

Rural-Urban Migration and The Role of Secondary Cities in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Bangladesh has been experiencing a rapid urbanization since independence in 1971. Due to the massive rural-urban migration, the tempo of urbanization is very high. But the distribution of urban population is highly skewed and the capital city receives a disproportionate urban population, which has become of unmanageable size. The other metropolitan cities are also growing faster than the secondary and tertiary level urban centers. The overarching aim of this study is to examine how secondary cities can play an effective role to attract the rural migrants to make a more balanced distribution of urban population. The data adopted in this study was based on secondary sources and it tries to identify the reasons behind the rapid rural-urban migration particularly in the capital city in general and secondary cities in particular. The findings of the study reveal that as rural people migrate due to economic reasons, the creation of economic opportunities in secondary cities is essential to divert these migrants towards those cities for a more balanced distribution of urban population. The study concludes with some recommendations such as for strengthening the economic base of the secondary cities and for capacity building of the local government in those cities, which will enable them to attract migrants.

1. Background of the study

Bangladesh is a densely populated deltaic country with a low level of urbanization. In recent years Bangladesh has experienced an unprecedented

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upsurge of urbanisation. The level of urbanisation in Bangladesh is still low and it is only 23 percent but total urban population is about 29 million (BBS 2001). The growth rate of urban population has been very rapid during the last three decades at 7 percent annually which is the largest among Asian Countries. It is expected that by 2035 more than half of the total population will live in the urban areas. These urban centers have become the hubs of economic, social, political, commercial and cultural activities and will be the focal points of healthcare, education, finance and governance. But the distribution of urban population in Bangladesh is highly uneven. Because of the absence of viable spatial policy, most of the major investments have been biased in favour of the capital city, the two port cities and a few other cities of administrative or industrial importance. The overwhelming concentration of infrastructure has been in Dhaka followed by Chittagong and has resulted in the development of high level of primacy in the urban hierarchy.

A large portion of the urban population is concentrated in these few large urban agglomeration. Dhaka, the primate city of Bangladesh, is the capital city of the country and is the main focus in urbanization. It is the thriving industrial and commercial centre besides being the administrative capital city of the country. The city grew rapidly as a result of increased socioeconomic and political activities, the expansion of the built area and the migration from the rural areas. Dhaka, with a population of 1.5 million at present, is growing disparately and currently has 38 percent of the total urban population of the country. According to a BBS report, Dhaka will be the fifth largest city in the world by 2015 though its position in terms of population was eighth in 2001. The two other port cities Chittagong and Khulna are also growing fast but at a lower rate than the primate city. Thus the mega city Dhaka and five other divisional cities share approximately 58 percent of the total urban population. There are 522 urban centers in Bangladesh. All other urban centers but the large six cities carry only 40 percent of the country's urban population. It is noticed that the large cities have reached the point where further population growth jeopardises the delivery capacity of basic urban services to people. People move to cities for better opportunities and to improve their economic situation and quality of life but it has become clear that many urban cities are not coping with the large growth of urban population.

The rapid growth of urban population has occurred due to natural growth and immigration. Demographic fertility in the rural areas is higher than that of the urban areas. Urban population growth in Bangladesh, particularly in Dhaka, is predominantly the results of the migration of people from rural areas. Many people in the country make Dhaka their ultimate destination. Most of the migrants

are poor and hence urban areas remain numerically dominated by the poor. The migrants come largely from the economically depressed areas of the country. Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, is the final destination of the rural migrants from all over the country and migrants jump to the city without remaining in the secondary cities for two main reasons. First, Dhaka, the focal point for the whole country of administration, commerce, finance, politics, and culture is also the centre for international trade and communication. Secondly, it attracts large number of migrants because of its central location.

The growth of massive metropolitan areas and primate cities has created economic and social problems which government of Bangladesh does not have resources to cope with. Mass influx from rural to urban areas has been a significant factor spiraling urban growth rate in Bangladesh. Heavy influx of migrants created new problems like unemployment, underemployment, a high incidence of crime, a proliferation of shanty growth, substandard housing, transportation, pollution and service supply problems. Expanding and maintaining the quality of infrastructural and utility services like sanitation, sewerage, drainage, supply of drinking water and other social services like health care etc, are difficult and become more severe with population growth.

