



## URBANIZATION, URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING: NOAKHALI SADAR PERSPECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT.** Urbanization and urban planning are both important for sustainable socio-economic development and nowadays urbanization has attracted the attention of various scholars. This paper aims to study the reasons for urbanization, urban planning, pattern and process of urbanization, urban governance, urban economic development, urban housing, urban transportation, urban land management and planning, infrastructure, urban poverty, and urban environment. This paper seeks a general understanding of urban development. Cities are considered a complex social fact because cities represent the future of global living. This paper tries to understand how economic factors are valuable behind urbanization. Rural-to-urban migration has happened widely in Bangladesh. There are push and pull factors of urbanization behind this migration. The study aims to outline the role of *Pourashava*, the people's work department, and non-government organizations that work for city planning and development. This study tries to discover the problems in slum areas their sufferings and social and economic exclusion. The main goal of my paper is to view the planned and balanced urban development across the Sadar, Noakhali.

**Keywords:** urbanization, urban development, vulnerable, planning and development, Noakhali

### INTRODUCTION

Urbanization defines the movement of people from communities concerned chiefly or solely with agriculture to other communities, generally larger whose activities are primarily centered on government, trade, manufactured, or allied interests (Thomas Warren, Encyclopaedia of Social Science). The process of urbanization in Bangladesh is low compared to other Asian countries. A city is more than a collection of buildings and streets. It embodies the idea of progress, success, failure, and destruction. Urban planning is taking adequate measures to confront all these sides (Marufa & Rahman, 2023). Planning is a systematic or organized method of doing something. The premeditated work done to create something new is called planning. In the modern era, city planning roughly dates back to 1893 AD. Since time immemorial, people have been building cities based on pre-planning (Hasan, 2022). Urbanization is a demographic and social change associated with urban growth. Urban planning is the organized development and management of urban areas. Urbanization is the process by which more and more people leave the countryside to live in cities. Urbanization mainly

occurs when a country is still developing. United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development took place in Quito, Ecuador from 17-20 October 2016. United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs) notably SDG 11 which is about making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. In 2016, it was estimated that more than half of the world's population lived in cities, and by the year 2050 world's urban population would almost double (Marufa & Rahman, 2023). In Quito, world leaders adopted the New Urban Agenda that sets global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development (United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals). Urban planning has been promoted as a means of achieving human interest.

As per the census of 2022, Bangladesh has a population of 165 million. As many as 113,063,587 of them live in rural areas and 52,009,072 live in cities. According to the *Pourashava* Ordinance 1997; an area that has more than fifty thousand population with a density of more than 1500 persons per square kilometer and three-fourths' population are engaged in non-agriculture activity is called an urban area. Bangladesh has been experiencing rapid

urbanization since its independence (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022). During 1974-2011, around 8.2% to nearly 28% of the total population lived in urban areas.<sup>1</sup> By the year of 2021 one-third of the total population live in urban areas (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics). Bangladesh gained its independence in 1971 and since then Bangladesh has been experiencing rapid urbanization. Among the world's nations, Bangladesh is one of the most crowded, poorest, and environmentally vulnerable nations. This paper will seek the correlation between urban development and urban problems. In Noakhali, Sadar Upazila's area is about 336.06 square kilometers, and population density is about 6, 42, 471 and more than 1565 people live per square kilometer.

#### *Urbanization in Bangladesh*

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. The country's population has been growing rapidly over the past century, and rapid urbanization in our country was completely unplanned. At present, the overall contribution of cities to the country's GDP is 60% (Hossain, 2013). Bangladesh has a very long history of urbanization. At the beginning of 1901, 2.43% of the total population lived in urban areas is 60%. The states of India and Pakistan emerged in 1947. As a province of Pakistan East Bengal became famous as East Pakistan. At that time, urbanization accelerated. Around the year 1951-1961 urban population increased at a significant rate and the rate was 45.11%. Urban population growth rate of Bangladesh from 1901-2001<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1.** Urban population growth rate of Bangladesh from 1901-2001

Census Year	Total Population	Urban Population	Percentage Urban	Variation	Exponential Growth Rate
1901	28,928,000	702,035	2.43	-	-
1911	31,555,000	807,024	2.56	14.95	1.39
1921	33,254,000	878,480	2.64	8.85	0.85
1931	35,604,000	1,073,489	3.02	22.20	2.00
1941	41,997,000	1,537,244	3.66	43.20	3.59
1951	42,063,000	1,819,773	4.33	18.38	1.69
1961	50,840,000	2,640,726	5.19	45.11	3.72
1974	71,479,000	6,273,602	8.78	137.57	6.66
1981	87,120,000	13,228,163	15.18	110.85	10.66
1991	106,314,000	20,872,204	19.63	57.79	4.56
2001	123,851,120	28,605,200	23.10	37.05	3.15

In 2010, Bangladesh had a population of 160 million (United Nations Population Program) and 25% of them were living in urban areas (Hossain & Islam, 2021). National population projection for 2050 estimated that the total population would be 188.1 million and the urban population will be 33% by the year 2050 (Hossain & Islam, 2021). The free-market economy has been taken as a driving force of the 21st century. Industries are set to manufacture goods and it helps to create employment. As a result, people are continuously moving towards cities. Bangladesh has experienced planned urban planning in very recent years. Local government, development authorities, and the Ministry of Housing and Public Works take up some projects and make master plans on them.

