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FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Metro tragedy exposes fatal supervision failure

The govt must conduct a full independent safety review

We are deeply alarmed by the death of a pedestrian struck by a falling bearing pad from Dhaka's metro rail. But behind this tragic death lies a baffling negligence of supervision by the authorities responsible for public safety. Public infrastructure is more than steel and concrete—it represents a covenant of trust, a promise that the systems designed to improve daily life are, above all, safe.

That covenant was shattered on a street in Dhaka's Farmgate area on Sunday. The falling component killed a 35-year-old man named Abul Kalam Azad. Just a year ago, an identical component fell from a pillar a short distance away. That no one was killed then was a matter of luck. The repetition of such an outrageous failure suggests that the initial incident was treated as a glitch to be managed, rather than a serious warning that should have triggered a comprehensive safety review.

The immediate aftermath of Sunday's incident has followed a predictable script. The authorities suspended metro services, causing widespread disruption. A committee has been formed to investigate. Compensation has been promised to the victim's family. These are administrative reflexes, not solutions. They do little to confront the deeper crisis—lax supervision and weak accountability. The explanations offered so far by the authorities are alarming in their vagueness. The managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL) speculated about "jerkiness of the line," a "construction issue," or a "design flaw." But this uncertainty itself is unacceptable. This is not a minor technicality; it is a component responsible for transferring the entire load of the train and absorbing its vibrations. Its integrity cannot be compromised. Even more troubling are the questions surrounding the investigation. Appointing the former managing director of the metro rail company, who now leads the government's Bridges Division, to head the probe committee is a clear conflict of interest. This is deeply problematic: he held the position of managing director at DMTCL when the previous incident occurred.

The science of elevated rail systems is indeed mature, perfected over a century of global engineering. That a bearing pad could dislodge not once, but twice in Bangladesh, points unequivocally to a grave compromise in either its construction, its design, or more likely, the rigour of its oversight and maintenance. The suggestion from officials that "corrective measures" were taken after the first incident reveals that those measures were insufficient.

The government must immediately run an independent safety review of the entire 21-kilometre line, with its findings made public. Every vulnerable component, every weld, every bearing must be subjected to scrutiny. The death of Abul Kalam Azad is a terrible human cost and a direct result of supervisory failure. This tragedy must be the final warning that forces a reckoning with the integrity of a system upon which millions of lives now depend.

Recurring deaths of animals unacceptable

Gazipur Safari Park plagued with mismanagement, neglect, and lack of expertise

The alarming decline in animal populations at Gazipur Safari Park has once again exposed the scale of mismanagement in one of the country's important conservation sites. Reportedly, at least 37 animals have died or gone missing over the past five years due to negligence and theft. The recent death of the park's last giraffe—an ageing female imported from Africa—has brought the issue to public attention. While officials claim she died of tuberculosis, animal rights activists and wildlife experts see it as the inevitable result of poor veterinary care, inadequate habitat, and a lack of accountability of the authorities.

According to the park's officer-in-charge, several thefts and escapes have occurred in the park in recent years. For instance, two green-winged macaws were stolen in November 2024, three lemurs in March this year, and a nilgai escaped in January, while another fled in 2021. Although the macaws and one lemur were later recovered, these incidents expose the park's poor security. Moreover, the tragic loss of all 13 giraffes—once the park's major attraction—and the deaths of zebras, lions, tigers, and kangaroos over the past few years point to a much deeper problem. While authorities talk about fixing logistical glitches and plans to "strengthen walls" and "install help desks," they continue to ignore the core issue: conservation failure. The absence of professional zookeepers, modern health facilities, and scientifically designed enclosures has left veterinarians overburdened and animals vulnerable to disease and neglect.

Animal welfare advocates argue that the park's vast 3,690 acres of land could have been a model of humane, semi-free wildlife management, but poor planning and lack of professional expertise have turned it into an ambitious project gone wrong. Importing animals without ensuring proper care is not conservation; it is cruelty. Experts point out that such facilities require multidisciplinary management, combining veterinary science, animal behaviour, habitat design, and tourism strategy, which is missing here.

The death of the last giraffe at the park should serve as a wake-up call. Authorities must investigate the park's operations, address structural flaws, and take decisive action against negligence. Most importantly, they should prioritise the welfare of animals—native and foreign alike, and make conservation the park's core mission. Moreover, rather than importing foreign species that struggle to survive in our environment, the park should focus on the country's abundant native wildlife and prioritise their rehabilitation. The environment adviser's proposal for a joint public-private management model for the park deserves serious consideration to ensure better, more professional oversight.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Italy invades Greece

On this day in 1940, Italy, led by Benito Mussolini, invaded Greece from Albania during World War II.