Many feel that it is time to restrict the movement of more people to Dhaka and other large urban agglomerations in Bangladesh. But according to the constitution of the country, all people have the right to free movement with the nation state and also to settle anywhere in the county. Rural-urban migration neither can be controlled nor stopped through formal rules. On the other hand, the secondary cities and small and intermediate urban centers are economically very weak and usually absorb a much small share of rural-urban migrants though the number of urban areas is growing rapidly and thus creating an unbalanced distribution of urban population.

By building up the capacity and increasing the number of secondary cities, it will be possible to relieve population pressure in the largest metropolises and contain the growth of secondary cities to size that is manageable. And also it is possible to slow down the existing migration rate in the large cities only by developing the secondary level urban centers and making them attractive for the rural-urban migrants.

In fact, the distribution of urban population in a more balanced way and also the distribution of related economic and social activities over the national territory should be an integral part of a country's spatial and social development policy. This can be possible by developing the secondary cities through promoting more equitable economic growth in rural areas aside from whatever impact it has on

slowing growth in large metropolis. These benefits can include commercialization of agriculture and provision of better services to residents of urban areas.

However, little or no attempts have been made to halt the growth of the largest metropolitan cities and to disperse economic activities in Bangladesh. This can be possible through promoting economic and social activities in the secondary cities. These are large enough to perform social and economic function for their own population and those, who are in the surrounding areas. Thus the spatial distribution of economic and social opportunities makes it possible for the secondary and intermediate cities to attract the rural migrants.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

- a. to examine how secondary cities can be made to attract the rural-urban migrants;
- b. to identify the dynamics of secondary cities and suggest how a more balanced distribution of urban settlements can be achieved; and
- c. to indicate policies and measures by which the rapid growth of large cities, especially the mega city, Dhaka can be slowed down.

The paper is based essentially on the review of the large body of literature available on the subject, from which recommendations have been drawn. Section 2 is devoted to a review of the literature centering on issues like the definition of migration, urbanization, characteristics of secondary and large cities, trends in urban growth, employment etc. Section 3 presents the lessons drawn from the literature reviewed, while recommendations of the paper appear in the fourth and final section.

2. Review of Literature

Definition of Migration: According to the Population Census Report of Bangladesh (BBS, 1991) migration is defined as the movement of person who changes his/her place of residence or intends to settle in the place of enumeration area, which is different from the previous place of residence for at least six months. It excludes the bulk of non-permanent movers, such as commuters and seasonal migrants. Hossain (2001, cited in Ullah, 2004) defines migration as a relocation of residence for a specified duration for various reasons, but it dominates the domain of planning since it changes the lives of migrant's families both at the places of origin and destination.

Strategies of Migration: Gilbert and Gugler (1992) classify migration strategies into four principal divisions such as (a) circular migration of men, (b) long-term migration of men separated from their families, (c) family migration to urban areas followed by return migration to the community of origin, and (d) permanent urban settlement.

There is a tendency among male migrants to leave their wives and children in their rural area of origin. A wife manages the farm holding on her own in the male-dominated environment with support of male relatives who assist in certain tasks and provide protection. Migrants accept the family separation because of the high living cost in urban areas. This family separation frequently takes the form of circular migration. Migrants return for an extended period with their family after employment for a specific period. Sometimes their returns coincide with the peak labour demand of the farm. Circular migration is a function of the recruitment of men at low wages. Repetition of the circular movement is common and migrants build up extended urban experience.

Because of the exception of the appearance of substantial urban unemployment, circular migration is no longer a viable option. The search for a job may take months and the outcome is aleatory. A migrant who has secured employment has good reason to hold on to it. Thus long-term migration can replace circular migration. Many of the long-term migrants leave their wives and children behind in the village. Short visits to the family replace the extended stay that characterise circular migration. Their frequency of visits varies a great deal with employment conditions and distance. Faster and cheaper transport may allow monthly or even weekly commuting. In many countries like India many migrants cover considerable distances and can visit their families only during their annual leave. Migrants, who manage to obtain a secured job in urban areas, take their wives and children to town. In such situation these migrants can maintain their position in the rural community and even during an extended urban career remain assured of access to land on their return. The migrants can expect to spend their entire working life away from their home place. Losing their urban employment or trade is the worst calamity, which leads them to move back to their village with their family. Eventually, these types of migrants return to their village home after retirement and live in a village home for rest of their life.