Now, about 40% of Bangladesh's people live in urban areas. Bangladesh is a rapidly urbanizing country. Urbanization in Bangladesh was 5% in 1971, 15% in 1981, 20% in 1991, and only 23% in 2001. By the year 2041, around 50% of the people of Bangladesh will be urbanized (Marufa & Rahman, 2023). Bangladesh is celebrating its 53 years of independence. Now, this country is graduating from LDC to a middle-income country. Thus, the country is passing the crossroads of its development. Urbanization plays a major role in a country's socio-economic development.

#### *Objective of the Study*

<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2003); Bangladesh Census Report, 1991, 2001; Report on Urban Areas, 1997.

The objectives of the studies are-

1. To explore the reasons for urbanization in Noakhali Sadar Upazila.
2. To analyze the urban developmental patterns in Noakhali Sadar Upazila.
3. To examine urban problems in Noakhali Sadar Upazila.

## METHOD

The data for this paper are primarily obtained from published literature, websites, and tertiary data. Secondary data sources were collected from annual reports and articles published in social science journals. Some information was gathered through field surveys, and written materials were used as the main sources. A questionnaire was utilized to collect field survey data. Statements and interviews were conducted with individuals directly or indirectly engaged in urban planning and management. Up to 20 interviews were conducted using both close-ended and open-ended questionnaires. These interviews were carried out through conversations. Additionally, newspapers and editorials were used as reference materials. The observation method was also applied to gain deeper insights into the urbanization, urban planning, and development conditions in Noakhali Sadar Upazila.

### *Selection of Research Topic and Objective of the Study*

This research focuses on urbanization, urban planning, and urban development in Bangladesh. The objectives of the study are to understand the patterns of urbanization, planning, and development in Noakhali Sadar Upazila; to examine socio-economic development related to urban areas; to analyze the effects on the environment and its management; to identify the reasons behind urbanization in Sadar, Noakhali; to assess how local government and public administration contribute to urban planning in Sadar Upazila; and to explore long-term perspectives related to the Sadar area.

### *Selection of Research Area*

The research was conducted in a specific area of Sadar Upazila in Noakhali district, focusing on urbanization, urban planning, and urban development. The study included data from various institutions and responses from 35 individuals via questionnaires. Observation methods were also employed to gain a deeper understanding of urban development.

### *Target Group*

For this research, three groups of people were interviewed: government institutions and NGOs, the general population of Noakhali Sadar Upazila, and slum dwellers.

### *Testing Questionnaire*

The questionnaire served as a deliberate research tool for conducting the survey. It was designed to align with the research objectives, helping to understand the topic from the respondents' perspectives. The questionnaire facilitated enhancing, rearranging, updating, and adapting thoughts based on realistic experiences. Open and close-ended questions were used to derive logical answers from the target group.

### *Data Collection*

Data was collected from two sources:

1. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and interviews.
2. Secondary data was collected from government statistics, international reports, journals, articles, academic studies, newspapers, books, and NGOs.

### *Problems Encountered During Data Collection*

Several challenges were encountered during data collection. In some cases, sufficient data could not be gathered due to communication barriers and time constraints. Local government and public administration sometimes pose communication challenges, creating obstacles to obtaining the necessary information.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis is a systematic process that employs logical techniques to interpret and evaluate data. It involves cleansing, transforming, inspecting, and modeling data to discover useful information. For this study, data analysis focused on cleansing, transforming, and inspecting data to make sense of raw information. The purpose of data analysis in this paper is to answer research questions, draw conclusions, and support decision-making.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### *Reasons for Urbanization: In the Context of Noakhali Sadar, Upazila*

There are many reasons behind the rural-to-urban migration. It often happens due to a lack of resources in rural areas. People always hope for well-paid jobs, greater work opportunities, education, and healthcare. Sometimes this urbanization happens due to natural disasters and calamities. There are many push and pull factors behind the urbanization in Noakhali Sadar Upazila.

### *Employment Opportunities*

In rural areas of Noakhali, there is no availability of jobs, industries, and services. In Sadar Upazila of Noakhali and its surroundings Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation has two

industrial areas of 360 square kilometers. One is Begumganj BICIC Industrial City located on the main road adjacent to Choumahani Chowrasta and the other is Noakhali Industrial City, located at a distance of 2 kilometers from Sonapur Zero Point. Globe Pharmaceuticals is the largest industry in Begumganj BICIC industries. They produced products for both domestic uses and exported to foreign countries (Government of Bangladesh, 2009). It creates employment opportunities for many rural people.

Moreover, over the last few years, the development of the Noakhali communication system and the construction of new roads have increased. It creates new business opportunities for the people of Noakhali. A new business community has been established in Noakhali, and many restaurants have been established which play a major role in providing job opportunities for people (Tasnim et al., 2024). Rashedul Islam, Director of a Business Organization, living at Housing Estate says Majdee, the heart of greater Noakhali, offers significant business advantages due to its excellent connectivity with the capital.

The town thrives with a dynamic mix of buyers and sellers, benefiting from the influx of professionals from across the district. This bustling urban environment provides a vibrant marketplace where businesses can operate efficiently. The well-maintained and clean business atmosphere in Majdee supports adherence to market rules, fostering a favorable environment for business growth and success. It helps people to be urban-oriented. Many schools, colleges, and hospitals are built around the Sadar. Many public and private job opportunities are being created regularly.

