

TRUE & IMPARTIAL

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Environment: Dhaka and flood flow zones

DR. M. AZIZUR RAHMAN

BANGLADESH is the most populated country in the world, where 950 people live in a square kilometre. Dhaka is the most densely populated city of the country. The population of Dhaka is about 1 crore and 25 lacs which is double the population of Singapore of 60 lacs. In Bangladesh 75% people live in villages while 25% live in towns. Rural to Urban migration is increasing everyday. The rate of urbanisation in Bangladesh is relatively more than that of our neighbouring country India. The density of our city population does not decrease due to rural-to-urban migration. The main reasons for this are the lack of employment, trade and commerce and the related facilities for the life and living in villages. The problem of housing in Dhaka has always been increasing. To solve this housing problem is vital and essential for the city dwellers and for Dhaka in particular. Environment of a city means a variety of things. The problems are like air pollution, standing water, irrigation, environment; related service and lack of integrity, unplanned management, lack of pure water, sewerage problem and absence of open space for recreation and freely drawing one's breaths. Most important tasks at the moment are to create an environment convenient to individuals and families. On the whole we need open space for breathing, inhaling oxygen, exhalation of carbondioxide, natural flood flow zone for artificial water flow etc.

The environment of Dhaka is becoming constricted and harmful in different ways. Open air and space is rare in Dhaka for living, and keeping balance in environment. Many people migrate from villages and small towns to Dhaka, because they can manage jobs and trade and commerce comparatively easily. Corruption, deterioration of law and order situation, weakness in judicial system, lack of political foresight and negative behaviours are some of the factors that pollute the environment of Dhaka. Moreover, unplanned development, traditional

and outdated thoughts, rules, impractical laws in different wings of the government and service-oriented organisations, lack of coordination between different offices and directorates are also responsible for pollution of Dhaka. Town Improvement Act (TI ACT: 1953) was framed about fifty years ago. Before the language movement of 1952 the population of Dhaka was 3 lacs and 36 thousand only which reached 1 crore and 25 lacs in 2009. For the last 58 years the population has increased on average 62.41% or 3,620 times. This increase in population of a town is rare in history. Again, the TI ACT-1953 should have become, invalid

while framing TI Act-1953. The result is that the environment of Dhaka is changing quickly and the problems show an increasing trend.

Sometimes there are obsolete laws including clauses, sub-clauses which can neither be applied nor changed easily. For example this unusual rise of population was not thought earlier. The authorities could not think where commercial areas, residential areas, quarters for government officers and military personnel could be set up. As a result the environment rules have become difficult to apply. During the last caretaker government an order had been passed to the effect that no

the rivers are the same and the rivers flow through China, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh or in other words the whole South Asia. We are doubtful whether Bangladesh alone can form such flood flow environment law. It is because our rivers and their branches are connected with those of China, India and other neighbouring countries. On the one hand there are ecological changes, desertification, salt, fuel and electricity crisis when the neighbouring countries are building barrages to reserve water for dry season exposing Bangladesh and other lower countries to flood. Amidst such regional and global problems how could Bangladesh alone form flood flow law and how will we protect it?

An important factor is that apart from small areas like Sylhet, Chittagong, hilly areas of Mymensingh, Netrokona, Modhupur of Tangail, Mohasthanagar of Bogra and Paharpur of Joypurhat, most of the country including Motijheel of Dhaka depends on China and India for the river network of Bangladesh, the regional flood flow zone. One of the critical reasons for our forming flood flow zone is its complexity and execution problem. Above all lies life, living and livelihood of the people. We cannot destroy most of the collective well-being of the people for the cause of protecting environment. We have to keep in mind that laws are for mankind, man is not for laws. We should cancel TI Act-1953 immediately and reform RAJUK created flood flow law so that we could save the vast community of Bangladesh. We need to protect physical and mental health, protect environment, life and living in good health and so save 15 crore people of Bangladesh. We need to rethink about flood flow zone so that we can save the environment, especially a densely populated city like Dhaka and at the same time think of creating laws which could supplement the practical matters related to human life in Dhaka and its surroundings.

Writer is Vice Chancellor and Chief Adviser, Institute of Policy Research (IPR), Uttara University



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long ago. The conscious and educated people will assess why it still prevails. Besides, specialist opinion is needed for the development of city, its residential and institutional areas, streets, airport, government and private offices, educational institutions, commercial, non-commercial centres and recreational centres. The specialist's opinion may be obtained from doctors, engineers, businessmen, lawyers, environment scientists, social scientists, economists, forest specialists, educationists etc. We are not sure whether these things were considered

educational institution should be set up in residential areas. The matter is complex. These are only a few out of thousands of problems. On the other hand, RAJUK itself fills-in lakes in Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara for which it is now facing the court. In this way RAJUK is making a business of filling-in the lakes and ponds of low lying areas. Again RAJUK made flood flow zone in 2000. It means nobody could undertake any activity that obstructs river flow. It is mentionable that flood flow is not unique and different issue in Bangladesh. The origins of