Migrants securely established in the urban economy may want to reduce their commitment to the village. They may break contact with the rural places and abandon the intention to return. These migrants are fully committed to urban life instead of planning for return to the village, they press for provision for social security. And they search for sources of earning other than paid employment.

Ownership of a home is a common practice, which assures accommodation and the possibility of income from rent while others try to establish their own business. Ultimately, they live in the urban area permanently.

Another type of migration is known as stepwise migration. Alamgir (1973) states that in many developing countries migration takes place in stages in the sense that migration could not change from their one place of origin to the final place of residence in one move general, movement takes place from interior villages to those in the suburb of some cities and towns for a period of time after which the next move into larger metropolis which often become their final destination.

Overview of Rural-Urban Migration: Rapid rural-urban migration is the common feature of urban growth in developing countries. As per the 1991 census, migration contributed 56 percent of urban population in Bangladesh where the rate of rural-urban migration was sharply dominant over other types of migration and it was 52 percent out of total 56 percent. A high rate of migration from rural to urban areas is intimately associated with unequal resources (usually land). Not only the landless but also the marginally landless migrate to the cities for better opportunities.

Bhuyan et al (2001) find that the process of migration in Bangladesh and the concomitant urbanisation were produced by extreme poverty and entitlement contraction particularly among the marginalised and the landless poor. The migration of the poor endangered the ruralisation of the urban centers by directly transmitting rural poverty and backwardness to the towns.

A migration model known as the push-pull model is widely discussed. This model postulates that people's decision to migrate is related to two types of factors- the push factors and the pull factors. In the context of Bangladesh the push factors are identified as low land per capita ratio, the frequent occurrence of natural disasters and the effect of the liberation war. The prime pull factors are cheaper food, higher wages, better education, and health facilities while the secondary pull factors were electricity, drinking water and sewerage (Bhuyan et al. 2001)

According to Alamgir (1973), factors that usually influence rural-urban migration are: (1) pressure of population on agricultural land; (2) land tenure system of the country; (3) underdeveloped agriculture; (4) lack of off- farm employment opportunities in the rural areas; (5) prospects of higher income and employment in the cities; (6) attraction of city life in the form of social amenities like education, recreation, entertainment, shopping centers, medical care etc; (7) breakdown of the traditional social and cultural ties; (8) social and political unrest in the country side; and (9) the desire to remain close to the administrative decision making authority.

These factors are basically the pull and push forces, which seem to have played a prominent role in migration decision in different countries as well as different regions of the same country.

Rural-urban inequalities and inequalities between small and large cities are the prime motivation for migration to the largest cities. Rondenelli (1983) states that per capita income of people living in Bangkok are four times higher than in Thailand's rural areas. Bangkok's average is 232 percent higher than that of the country as a whole. Overall quality of lives is for better in cities than that of rural areas. For example, Rondenelli (1983) further mentions that measurement of physical quality of life based on health, education and social indicators shows that people living in Tanzania's capital city have far better condition than rural people. Similar conclusion holds for Philippines where 96 percent of households in Manila have electricity compared to 28 percent in the country as a whole; 83 percent households in Manila have piped water compared to 40 percent in the rural areas; and half of Manila's households have flush toilet facilities compared to 1.2 percent outside Manila.

According to Todaro (1969), Migration is a selective process. He developed a famous model for rural-urban migration in which the decision to migrate is a function of the wage differentials that exist between urban and rural areas and the probability of finding a job in cities along with the prevalence of higher wages there, which motivates a prospective migrant to finally migrate. Renaud (1981) notes that migrants will go where there are job opportunities and where they will improve their living conditions.