#### *Agricultural Challenges*

Agriculture is the driving force of the economy of Bangladesh. But in the rural sides of the Noakhali district, there are limited environmental opportunities for modern farming mechanisms, environmental factors, droughts, salinity intrusion, river erosion, climate change, and sea level rising which manifests lower crop productivity and reduced cropping intensity. River bank erosion and loss of habitats is another acute problem. Many farmers are constantly losing their land due to Meghna River erosion on the other sides of Subarnachar, Noakhali, and Hatia Dwip. That is a kind of pull factor that allures people to settle in Majdee and search for another better job for a better living standard.

#### *Education*

Noakhali Sadar Upazila provides better educational facilities and institutions and a wider range of educational facilities for both children and

adults than other Upazila of Noakhali districts. Education is the key sector in building up a nation. The Noakhali Sadar area provides better educational facilities than that of other areas. There are many Governments and private Schools, colleges, Madrasha, and Technical and Vocational Institutions in Sadar Upazila. There are 2 Government colleges and 6 Non-Governmental Colleges, 46 High Schools, 198 Primary schools, a Vocational Institute, and 1 Polytechnic Institute. There is also a public university named Noakhali Science and Technology University in Noakhali Sadar Upazila.

It has been observed that most of the students of Noakhali Government College come from outside of the Sadar Upazila. Every year many people from outside of Noakhali districts come to Sadar, Noakhali in search of better educational facilities. A case study is attached here. Rakibul Hasan, a student at Noakhali Karamatia Kamil Madrasa, has experienced firsthand the disparities in educational quality between his village and the city. After completing his secondary education in his village, he moved to Noakhali city for higher studies, where he enrolled in Noakhali Karamatia Kamil Madrasa. The transition highlighted significant differences: while the village offered necessary educational materials and dedicated teachers for primary and secondary levels, the situation changed for higher education. Quality teachers are scarce in rural areas as they often prefer city institutions and frequently transfer, leaving gaps in the educational environment.

In contrast, Noakhali city boasts modern teaching methods, advanced learning materials, and a supportive academic community. This environment has greatly enhanced Rakibul's educational experience and aspirations for higher education. Abdul Quader Roman, residing at Charkaunia, Sadar, Noakhali, and currently living in Master Para Majdi, Sadar, Noakhali, is affiliated with Noakhali Government College. The shift from village to city for education is crucial due to the lack of quality educational institutions in rural areas. Cities offer superior educational facilities, including well-established coaching centers, tuition services, and access to online digital resources, which are often unavailable in villages.

Urban areas provide opportunities to participate in competitive exams and cultural events, enhancing personal and academic growth. With WiFi internet, administrative support, and top-notch coaching, city-based education offers numerous advantages over rural settings. Moreover, after the establishment of Noakhali Science and Technology University, every year thousands of students from different parts of the country come to study here. Which helps urbanization to be increased.

### *Better Living Standard*

The better living standard consists of some basic human needs like shelter, social safety, and food. Better living standard is another factor that inspires people to move towards city instead of rural life. Noakhali Sadar Upazila improves human life by providing access to basic human needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education as well as opportunities for economic growth. It is another reason behind the people's movement towards Noakhali Sadar Upazila.

### *Health Care Facilities*

In an urban area, healthcare facilities are more accessible than in another rural area. Healthcare facilities include hospitals, clinics, outpatient care centers specialized care centers, etc. There are many hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies in Noakhali Sadar Upazila. The history of Noakhali Sadar Hospital traces back to 1860, starting with just 10 beds. Over the years, it has grown significantly to meet the increasing demand for medical services. By 1972, the hospital had expanded to accommodate 150 beds, and this number was further increased to 250 beds in 1998. Since 2008, the hospital has served as a temporary campus for Malek Ukil Medical College, integrating its resources and services with those of the medical college. Currently, the hospital features 24 wards, 10 intensive care units (ICUs), and 20 diagnostic centers, reflecting its commitment to providing comprehensive healthcare. The blood bank operates around the clock, ensuring a constant supply of essential resources.

Urban centers can provide early and high-quality care for pregnant women, significantly reducing maternal and infant mortality rates. Additionally, towns like Noakhali host numerous world-class hospitals equipped with advanced medical systems, modern equipment, and qualified doctors. The availability of both public and private hospitals in Noakhali ensures that patients have access to the best care options, allowing them to choose medical institutions based on their condition and financial situation. This is another reason for people's movement towards urban areas.

### *River Erosion*

Bangladesh is situated within the vast Ganges-Brahmaputra- Meghna Delta. As a result of climate change, creates severe river bank erosion in the Noakhali district. Chairman Ghat, Hatia Upazila located on the Noakhali coast. Monsoon seasons widely affect this area. The islands of the lower Meghna River are unstable. Most of the erosion occurs in the north and southeast parts of Hatia Dwip, Sandwip, and Orir Char. River bank erosion creates

an impact on the development process. River bank erosion has a wide impact on social, economic, health, and social life. The most significant impact is the homelessness of people which forces people to move toward the city.

Another consequence is the lack of adequate medical services and education. So, most of the people move towards Sadar Upazila. Through the Daily Sun, a reputed newspaper in Bangladesh, the picture of river erosion in 2020 in Hatiya Upazila came to light. Here it was seen that 10,000 families of Hatiya Upazila have become uncertain, as most of them were homeless due to the river bank erosion of the Meghna river. Kabir Hossain, a resident of Hatiya Upazila said, "I have lost everything to natural disaster-my home my livelihood." Thus, many of those who succumb to river erosion and other natural calamities head towards the city in search of jobs.