Why we should be worried about the latest revision of DAP

Amirul Rajiv and Naim Ul Hasan are coordinators at the Bangladesh Tree Protection Movement.

AMIRUL RAJIV and NAIM UL HASAN

With an estimated population of more than 2.4 crore people, Dhaka has become Bangladesh's central growth engine, contributing around 40 percent of the country's GDP. The unplanned urban growth of Dhaka came at the cost of the environment, liveability, and sustainability of the city. It ranked as the third least liveable city in the world in 2025, only surpassing the cities in active war zones. This should have been a wake-up call for the policymakers of our country. They should have implemented radical policy measures to fix this dysfunctional city and make the lives of millions of people in the city bearable. However, instead of putting forward progressive and stringent planning policies to save the city, the revised Detailed Area Plan (DAP) 2022-2035 of Dhaka was approved in principle by the interim government last week, despite opposition from urban planners.

After years of unplanned development due to unimplemented master plans, the DAP 2022-2035 marked a positive shift in urban planning when it was gazetted in August 2022. A team of experts, along with the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), conducted research, held numerous meetings and consultations to finalise the document. Despite its limitations, the initial document was a step in the right direction to rescue Dhaka city from its woes. Rather than taking a singular approach for all areas, it took a spatial planning approach locally and contextually by dividing the city into 350 density zones. These zones determined the building heights, area, and units based on existing infrastructure such as road conditions, common facilities, and the character of an area. Within a year of the gazette's publication, Rajuk caved in to the pressure from real estate businesses and landowners, increasing the floor area ratio (FAR) in

some areas.

The floor area ratio has been a point of contention for real estate businesses and construction professionals (architects, engineers, etc) because it determines the volume and floor area of a plot. A larger FAR means a bigger structure can be built on the land, and a larger structure translates into bigger profits for the companies and professionals. On the other hand, the government and urban planners use FAR as a mechanism to control the density of an area based on the utility infrastructure and common facilities

experts, and they produced reports with recommendations for reforms in various areas. Obviously, it came as a shock to us when the government, under pressure from the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (Rehab) and the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), took the initiative of revising the DAP (2022-2035) once more. Ignoring the pleas from environmental and citizens' rights activists, academics, urban planners, and several architects, the government reduced the number of density zones in DAP

would decrease the affordability of the properties. Although it seems like a fair argument, other factors that made real estate unaffordable have been completely ignored. According to various media reports, the provision of allowing black money in the real estate sector has heavily inflated the market in the last decades and taken it out of reach of ordinary citizens. Instead of putting a stop to this issue of black money injection in the real estate sector, the interim government fulfilled Rehab's demand of revising the DAP as a cherry on top.

Real estate businesses and related professionals also argued that the FAR provided according to the density zones in the original DAP is "discriminatory," because it gave a higher FAR to affluent zones, in other words, the option to build more units. However, instead of demanding a reduction in the FAR of the affluent zones to end discrimination, they pushed for increasing the FAR in areas with narrow roads and poor utility services and management. Their demand was anti-people, purely profit-driven, and counterintuitive to any planning principle.

The revision of DAP threatens Dhaka's liveability and sets a dangerous precedent. Without taking the initiative to decentralise Dhaka, the government preferred short-term growth over long-term sustainability. The people who endorse the revised document should ask themselves whether they or future governments will have the capacity to develop the infrastructure to ensure the services to the millions who call Dhaka their home. The city's density is already taking a toll on people's standard of living. Are there any plans to handle the increased population density that will come from increasing the building heights?

Our recent experiences with fire hazards exposed the inadequacies in infrastructure and emergency services. Experts' kept warning about the lack of preparedness against earthquakes. With no clear direction on how to handle the increased risk that will arise from more buildings and increased population density, the revised DAP might as well be the last nail in Dhaka's coffin as a functional city.



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FILE PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

to ensure the quality of life for residents and to preserve the environment. Dhaka needs contractionary measures for its exploding population density, which already exceeds the international standard by a long margin. Whether Rajuk had the willingness to implement the DAP or not, the original document provided an instrument that people and the government could use if they wanted to.

After the July uprising, the interim government assumed power with several reform agendas as priorities. Commissions were formed with

by five times, which increased the FAR significantly in many of the areas. DAP had a provision of revising the document every five years if needed, but the government changed the document twice since its finalisation in 2022, without any sort of technical justification. It begs the question, why was the interim government so eager to revise the DAP, putting the liveability of Dhaka city in jeopardy, even when the matter was not part of their reform agenda?