Drakakis-Smith (1987) states that third world transport improvements have resulted in circular migration which really means long term commuting, with the migrants retaining rural home but moving to the city for weeks or months at stretch. This is a common-sense response by the poor who are attempting to obtain the best of both worlds by reducing expensive living cost in the city and retaining rural land revenues for food sources; a process of earnings in the city, spending in the village.

Bhuyan et al (2001) mentions that independent migration by women in the Third World is a result of growing demand in the industrial sector. It nevertheless limited by factors such as women's inability, socio-economic and geographic causes and social and religious norms. In Bangladesh, large number of females have in the recent past migrated to the cities and have been employed in the garments sector following the proliferation of export oriented garments industries requiring female labour. It has been found that about 61 percent of female workers

in garment factories in Dhaka were migrants and 35 percent of such families migrated with their families

Definition of Urban Places: There are two criteria that best define an urban area. These are the size of population of a place and the percentage of non-agricultural population. It is better to apply both the criteria concurrently so as to avoid the difficulties that might arise if neither were used alone. By establishing a minimum population requirement for an urban place, many places can be eliminated that have few inhabitants, even though they have a complex economic structure. By establishing the requirement of a certain percentage of population that must be employed in non-agricultural activities, many largest places can be eliminated to qualify as urban which are large in size but lacking an urban economic structure.

The definition of urban areas in Bangladesh was not uniform in various censuses of the country as urban population is defined on the basis of political criteria. In the 1901 and 1974 censuses, the areas with pourashava or town committee or cantonment area were treated as urban areas. But this definition was relaxed in 1981, 1991, and 2001 censuses. In these later censuses, the pourashava areas, including town committee areas, cantonment areas, and peripheral areas adjacent to demarcated pourashava area especially around the metropolitan city corporation area were identified as urban areas.

According to the redefinition of urban areas in 1981 census, all 460 Thana headquarters were upgraded into upazila and declared as urban areas regardless of the size and character of their population. It is estimated that the redefinition of urban areas contributed 30 percent of the urban growth in 1974-1981 (BBS, 1984 cited in Afsar, 2000).

Definition of Secondary Cities: Rondinelli (1983) classifies the cities into three levels:

- * The metropolis – a large city, usually the national capital of small country (e. g. Lima in Peru) or a major regional capital in a large country (e. g. Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, and Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai in India);
- * Secondary centers – small cities ranging in population from 1 lakh or 25 lakh;
- * The rural-urban interface – small cities or rural growth centers ranging, according to country context, downward in population from 1 lakh.

The upper limit of secondary cities may vary. In highly urbanised countries, the largest city may have 10 million or more people and secondary metropolises may reach two or three million. In countries with low urbanisation, the largest city may not have even one million people.

In the definition of Rondinelli (1983), there is a wide gap between the secondary cities and the rural-urban interface in the above mentioned classification/In this stage, Hardoy and Satterwaite (1986) try to fill this the gap by defining and intermediate urban centers as, the small urban centres which are nucleated settlements with population of between 5000 and 20000 while intermediate cities are nucleated settlements with population of 20000 and more. Interestingly, it is observable that there is no upper limit for the intermediate urban centers. Regarding the upper limit they mention that the distribution between the intermediate urban centre and the large city depends on the scale and type of their contribution to the national production and trade and regional scale provision. Theoretically, this is a question of how many levels are there in the urban hierarchy, which requires further research.

Dynamics of Growth and Development of Secondary Cities

Rondinelli (1983) states that before 1950 the development of the networks of secondary cities failed to appear in the most developing countries. This was either because the spatial implications of national investment policies were ignored or the policies were deliberately designed to contain industrial and commercial activities in one or a few major cities. Little or no attempt was made to create a system of secondary cities that would generate demand for domestically produced goods or make urban services and facilities to a large majority of the population. Significant growth in secondary cities started at the end of colonial rule in the Third World Countries. In some cases, secondary cities were encouraged to grow as colonial administrative posts or transfer or processing centers for exploiting the mineral and agricultural resources in the interior.