**Table 2.** Reasons for Migration in Noakhali Sadar Upazila

Reasons for Migration in Noakhali Sadar Upazila	Frequency	Percentage
Better job facilities	04	11.42%
High standard of living	02	5.7%
Education Facilities	07	20%
Health care facilities	01	2.85%
Financial problems	03	8.57%
Surrounding problems	01	2.85%
More employment opportunities	10	28.57%
Positive thinking about city life	02	5.71%
Reluctance of village life	05	14.28%

Among the 35 respondents, 28% of people are moving toward the city for more employment opportunities and this is the highest number of people moving towards cities. Education facilities are the second choice of people moving toward cities. Among the 35 respondents, it is seen that 14.28% of people are reluctant about village life. Better job facilities are another option which is another reason behind people's movement towards cities. Only 2.85% of people move towards cities to get better health facilities.

### *Urban Developmental Patterns in Noakhali*

Once a city is built its physical form and land use pattern can be locked in for generations leading to unsustainable sprawl. Building cities that work green resilient and inclusive requires intensive policy coordination and investment choices. National and local governments have an important role to play in acting now, shaping their development's future, and creating opportunities for all.<sup>3</sup> With the rapid acceleration of worldwide urbanization, urban

<sup>3</sup> Urban Development, World Bank, 2023.

development in Bangladesh has become the main focus of the government of Bangladesh. For sustainable urbanization, logical urban development is a major concern. Sustainable urbanization is a dynamic and multi-dimensional issue. Bangladesh's government has a future vision for urban planning. Urban planning includes all sectors of the community. It ensures urban management strategies and government arrangements for implementing urban development.

### *Urban Planning Goals and Directions*

Formulating planning is a major objective that guides sustainable urban development. These policies include environmental protection, resource conservation, and population mobility. In this planning, local government plays a vital role in introducing green urban policies. According to the Local Government Act 2009 *Pourashava* has been given a wide range of responsibilities in urban development (Government of Bangladesh, 2009). In Noakhali Sadar Upazila, *Pourashava* continuously plays a role in town planning and development, public health and sanitation, water supply and sewage disposal, and maintenance of public infrastructure. *Pourashava* plays a role in environment management. Noakhali *Pourashava* is struggling to provide many services to the people including pure drinking water supply, roads, and solid waste management. Many government entities are involved in urban sector development in Noakhali Sadar Upazila. The Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and cooperatives are continuously working on making citizens' lives smooth. There are many non-governmental organizations such as ADB, and UNDP work on urban development in Noakhali Sadar Upazila.

### *Households Size*

The average household size for upazila is 5.2, for rural areas the size is also 5.2 persons, and in urban areas, the size is slightly lower which is 5.0 persons.

### *Type of Housing Structure*

In the Upazila 8.3% of general households live in a Pucca house, 11.3% in a Semi-Pucca house 77.2% in the Kutcha house, and the remaining 3.2% live in a Jhupri house (Bangladesh Institute of Governance and Development [BIGD], 2021). Affordable housing policy is one of the major public policies in urban development planning. Affordable

housing policy provides low-cost housing to low-income, middle-income, and vulnerable groups. UNDP works on giving low-cost houses to the low-income and vulnerable groups in *Pourashava* area. UNDP provides low-cost houses to low-income and vulnerable groups under the project of Livelihood Improvement of Urban Poor Communities Projects in *Pourashava*.<sup>4</sup>

An observation shows that most of the houses are 6 to 7 stories building and some of the houses are up to 10 stories high. Houses are extremely dense here. One house is almost attached to another house. The roads between the houses are very narrow. Kulsum Begum a tenant here said the house rent is very high here, the houses are very small, and other facilities are here. Nafisa Tabassum, a student of Noakhali Government College said that houses are very unplanned, they do not follow the building code provided by the People's Work Department or Local Government Engineering Department. The stairs of these houses are very narrow it is difficult to leave the house in an earthquake or other difficulties like fire and so on. Block bricks are now used instead of clay-made bricks in fields for building houses so that buildings can be earthquake-resistant. Old buildings are being demolished and new buildings are being built. Moreover, the people's work department does not allow building more than seven-story buildings. If the building is above seven storeys then its approval has to be taken from *Pourashava*.<sup>5</sup>

### *Transportation and Maintenance*

Infrastructure is the basic facilities and services that serve mostly in the development of a community or urban region. Infrastructure includes a variety of structures and it is essential for the economy of any country. One type of infrastructure is roads and transportation. Sadar Upazila contains all possible types of transportation routes except the airway. There are four railway stations in Noakhali Sadar Upazila. There are two bus terminals in Noakhali Sadar Upazila. One terminal is located at Sonapur Zero Point and another terminal name is Noakhali Bus Terminal. There are many inter-district bus routes. According to the *Pourashava* sources it has 207 km of total road length (Government of Bangladesh, 2009, Hossain & Ahmed, 2021). There is one truck terminal located in the *Pourashava* area. Noakhali Sadar Upazila has only one main road which carries the whole burden of the city. In the past that was a one-way road. After 5 to 6 years of long construction work, it has been made into 4 lanes. But

<sup>4</sup> S.M Liaquat Ali, Town Manager, UNDP, Sadar, Noakhali. Date and Place of Interview: July 20, 2024. Noakhali Pourashava.

