



“A paradigm shift in Bangladesh’s transport system”

In conversation with
Md Hadiuzzaman, Professor at the
Department of Civil Engineering,
BUET.

TDS: With MRT Line-6 nearing completion and awaiting inauguration, what's your overall impression?

MH: The introduction of a schedule-based mass transport system in Dhaka is a significant milestone. Metro rail offers a safe, regular, and modern transportation option that was previously absent in the city. This development represents a paradigm shift in Bangladesh's transport system, providing a valuable opportunity for passengers traveling from Uttara to Motijheel.

TDS: What are your observations after one year of the partial inauguration of MRT Line 6?



MH: The metro rail aims to provide more than just speedy transportation; it's a town planning tool that encompasses accessibility and connectivity for users. Currently, passengers using the metro for their daily commute require four different modes of transportation. The focus has primarily been on the metro, with around 90,000 commuters currently using it. However, this number is expected to increase significantly, up to four to five times, once it extends to Motijheel, the city center.

To make it accessible to hundreds of thousands of commuters at stations, a feeder service is essential, but it's currently lacking.

One of the main objectives of the metro was to reduce private car usage, but recent research shows that 60% of metro users previously relied on city buses, while only 5% were former private vehicle users. This trend should ideally be the opposite, emphasizing the need to attract private car owners to the comfortable and air-conditioned metro.

Moreover, it is worth noting that a mere 6% of private vehicles occupy a significant 60% of our road space. This statistic underscores the need for promoting the metro system as a compelling alternative to the use of private vehicles.

TDS: Can you share your insights on fare and maintenance issues?

MH: The fare structure of the metro rail is designed to align with the substantial costs associated with its construction and operation, which are comparatively higher than those in other countries. Despite higher fares, people have shifted from city bus services to the metro due to the significant cost associated with wasting time in traffic.

Regarding maintenance, further research is needed. For instance, the Nagpur Metro relies on 60% of its power from solar energy, while our metro is solely electricity-driven.

Conducting continuous training for metro employees, similar to the practices employed with the Delhi metro, is essential for staying updated on the latest maintenance advancements.

The interview was taken by Priyam Paul.

“Prevent haphazard development around the metro stations”

In a conversation with Dr Adil Mohammed Khan, Professor at the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Jahangirnagar University.

TDS: What is your assessment of the current status of MRT in Dhaka with the inauguration of the new phase of MRT Line 6?

ADM: The recent extension of MRT Line 6 from Farmgate to Motijheel signifies a crucial step in relieving Dhaka's notorious traffic congestion. Despite the relatively high fare, it has swiftly become the preferred choice for many middle and lower-income commuters who cannot afford private vehicles. However, the successful operation of this expanded transport system faces significant challenges, primarily due to the limited number of carriages available. As a result, during peak hours, a surge in commuter traffic is expected due to the substantial demand along this route.

The high demand for the metro underscores the need for a diversified and comprehensive transport system. While the metro has gained popularity, it's essential to recognize that no single transport mode, even one as advanced as the metro, can single-handedly address the complex transportation needs of a city. A truly sustainable and efficient transport network should integrate various modes, including metro, BRT (Bus Rapid Transit), well-facilitated bus services, and seamless multimodal communication.

Regrettably, our focus has primarily centered on the expensive metro project while overlooking other critical components of an integrated urban transport system. Neglecting the control of private vehicles, motorcycles, and rickshaws has had a detrimental impact on traffic and overall urban mobility. This imbalance in our approach can be attributed to a misconception that the metro would be a panacea for all our transportation problems, which is far from accurate.

The recent congestion observed at Farmgate due to the Dhaka Expressway ramp highlights the pressing need for comprehensive planning. As more metro stations become operational, the challenges of transporting passengers to and from these stations are evident. Multimodal integration should have been a fundamental consideration during the metro's construction to ensure a holistic and effective urban transport network.

TDS: What impact will it have on urban development?

ADM: In other countries, development of areas near metro stations occurs after the introduction of the metro. In our country, it's the opposite, particularly from Farmgate to Motijheel, where these areas were already developed. Uttara was relatively underdeveloped, and land values increased there with the start of numerous housing projects.

Some efforts related to Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) are visible in Uttara, but absent in other areas. City authorities should implement systematic regulations to prevent haphazard development around the metro stations. Dhaka is densely populated, and its traffic is unruly, so station management should be sophisticated and consider the local context. Foreign consultants who are involved in planning sometimes impose their own country's experiences on ours, which can have a negative impact. Hence, we should value our local experts.

TDS: What recommendations do you

have to make the metro service more people friendly?

ADM: Other countries have successfully introduced special rapid passes and monthly pass schemes tailored to lower and middle-income individuals. This system can also be implemented in our context to benefit a wider range of commuters.



If the market alone drives the development, affluent individuals will occupy spaces near the stations, leading to the displacement of lower and middle-income residents. The metro rail's primary objective would be compromised if gentrification is allowed to occur.

The interview was taken by Priyam Paul