All contemporary secondary cities grew as service centers. They provided easy access to commercial or personal services. Most of the largest cities in the developing countries are seaports. On the other hand most secondary cities in the developing world are inland. Thus a physical (site) and the relationship among sites (situation) have controlled the growth of secondary cities throughout the developing countries. Development of transportation networks played an important role in the growth, spatial distribution and functional development of secondary cities. Different modes of transportation had different influences on the growth of secondary cities at different periods in their development.

Rondinelli (1983) concludes that the main stimulations for the growth of secondary cities prior to 1960s were: (a) their favourable physical location and endowment of natural resources; (b) their selection as political or administrative or defense centers; (c) the concentration in them of colonial or foreign investment;

(d) conditions favourable to making them commercial and service centre for their region; (e) the influence of transportation routes and technology; and (f) the impact of government investment in infrastructure and facilities;

Although some cities were planned and their physical location was carefully designed, the large majority of the secondary cities grew from spontaneous actions by individuals reacting to favourable condition.

Characteristics of Secondary Cities: Rondinelli (1983) indicates two types of characteristics of secondary cities. These are the demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

Demographic Characteristics: Secondary cities in developing countries have been growing rapidly in both number and population since 1950, but yet they have played a relatively weak role in absorbing population increases in most developing countries and creating a more balanced spatial distribution of population. In Asia, migration from rural areas and small towns has played a major role in the expansion of primate cities and in the growth of the largest metropolitan areas. But secondary cities in most part of the developing world have absorbed a smaller share of these rural-urban migrants.

Economic and Social Characteristics: Secondary cities tend to have a combination of rural and urban socioeconomic characteristics and they generally perform functions in both urban areas and countryside. Due to location of the secondary cities they have a blend of urban and rural characteristics. They share some social, economic and physical characteristics with both larger metropolitan centers and smaller towns and villages, but they are not competitive with large metropolitan centers, and their industrial and even commercial and service establishments are small in size.

Small and secondary cities have large proportion of their labour force engaged in agriculture, agro-processing, marketing and farm services. Thus they remain dependent on rural hinterlands for agricultural production, which is often very low.

Variations in the economic structures of cities in different size groups may be explained in part by their economies of scale. Cities smaller than 1 lakh may not have sufficient population to support large-scale commercial and manufacturing activities that are dependent on local markets. As cities increase in size they begin to offer economies of scale and proximity that allow larger volume of production and generate demand for goods and services produced than smaller towns and rural villages.

3. Lessons on Migration drawn from the literature reviewed

3.1 Motivation for Migration

Urban population in Bangladesh grew during the last three decades at an annual rate of about 6 percent compared to the rural population growth of just 2 percent per annum. Internal migration has contributed most to the high rate of urban population growth. This trend is likely to continue in the future as well. According to the ESCAP projection rural-urban migration is expected to contribute to about 58 percent of Bangladesh's urban population growth up to 2005.

Migration can take place in different forms such as rural-urban, rural-rural, and urban-urban. But literature shows that large scale migration from rural to urban areas is the most dominant cause of the rapid urban growth in Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2003). Although estimates of total numbers of rural-urban migrants are uncertain, BBS (1997) finds that 7 million rural people migrate to different cities in Bangladesh each year and more than 80 percent of them migrate for economic reasons.

Afsar (2000) finds from her survey that, out of 710 households, all but two and half percent wanted to settle in Dhaka city and around three-fifths of these migrants are surrounded by their kin network, which serves as major fallback in case of crisis such as financial and settlement problems. For permanent migrants, network arrangements are stronger at the place of destination particularly due to their proximity of kinsmen in the same city.

Paul-Majumder (1996, cited in Ahmed, 2003) finds that 21 percent of household heads that come to Dhaka city first found a job almost immediately within 10 days with the help of relatives and friends, and 38 percent got employment after 1 month of their arrival. Nearly 40 percent of women migrants found work within 6 months of their arrival in the place of destination (Huq and Hossain, 1996, cited in Ahmed, 2003).

Intra-village, inter-region inequalities and also inequalities between the large and smaller towns or rural areas are the major motivation for migration in the largest cities. Afsar (2000) also states that the poor migrate due to abject rural poverty and unemployment while the rich farmers, landlord or their sons move out of the village to attend probably better schools or to look for prestigious occupations or getting better health care facilities.