<sup>5</sup> Arif Shikder, Sub-Assistant Engineer, Public Work Department. Date and Place of Interview: July 20, 2024. Public Work Department. Sadar, Noakhali.

even this is not enough to bear the pressure of the huge population in Noakhali Sadar upazila. There are not enough sidewalks alongside the main road. There is not enough foot over bridges so people cross the roads between the moving vehicles.

#### *Solid Waste Management*

Solid waste management is a part of an effective and sustainable urban development system. Solid waste is commonly known as trash or garbage. Solid waste also includes all items that homes and businesses no longer use. Some types of solid waste are food, paper, plastic, textiles, leather, wood, glass, metal, etc. There are around 110 waste bins, seven vans, and 7 garbage trucks in *Pourashava* to collect and carry garbage and trash, two landfills, 4 transfer stations, 20 vans, 50 trolleys, and daily garbage produced 55 tons in the *Pourashava* area (Population and Housing Census, 2022). Every day city people create lots of plastic-made garbage and other types of garbage and its sorting situation is highly concerning. Waste generation in Sadar Upazila is increasing due to the growing population pressure. In Noakhali Sadar Upazila, human awareness is very low. People litter everywhere. Garbage management especially in the municipal market area is very bad. There is a gigantic pile of garbage at the back of the market which is completely ruining the market environment. Sometimes this garbage is not removed on time. *Pourashava* cleaners pick garbage up late in the day which creates discomfort among people. *Pourashava* has only two landfills to dump solid waste one is located at Dharmapur and land areas are 10. 8500 acres and one one is located at Charsly land areas are 1.1500 acres (*Pourashava* Data, 2024).

#### *Water Supply and Drainage System*

The government has adopted the sector development plan 2011-2025 to provide a framework for planning, implementing, coordinating, and monitoring sanitation and drainage. To improve sanitation and drainage systems local government, urban development authorities, and NGOs work hard. In 7th Five years plan, the aim of covering the drainage system expanded to 80% (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022). According to the source of *Pourashava*, Noakhali *Pourashava* has a 63 km drain network to run out of water (Government of Bangladesh, 2009). There are six overhead tanks within the *Pourashava* area. The *Pourashava* has also two production tube wells, two water treatment plants, and 4600 taps for pipe water supply (*Pourashava* Data 2024). In Sadar, Noakhali, groundwater contains a lot of salt iron, and other chemical substances. The color of the water is yellowish and people can hardly find transparent water in this location which creates suffering in human life. The population rate is increasing very

fast in Noakhali Sadar Upazila due to the rapid urbanization. So, the number of houses is also increasing. The number of new houses has increased 2 to 3 times faster than in the past years. So, municipalities have to struggle a lot to deliver clean water to every home. There is a production tube-well one is located at Eklashpur (land extent- 0.5500 acres, Mouza- Eklashpur, J.L No-235) and another one is located at Salehpur (land extent- 0.0225 acres, Mouza- Salehpur, J.L No-67). There are two Iron Removal plants in the *Pourashava* area.

#### *Economic Development*

Urbanization is the driving force of economic development. The two processes are interdependent. Development cannot take place without urbanization and urbanization is the result of economic development (Bangladesh Institute of Governance and Development [BIGD], 2021). Due to rapid urbanization, many economic opportunities are created around Noakhali Sadar Upazila. Noakhali *Pourashava* is the main center of business and trade in Noakhali district. It is supposed that there will be no possibility of any adverse situation like job loss. People are running their own business. There are many shops and markets in Sadar Upazila some of these markets are owned by *Pourashava*. These market's names are Sonapur Bazar, Datterhat Bazar, Majidee Bazar, Poura Super Market, etc. These business centers create lots of job opportunities. The economy of this area is mostly influenced by these business centers. From the wealth distribution ranking of people in Noakhali *Pourashava*, it is revealed that there are mainly four categories of people in terms of a group of the economy such people are poor class, lower middle class, middle class, and rich. In addition, many people are active in farming and farming-related activities, fishing and trading, industrial workers, daily wage workers, small-scale businessmen and women, and others.

However, the Noakhali district depends largely on agriculture but the economy of business is the most dominant economic factor here. The second largest source is remittance. By far the most dominant organized commercial activities of the *Pourashava* are in the form of wholesaling and retailing businesses. The numbers of units in each sector are 10 retail markets, 2 wholesale markets, 10 small & cottage industries, 5 small & medium industries, and 3 large industries here (Bangladesh Small & Cottage Industries Corporation, n.d.). Hilsa Fish is one of the largest wholesale markets which are currently operating in Sonapur. The major part of trade and commerce of the *Pourashava* is implemented through hat/bazar which involves selling agricultural products and consumer products. Many houses are constantly built in Sadar Upazila

which needs lots of workers. Many men and women of different ages work here daily. Which helps to boost the economic condition in this area. Moreover, new jobs are being created here for the constant development of the communication system. Many restaurants are coming up here which is continuously expanding the job sector in Noakhali Sadar Upazila. As a result of urbanization, many people migrate from rural areas in search of job facilities. When a family gets involved in a job, it creates an impact on its economic development.