One of the main arguments Rehab put forward to revise the FAR was that restricting the number of units

The untaught skill of teaching in Bangladesh



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In Bangladesh, university teaching is often seen as a natural extension of academic brilliance. A high-achieving student becomes a lecturer, and it is assumed that their subject knowledge will automatically translate into effective teaching. But this assumption is deeply flawed. Teaching is not just about possessing knowledge; it is about facilitating learning, which requires development. This became clearer to me after participating in a six-week programme at the University of Glasgow designed to help academics grow as teachers. The programme explores questions such as: how does learning work? How do academics develop as teachers? What do the top university teachers do?

Two influential models—Peter Kugel's five stages (1993) and Gerlese Akerlind's five approaches (2007) to teaching development—offer valuable insights into this journey. Though developed independently, these models align remarkably well and together provide a powerful framework for understanding how academics evolve from novice lecturers to transformative professors.

At the beginning of this journey, Kugel describes the "Self" stage, where the teacher is focused on survival—designing courses, preparing lectures, and managing classrooms. Akerlind's corresponding approach is "Content Familiarity," where confidence comes from mastering the subject matter. This is where Bangladeshi lecturers begin, and unfortunately, where many remain.

Kugel's second stage, "Subject,"

is where teachers become fluent in delivering content. Akerlind calls this "Practical Experience." Teaching is still teacher-centred, and learning is passive. This is the dominant mode in most Bangladeshi universities, where lectures are the norm and student engagement is minimal.

The third stage marks a turning point. Teachers begin to notice that students are not all the same; they learn, think and respond differently. Kugel calls this "Student as Receptive," and Akerlind's parallel is "Strategy," where teachers start experimenting with varied methods. This shift from "What am I saying?" to "What are they hearing?" is critical but rarely supported in our institutions.

In the fourth stage, the teacher becomes a facilitator. Kugel describes this as "Student as Active," and Akerlind calls it "Effectiveness for Teacher." Here, student feedback, self-reflection, and peer input become tools for development. This stage is almost absent in Bangladesh, where teaching is rarely evaluated, and reflection is not institutionalised. However, this stage is not without its limitations. Without a focus on concrete learning outcomes, teachers are seen as experts who must "deliver" knowledge, not as coaches who guide students to discover it themselves.

The final stage is the most transformative. Kugel's "Student as Independent" aligns with Akerlind's "Effectiveness for Students." The teacher empowers students to take control of their learning, encouraging them to explore beyond

the syllabus, even into areas the teacher may not have mastered. This is where true learning happens. This shift from teacher comfort to student-learning outcomes marks a profound transformation in teaching philosophy. It requires academics to move beyond satisfaction surveys and embrace the ultimate indicator of learning outcomes.

One of the biggest barriers to achieving the final stage is cultural resistance. In many institutions, the teacher is seen as the unquestioned authority. Student-centred learning is still viewed with suspicion; their feedback is too often dismissed.

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Ultimately, education must be judged not by how well it is delivered, but by what it enables students to achieve. Defining a clear threshold or benchmark for successful learning outcomes might not be an easy task. Yet, without an honest attempt to articulate and assess these outcomes, we risk perpetuating a system that values tradition over transformation.

But the problem runs deeper in Bangladesh. Students, from their first year of university, often shift their focus from academic learning to government job preparation. Coaching centres flourish, offering shortcuts to success in a system where memorisation is rewarded more than

creativity. As a result, academic study is devalued. Even meritorious and well-trained professors find themselves teaching half-engaged classrooms. This disconnect is compounded by politicised teacher recruitment. Appointments are often based on political loyalty rather than academic merit. Many teachers are neither encouraged nor equipped to go through the developmental stages described by Kugel and Akerlind. Subsequently, students do not demand quality teaching, and teachers do not feel compelled or empowered to provide it.

Adding to this crisis is the unregulated expansion of universities and educational institutions. While access to higher education has increased, quality assurance has not kept pace. Many institutions were established without ensuring qualified teachers or adequate infrastructure. This rapid expansion has also made political considerations more entrenched in faculty recruitment and institutional governance. In such a landscape, the space for pedagogical innovation and reflective teaching has shrunk even further.

To break this cycle, we must normalise developing teaching. Pedagogical training should be embedded in academics' lives—not treated as optional, but as a professional obligation. Universities must celebrate teaching excellence over research output. Most importantly, teaching development must be linked to career progression. When promotions and recognition depend on teaching quality, faculty will have a reason to engage.

Structured teaching development can transform one's approach and offer not just a roadmap for development, but a mirror to reflect on our own teaching journeys. We can continue with outdated models of teaching, or we can embrace a future where academics are supported to grow as teachers.