3.2 Migration and Employment

Agriculture is the main source of employment in rural areas, but the prospect of employment of the increasing number of rural labour force in agriculture does not appear to be bright (FFYP, 1997-2002). Nor are the employment opportunities in

the rural non-farm sector enough to absorb the currently unemployed and underemployed people. This growing unemployment and underemployment of the rural people motivates them to migrate to urban destinations where they hope to get jobs. Moreover, the rapid expansion of commercial transport and construction sectors and a few specialised types of manufacturing activities such as readymade garments, leather and shrimp fisheries processing are drawing the youths, and adult men and women from rural areas. Creation of some other labour intensive industries in the export-processing zone also provides work for rural migrants.

Employment opportunities are highly centralised in the large metropolitan cities, particularly in the capital city. Two-fifths of jute mills are located in Dhaka employing one-half of all jute mill workers in the country. Over half of the textile mills and one-third of all registered factories of major industries are located in Dhaka, which accounts for nearly half of Bangladesh's total manufacturing employment. Also, about one-fifth of non-farm economic activities are established in Dhaka, which generate a quarter of employment in the non-farm sector (BBS 1983, BBS 1990 and UN 1987, cited in Afsar, 2000). So migrants are generally capital city oriented and hence the distribution of rural-urban migrants among large and secondary cities is quite uneven in Bangladesh.

3.3 Urbanisation Profile in Bangladesh

At the beginning of the last century, only 2.43 percent of the total population lived in the urban areas. In 1961, too, the proportion of urban population was not very high, just about 5 percent of the total population. Even till independence the growth of urban population was more or less steady. A sharp rise of urban population was observed after independence due to rural-urban migration. The high urban growth between 1974 and 1981 was accounted for by the extended area of urbanisation in 1981 and the recognition of upazilas as urban area. After 1981 till today urban population is experiencing higher growth due to rural-urban migration for better income, and better opportunity for education and health care. Till today, there is a steady rise in urban population with a growth rate of 3.15 percent compared to the rural growth rate of 1.08 percent.

Cities in Bangladesh are now growing competitively, but the capital city is always beyond the reach of other cities. Two other port cities are also following the primate city but keeping a big distance. According to Population census (2001), Dhaka's population is 3 times greater than Chittagong. Similarly, Chittagong's population is two and half times greater than the next largest city Khulna, and Khulna's population is around 2 times greater than the next city Rajshahi. It is a paradox that the population of two cities, B.Barua and Saidpur even decreased

during the last decennial period. It is quite apparent that the largest city always dominates the overall growth of urban population in Bangladesh. In the beginning of the last century, Dhaka contained 18.38 percent of the total urban population and 0.45 percent of the national population. After the independence from Pakistan, Dhaka emerged as the capital city and got momentum in population growth. Due to its functional headquarter and central location, migration of rural people to Dhaka rose sharply. Though Dhaka contributed only 0.45 percent of the total national population in 1901, it increased to 8.65 percent in 2001, which was 37.45 percent of the urban population of the country.

3.4 Secondary Cities in Bangladesh

The number of cities having population between 1 lakh and 10 lakh was stable at two between 1901 and 1951 and rose to 4 in 1961, 6 in 1964 and 13 in 1981. According to the population census (2001) there were 15 pourashavas where the size of population was more than 1 lakh. These pourashavas exclude the 4 statistical metropolitan areas, two new city corporations Barisal and sylhet, and the pourashavas already included in the Dhaka and Chittagong metropolitan areas. There are 5 other pourashavas in Dhaka mega city with population of more than 1lakh, each. These are Narayanganj, Kadamrasul, Savar, Tongi and Gazipur. Up to 1921, there were no intermediate size towns having population between 0.25 lakh to 1 lakh. In 1921, there were only 5 such towns but this number increased to 69 in 1981. The number of cities of the same size recorded in 2001 was 115.