#### *Air quality Noise Pollution*

As the Noakhali *Pourashava* is the main town of the Noakhali district many activities are performed inside the Pura areas. It is still active at all times of the day. The bazaar and the marketplaces stay jam-packed most of the time on a given day. The *Pourashava* mainly consists of an urban area that is a semi-density residential area as well as some business areas. Some of the main activities indicated to cause air pollution within the area include vehicular emissions along the Roads and commercial and domestic emissions. Poultry and livestock are reared in some places and that results in pollution of the air.

In addition, there are brick fields in these areas as well. Regarding energy supply, it is not very strong in the area, and as such, diesel-fired small power generating sets are widely used in the urban centers of the study area. The catalytic converter ought to be utilized in buses, trucks, and other category. Fossil fuels like Petrol and other fuels should be replaced by CNG. It is observed that the noise level of Noakhali *Pourashava* is moderate and it has some residential, administrative, and commercial zones. However, this noise pollution has many sources some of which are construction sites and blasting, use of loudspeakers, etc the most dominant of this noise is that created by motor vehicles in the urban areas. The noises emanating from motorized vehicles have also risen with the numbers in the city and the dangers of noise pollution have been enhanced and surpassed the tolerance level.

#### *Urban Poverty*

Bangladesh has been a rapidly urbanized country since 1980. The urbanization rate in Noakhali Sadar Upazila like other parts of Bangladesh is high. There are many influential factors behind this urbanization. One of the factors is economic development. However urban poverty in Noakhali Sadar Upazila reflects broader socio-

economic challenges. Noakhali Sadar Upazila has been experiencing higher levels of unemployment and under-employment problems. Many residents living in Noakhali Sadar Upazila mainly rely on the informal job sector which often creates job insecurity. The slow rate of infrastructural development can exacerbate poverty issues because there are lack of housing, sanitation, and fresh water supply. A study estimated that the urban population growth rate remained constantly above the national population growth. There are many causes behind urban poverty in Noakhali Sadar upazila these are slow job growth, unskilled labor and illiteracy, improper training, livelihood issues, financial crisis, and social barriers. The country has been on the path of high growth but unfortunately, this growth has not been accompanied by job creation and employment generation (Fahmida Khatun, CDP). In Sadar Upazila, Noakhali is backward in an industrial area and creates a hindrance to the creation of employment. The industrial city in Sonapur, Noakhali set up by the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation has failed to create an industrial-friendly environment more than a decade after its inauguration due to inadequate infrastructural development.<sup>6</sup> According to BSCIC, this industrial area started its journey in 2003 on 15 acres of land to create new entrepreneurship and eliminate unemployment which was completed in 2007 (Bangladesh Small & Cottage Industries Corporation, n.d.). Out of 107 plots, 62 plots were allotted for setting up industries (Government of Bangladesh, 2009). This industrial city is gradually shutting for many reasons like infrastructural issues and many entrepreneurs have not set up their units to their allocated plots.

They work on the security of the slum dwellers people. To ensure governance transparency and accountability they arrange meetings, discussions, and collaboration with the Mayor and councilor. They focus on the creation of poverty mapping through which they can identify the number of poor people and confirm the climate impact on this region. Under the project of Institutional Strengthening Community Mobilization, they work on the condition of poor people under the 9 wards of Noakhali *Pourashava*. 12,600 households are assessed using the APP to create A multi-poverty Index that includes the Father's name, household number, income, and property. UNDP has four institutions PG, CDC, CLUSTER, and FEDERATION. UNDP in Sadar Upazila works on

<sup>6</sup> Mijanur Rahman Riyad, Noakhali BSCIC industrial city fails to shine. The Business Standard, 2022.



awareness building, economic health, skill, and employment generation issues among 12600 families in Noakhali *Pourashava*.

### **Urban Problems in Noakhali Sadar Upazila**

#### **Housing Problem**

Noakhali Sadar Upazila is one of the large administrative subdivisions in southeastern Bangladesh where the absence of an adequate housing stock constitutes a severe problem due to population increase, rural-urban migration as well as the poor provision of housing amenities. As per the Population and Housing Census (2022), the population pressure of Noakhali Sadar Upazila has increased significantly over the years leading to an acute shortage of housing stock compared to the need. These have resulted in several socio-economic and environmental problems such as high-density accommodation, the growth of slums, and increasing demand for limited resources. Population growth means that there is a high demand for housing but common resources such as land have limited availability.

The Noakhali Sadar Upazila is among the most populous areas of Bangladesh with the Population Census report stating that more than 700,000 people are living in the upazila. This is compared to 640,000 people according to the census that was conducted in the year 2011 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Population Census, 2022, Hossain & Islam, 2023). The fertility rate in the region is high while rural-to-urban migration has also played an important role in putting this region among those that have a high population growth rate. This increases the organizational density in Noakhali *Pourashava* as do seek better employment opportunities, education, and health care facilities for their families thereby contributing to a congested problem in controlling the growth of the urban housing demand. There is, therefore, an increased demand for housing by this population density a situation that has not been well complimented by the local authorities. The total stock of homes as well as the housing units has not risen proportionately to the population hence the problem of overcrowding. In many families people live in very small rooms and overcrowded places, they have no proper access to clean water, electricity, and even sanitation. Population density in the residences may also expose residents to different diseases and health complications, worsening the healthcare systems in the area. Due to the scarcity of housing stock in Noakhali Sadar, people find it rather easy to be housed in informal areas, particularly in Noakhali *Pourashava*. These are called slum areas; the houses in these areas are always poorly developed with materials like tins, bamboo, and plastics.