According to the urban hierarchy, the government declared 6 cities including the capital city as city corporations and these cities lie on the top of the urban system. Only the capital city is the mega city and the rest are secondary cities according to the definition of Rondinelli (1983). He has not mentioned the upper threshold of secondary cities but since these cities lie in the higher position in the urban hierarchy, the position of these cities should be above the secondary cities. Moreover, the population threshold should not be the only criterion for defining the cities. There are 64 districts in Bangladesh, which have been playing an important administrative role for a long time. As there are district administrations in the divisional cities, there are 58 district cities other than 6 divisional cities. Of these, two cities are included in Dhaka mega city. Hence there are individual 56 divisional district cities, which act as the blood of the country's administrative system. These cities are also in the top position in the four tiers of decentralised system. But the country shows a greater imbalance of urban population at the district level. Out of these 56 cities, 13 have population more than 1 lakh each.

There are two other cities, Saidpur and Madhabdi, both with population over 1 lakh, but they are not district cities. Among the other district cities, 26 have

population between 80000 and 1 lakh, 16 (each) have population between 25, 000 and 50, 000 and only one has population below 25, 000. Following the above-mentioned definition of Rondinelli, only 13 district cities are the secondary cities. But all the district cities have almost the same social and physical infrastructures and are getting equal opportunities from the government. So function of cities should be an essential criterion in addition to the population threshold for defining the secondary cities. The district cities with population more than 1 lakh may be treated as secondary city type A while the other district cities irrespective of population size may be termed as the secondary city type B. In Bangladesh, the rate of growth in number and population of secondary cities has been relatively slow compared to the large cities.

3.5 Policy Vacuum

Though rapid urbanisation has been going on in Bangladesh since 1971, there is no integrated national urbanisation policy in the successive five year plans. Migration is primarily responsible for the rapid urbanisation process, but little attempt was made to reduce the pace of migration. Due to the lack of appropriate urbanisation and migration policies, the spontaneous process of urbanisation made an uneven distribution of urban population among large and secondary cities. Rural-urban migration is an inevitable phenomenon in Bangladesh. The causes of migration are primarily economic. The relative deprivation and inequalities play important roles in the migration process. The push factors such as poverty, a high population-land ratio, and natural calamities like cyclone, famine and river erosion rendered many people homeless and economically destitute, which compelled them to leave their place of origin. The pull factors such as higher wage rates, amenities and chance for getting better employment opportunities inspired them to migrate to the primate cities as the secondary cities are not capable of attracting them. This led to the growth of slums in large cities, resulting in congestion, overcrowding, shortage of housing, scarcities of urban amenities and basic urban facilities and finally imbalance in ecological system.

So, creation of economic opportunities in the secondary cities is a vital factor to divert the flow of migrants toward the secondary cities. The development of physical and social infrastructure and creation of income generating activities in secondary cities would make them attractive to the rural people who would otherwise migrate to large metropolitan areas. Even, if the rural migrants get comparatively lower income facilities in a secondary city than that of larger cities, they will stay in secondary cities rather than going to the larger cities for at least two reasons. One is that living and opportunity cost in secondary cities are much lower than that in the larger cities, and the other is that the migrants can maintain the rural-urban linkage easily as these cities are nearer to their village homes.

Strengthening of the economic base of secondary cities is essential to generate more employment opportunities. This requires strengthening of their commercial and market functions, especially the informal sector and small-scale enterprises, and increasing the productivity as well as diversity of SMEs. Also, expanding and diversifying the secondary and tertiary sectors may be the most direct and effective way of employment generation that will increase the income of the rural poor, thereby raising internal demand for locally produced goods and services and increasing the capacity of the secondary cities to absorb larger population. Industries and businesses in the secondary cities that are likely to absorb the unemployed should receive the greatest attention in the government's assistance program. Large industries are likely to provide the best opportunities to skilled workers who already have jobs and would most likely be export oriented rather than tied to local demand. In the secondary cities priority should be given, at least in the initial stages, to expand the marketing and commercial functions that already exist and to strengthen the role of the cities as trade and service centers.

For understandable reasons, the country's first city how receives a disproportionately large share of public investment compared to other cities or other urban centers. Even rural sectors are getting more privileges than the secondary cities and other small urban centers.

The secondary cities of type A and B are distributed all over the country. Also, these cities are quite near to the original place of rural migrants and play an important role in rural-urban interfaces. Rural migrants who go to large metropolitan cities to seek jobs will prefer to go to these secondary cities if they have the minimum of opportunities to get work there. In this way, two alarming problems in the urbanisation process of Bangladesh can be minimised. One is that it will be possible to maintain a more balanced distribution of urban population, and the other is that it will be possible for the primate and other large cities to provide urban facilities for their own population.

There has been a revolution in the development of the road network in Bangladesh in the last two decades. Now almost all the districts are well connected with the large cities, particularly with the capital city. The upazila and their growth centers and their hinterlands are also well connected with the district headquarters, which are defined as secondary cities Type A and B. But there is no well-managed or an integrated transport plan. If a good transport plan can be introduced, many people can communicate to the secondary cities from their village home thus saving the cost of urban areas.

Though GOB has no direct policies to tackle migration and address urbanisation, they have many programs for rural development, poverty alleviation and

employment generation, which would reduce the pace of rural-urban migration. But due to over- population, unemployment, high man-land ratio and frequently occurring floods and river erosion, these programs have failed to reduce the migration rate as much as expected up to the present. So attracting rural migrants by the secondary cities may be the best way to handle the internal migration problem in Bangladesh. It is necessary to improve the secondary cities' economies, employment opportunities and infrastructural facilities.

4. Recommendations

Urbanisation should be recognised as an inevitable process consistent with a worldwide pattern. It should also be recognised as a challenge not as a problem. In other words, policy makers should view urbanisation as an important component of the development process.

Economy: Strengthening of the economic base and the creation of employment and income generating activities in secondary cities will be essential. The government may take a number of actions to stimulate the economic activities in the secondary cities. These include:

- (a) Setting up industries in secondary cities will create employment opportunities for rural households by allowing them to commute to industrial jobs in nearby cities. It will also enable them to take part in farm activities on weekends and create numerous linkages with small commercial service and repair establishments in rural towns making it possible for small businesses to develop rural areas. This type of decentralised industrialisation will create entrepreneurial opportunities for rural people, giving them more income to spend on manufactured goods produced in the secondary cities. It is necessary to find out the reasons why the private investors are not getting encouragement to establish industries in BSCIC industrial estates and take appropriate measures.
- (b) Assisting small –scale industries with identifying investment opportunities, providing technical assistance to small-scale entrepreneurs in organizing business, helping them to obtain adequate supporting services, infrastructure, access to financial resources and credit, providing operating assistance and training in management and production and helping them to expand demand and overcome the limitations of small size.
- (c) As the rural migrants mostly manage to find employment in urban informal sectors, it is essential to increase the capacity of informal sectors in the secondary cities.

- (d) Creation of off-farm employment opportunities should be given more emphasis in the secondary cities to deflect people from going to large metropolitan areas.
- (e) Financial incentives and other inducements, for example, allowing loans at concessional interest, must be given to the entrepreneurs who are willing to establish industries in the secondary cities.

Infrastructures

- (f) Development of infrastructures, and decentralization of public services and administrative functions as well as diverting investment from capital city to the secondary cities is essential to attract rural migrants. These include physical infrastructure and social services such as better education, health care service and recreational facilities to enhance people's choice to stay in the secondary cities.
- (g) Development of integrated, appropriate and convenient subsidised transport system can provide rural dwellers easier access to urban employment and amenities without their having to permanently migrate to cities. Integrating the rural areas with the smaller towns and with the big cities should lead to improvement of physical transportation and communication linkages.

Decentralisation and democratisation

- (h) Administrative and financial power should be decentralised, delegated and devolved to the local government so that the secondary city governments can manage their affairs independently and more efficiently without interruption of the central government.
- (i) The stakeholders must be involved in the decision-making and implementation process of local government. Such stakeholders include the private formal sectors, the private informal sectors, NGOs, civil society and beneficiaries. Civil society includes various professionals, intellectuals, women organizations and slum dwellers.
- (j) Allocation of national budgets should not be biased to the first city. The development of secondary cities should be given due emphasis by allocating more budgets for the cities.

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