### **Population Problem in Noakhali Sadar Upazila**

Noakhali Sadar Upazila, southeastern part of Bangladesh, is in the middle of a population issue that is creating problems for sustainable developmental opportunities. This is due to high fertility rates and peoples' fleeing from rural areas to upazila, which overpopulate the area, exert pressure on existing public utilities, and adversely affect the environment. Population and Housing Census (2022) due to a high rise in population density makes competition higher in the following sectors including shelter, employment, health, and education sector in the upazila. Population Census (2022) reveals that there is an increase in the population of the Noakhali Sadar Upazila as compared to the population census of the year 2011. As per the 2022 census the population surfaced to be more than 700,000, which improved from the population count of about 640,000 in 2011 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011). This high population growth can be explained by the high fertility rate and migrating rate from rural to upazila Noakhali *Pourashava*.

Population congestion is one of the most observable phenomena resulting from population growth in the Noakhali Sadar Upazila especially in the urban centers. The arrival of new people to the central business areas has not been met by new construction and development of housing stock that can house the incoming population leading to a severe shortage of both affordable and adequate housing. Most of the people live in very confined spaces with many of them living with their children and grandparents in small houses.

### **The Road Traffic Problem in Noakhali Sadar Upazila**

It is relatively plausible that many SA's particularly those which are fast turning urban in Bangladesh, such as Noakhali Sadar Upazila, are experiencing a rising road traffic concern. Over the years, the population has grown, and this has resulted in population detonation, urbanization, and unplanned infrastructure development to worsen traffic jams and increase accident rates as well as other numerous issues in the transportation sector. According to the Population and Housing Census (2022), Noakhali Sadar Upazila has a large increase in population, they also have a large growth of vehicles and there is no good development in road conditions and proper traffic signal system. The number of motor vehicles especially motorcycles and three-wheelers known as CNGs has increased tremendously and has outgrown the capacity of the existing roads mostly during rush hours, causing congestion. That is; when many people are settling more within the upazila, road standards constructed for lesser traffic flow density are already congested and risky. Also, there is no specific control on the

growth of three-wheeler and rickshaw transportation which causes unhealthy traffic flow, because slow vehicles share the same roads with fast ones. This factor has been a major setback to the growth of the transport sector since the necessary road infrastructure is missing.

Thus, it may be considered that one of the prime reasons for the road traffic problem in Noakhali Sadar Upazila is the inefficiency of its road network. Several roads in this upazila particularly the existing and within the Noakhali *Pourashava* are characterized by narrow widths and bad surfaces that do not allow desired traffic strength. Highways and feeder roads that physically integrate the upazila to other areas of the country are few and at rush hour, these act as bottlenecks. Other important areas which contribute to the road traffic problem include traffic management and law enforcement.

#### *Municipal Service Delivery in Noakhali Sadar Upazila*

The Noakhali Sadar Upazila has been experiencing a high growth population, which has exerted so much pressure on the delivery of municipal services. The problems include – the inability to provide adequate service delivery such as waste management, supply of potable water, health care delivery, and maintenance of infrastructure in the region especially in the main urban area known as Noakhali *Pourashava*. According to the Population and Housing Census (2022) – there are increased signs of political practices and insecure work arrangements as well as signs of poor service delivery in Noakhali Sadar where the population has grown considerably and far beyond the ability of the established municipal services to deliver good quality and accessible services. This situation has led to numerous social and environmental problems with a deduction that the standard quality of life in the upazila is not all that good. Another problem area that has been identified is the problem of waste management which is still poor. Amid rising waste generation, waste pickup and disposal have remained major challenges in Noakhali *Pourashava* though the municipal bureaucracies of the *Pourashava* areas have not been effective in the local waste management. There are so many places, especially in the growing informal settlements where households are not privileged to have services such as regular waste collection. This results in social vices like open dumping of garbage and resultant environmental degeneration, water pollution, and effects on the health of the people due to diseases.

#### *Trust and Satisfaction of People on Noakhali Pourashava*

Noakhali *Pourashava* which is the principal urban center of Noakhali Sadar Upazila has been consistently receiving dissatisfaction and lack of trust from its populace. The municipal authority which has the responsibility of delivering other basic infrastructure in the society like garbage collection, water provision, sewage systems, and maintenance of physical infrastructure has continuously failed to satisfy the increasing demand of the growing population in the urban areas. Therefore, the lack of trust and satisfaction that are recorded among the people of Noakhali *Pourashava* has emerged as a major issue about governance and local development. This has again made people lack confidence in the Noakhali *Pourashava* due to the perceived inefficiency in the delivery of the services. This study finds information from people's interviews and observations revealed that the respondents perceived that the municipality has performed poorly in key areas including environmental health, infrastructure, and social services. Some of the places like Master Para, Stadium Para, and Housing Estate in Noakhali *Pourashava* especially the congested residential areas complain of haphazard refuse collection thus resulting in dump site formation. Due to poor and delayed access to adequate waste disposal, this has led to pollution and deterioration of the environment and most of the residents have complained of bad smells, unclean surroundings, and diseases.

#### *Environmental Impact*

The ever-increasing population density of Noakhali Sadar Upazila has also led to drastic effects on the community on its environment. This has prompted the conversion of soil for agricultural activities as well as wetlands into residential places thus affecting the environment. On the same note, the population of the region has grown, and this has seen an increase in the amount of waste produced thus challenging the waste management systems of the region and polluting water and air sources.

#### *Limited Opportunities for Youth in Noakhali Sadar Upazila*

The major issue that the young generation of the Noakhali Sadar Upazila faces is the issue of unemployment. The general picture from the BBS Labour Force Survey concerning employment, and employment of young persons in rural areas of Noakhali Sadar is considerably lower than that in urban areas. Lack of adequate industrial and commercial development results in few employment opportunities hence the youth seek employment in informal sectors or move to other urban areas in search of employment opportunities. This is so because the youth has little or no job prospects

mainly due to skills provenant from formal education which does not suit the existing market forces. Limited scopes for educational and training facilities for youth is another problem in Noakhali Sadar Upazila. The educational facilities in Noakhali Sadar Upazila are also one of the constraints of employment among the youths. Of course, there are schools and colleges in the region, nonetheless, many of them are poorly equipped, have obsolete curricula, and insufficient number of qualified teachers. Educational facilities in the upazila suffer from problems such as large classes, inadequate teaching aids, and physical structures that hamper quality education (Hossain & Islam, 2023).

There is a scarcity of vocational and technical training institutes that could offer both theoretical and practical training and career-based education respectively. There are only 2 vocational institutes in Noakhali Sadar Upazila. Engagement and empowering youth programs are significant in youth's development and their participation in activities. However, only a few programs of such kind are there in Noakhali Sadar Upazila. Programs that are aimed at improving leadership, entrepreneurship, and community services are scarce, and therefore young people have fewer opportunities to hone their talents and contribute to society. Youth Development Directorate said that despite the efforts that have been made to introduce new programs that would target the youth, they still lack the required caliber and coverage with programs that still miss a big number of youths (Planning Commission, 2005; Ahmed & Rahman, 2024).

#### *Water clogging and flash floods in Noakhali Sadar Upazila in the year 2024*

Noakhali Sadar Upazila has felt some challenges in 2024 in terms of water clogging and flash flood situations. These woes have been compounded by such factors as a lack of infrastructure urbanization and climatic changes. Several parts of southeastern Bangladesh experiencing significant flooding due to heavy rainfall influenced by an active monsoon and a low-pressure area (BMD). Flash floods happen in Noakhali due to heavy rainfall, urbanization, and deforestation because it decrease the land's natural ability to absorb rainwater. Another reason is inadequate Drainage Infrastructure. This is the major contributor to problems of water clogging in Noakhali Sadar is poor drainage network. It is likewise significant to discover that the drainage systems in the region are in most cases ignored in as much as they lack the capability of channeling the stormwater effectively (Hossain et al 2024). The blocked and underdeveloped draining system

prolongs the water clogging contributing to flash floods yet it becomes aggravated.

Rapid Urbanization is another reason. Uncontrolled and uncoordinated growth conditions of Noakhali Sadar linked with high population density have resulted in the change of the width and the functions of the catchment areas affecting thereby the natural drainage system. When ecosystems and wetlands are peeled to create buildings and other structures, they alter the water drainage system resulting in building up the water and hence a higher reel toward floods. Poor Waste Management is also responsible for the flood here. One such problem that is related to poor waste disposal is compounded by the inefficient manner of waste disposal and management. Plastics and other waste disposal as well as organic matters block the drainage channels due to the blocking of the channels by the wastes.

## CONCLUSION

There are mainly two types of factors, namely the push and pull factors, which might lead people to migrate to cities. The normal push factors for rural people are the circumstances that make their earning of living impossible: soil degradation, scarcity of land, unequal distribution of the land, climatic shocks such as drought, storms, floods, and scarcity of clean water. Lack of facilities, which are important in the contemporary society. Political riots and local economic downturns are other significant factors for moving to the urban areas. Urbanization is a very important factor in the economic development of Bangladesh. There is an abnormally high population density in the urban area of Sadar Noakhali & cities of Sadar Noakhali experience the dynamics of rapid population explosion accompanied by crises like-lack of economic activity, failure of governance, the overall infrastructural and service backlogs, paucity of appropriate land management practices, slum areas and structural social-vortex as described above. It is, therefore, very crucial that Sadar Noakhali synchronizes all urban policy activities with the spatial patterns of sustainable economic development.

Economic factors are push factors for migration from rural to urban areas for Bangladesh's population. For the faster rate of economic growth Sadar Noakhali requires more innovative cities and well-integrated internally and externally with the global economy. Several key points have been elucidated from the discussion that urbanization, in general, befits economic growth: It would be quite evident from the historical analysis presented that the cities are centres for the diffusion of innovation and economic change. The principal problem is how to manage urbanization properly which plays a crucial

role in the ontogenesis of modern megacities. Thereby, the urban policy can be the key instrument by which the process of fast urban-building development is regulated. The new city structure that this scale of growth suggests could potentially compound problems of crowdedness, pollution, or traffic accidents unless design and planning are done right. Sadar Noakhali must be changed to fit the challenges of the current epoch, the issues of inequality, climate change, informality, insecurity, and the forms of unsustainable urban development. Hence, urbanization may be a force of development, which is why it is necessary to plan for it and manage it well in advance.

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