

UAP incident shows systemic erosion of academic integrity



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Academic freedom—the right to teach, study, pursue knowledge or research without unreasonable interference—is often perceived through a narrow lens in our country. The dismissal or silencing of a teacher practising this right, often has much deeper and potentially dangerous implications. When academic freedom is attacked in one place, it sends a message far beyond the individual concerned. If one teacher can be punished, cornered, or publicly humiliated, it becomes a warning to thousands of others. The damage, then, is not individual; it is systemic. In Bangladesh, political, economic, social, and cultural forces frequently converge to create an increasingly hostile environment for teachers, researchers, and students alike.

Traditionally, the gravest threat to academic freedom comes from the state. When governments restrict dissent, criminalise speech, or politicise education, academic life becomes fragile. Bangladesh experienced this acutely during Sheikh Hasina's rule, when teachers were jailed, harassed under the Digital Security Act, 2018, subjected to surveillance and intimidation simply for expressing opinions or criticising injustice. Speaking out—whether inside or outside the classroom—became a high-risk act.

However, state repression is only one part of the picture. Neoliberal capitalism has also played a decisive role. Since education has been commodified and reduced to a form of skill training, disciplines that are not immediately “marketable”—promising immediate lucrative job opportunities—have come under pressure. Subjects that encourage critical thinking, social analysis, or dissent are increasingly seen as unproductive or even dangerous. Over time, this creates a social perception that certain disciplines—and by extension, their teachers—are dispensable.

The freedom to teach, research, and even attract students gradually erodes.

This is compounded by the rise of social and cultural authoritarianism. When decisions about what should be taught, who should teach, and who should study are influenced not by academic standards but by religious sentiment, political allegiance, or pressure from organised groups, academic integrity collapses. Universities cease to be spaces that promote inquisitiveness and become battlegrounds for moral policing and ideological control.

The consequences of this erosion are not confined to higher education. When academic freedom is damaged at the tertiary level, its effects trickle downwards—to secondary, primary, and even pre-primary education. Fear, conformity, and self-censorship become normalised across the entire education system.

However, academic freedom is not destroyed only by dismissals of teachers. There are many quieter, bureaucratic ways to strangle it. In South Asia, we inherited colonial legal and administrative structures, including the University Grants Commission (UGC) model, which continues to enable excessive control over universities. These structures, combined with neoliberal “quality assurance” frameworks shaped by international financial and development institutions, often force knowledge into narrow, standardised moulds. Under the guise of maintaining quality, they limit intellectual diversity and autonomy.

At the institutional level, pressures are both overt and subtle. Teachers may be told what they can or cannot teach. More commonly, they are punished for being vocal against injustice in society or governance failures—activities that may not be part of their formal academic duties but are inseparable from the role of an academic. Over the past 15–16 years,

we have seen teachers being imprisoned, sued, and harassed for expressing opinions. Some have been repeatedly remanded, their dignity and security systematically stripped away.

In extreme cases, academic freedom has been met with outright violence. The enforced disappearance of researcher Mubashar Hasan because of his research topic represents one of the most brutal assaults on academic inquiry imaginable. Others have lost their jobs, faced politically motivated cases, or endured physical attacks. There have been instances where progressive teachers and writers were hacked to death in the past. Students, too, have been targeted—arrested, detained, and prosecuted simply for expressing views.

There are also less visible forms of coercion.

students, alumni, and sections of the general public are engaging in intimidation, harassment, and physical aggression against teachers.

Elected student representatives have stormed offices, threatened administrators, and publicly humiliated faculty members. Sometimes, teachers have been obstructed from teaching certain subjects. Online spaces have become arenas of relentless cyberbullying, misinformation, and character assassination. Academics are routinely delegitimised through coordinated hate campaigns that twist words and fabricate allegations.

This climate has led to a disturbing conclusion: academic freedom in Bangladesh is virtually non-existent. However, at this

accountability. When due process collapses, no one—teacher, student, or administrator—has real rights. Besides, trust between teachers and students, which is central to any functioning classroom, disintegrates.

This breakdown has been actively encouraged. Violence, intimidation, and humiliation have gone unchecked, sometimes even tacitly endorsed by the highest authorities. As a result, fear has become the organising principle of academic life.

The termination of Layeqa Bashir and ASM Mohsin at the University of Asia Pacific (UAP) must be seen in this context. This was not an isolated incident but the culmination of 17 months of unchecked violations of academic freedom and due process. The spectacle of mobs forcing administrative decisions without investigation sets a terrifying precedent.

By allowing this to happen, the UAP has inflicted lasting damage on its own credibility. Many teachers may now choose to leave this profession, recognising that their rights are unprotected and that university administrations are either unwilling or incapable of acting as administrators at all.

This problem extends far beyond one university. From Chattogram to Rajshahi, from Jahangirnagar to Dhaka University, and across numerous private universities, the pattern is the same. Student groups linked to political organisations have simply replaced earlier political actors, who once gagged academic freedom on campuses.

University administrations, the UGC, and the Ministry of Education all bear responsibility. In the case of UAP, the UGC was informed early and urged to intervene, but they failed to act. This inaction has contributed directly to the deterioration of academic freedom at a moment when, after the July uprising, many hoped for meaningful change.

Instead of qualitative improvement, we are witnessing qualitative decline. For institutions of higher learning, this is an ominous warning. If administrations cannot govern, they should step aside. Otherwise, universities will soon be run not by academic principles but by intimidation and mob influence.

Academic freedom cannot survive in such conditions. And without academic freedom, universities lose their very reason for existence.



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

Administrative systems are often designed to wear teachers down by delaying promotions, denying leave, manipulating housing, and creating an atmosphere in which survival depends on obedience. This breeds self-censorship, where conformity becomes a strategy for safety.

While these patterns were stark during the Awami League era, the situation has not improved since. What has changed is the nature of the perpetrators. Academic freedom is no longer violated only by the state or university administrations. Increasingly,

point, it is also crucial to clarify what academic freedom does not mean. It does not protect hate speech, incitement to violence, or actions that endanger the lives and freedoms of others. Such acts fall outside the bounds of academic freedom and must be addressed through due process.

The absence of due process is, in fact, one of the most damaging aspects of the current crisis. Over the past 17 months, we have repeatedly seen instant punishment being meted out based on mere accusations and mob pressure, without investigation or

ADP downsize: Why health and education are taking the hardest hits



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NAWSHAD AHMED

In the tradition of reviewing the performance of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) at the mid-point of each fiscal year, the National Economic Council (NEC) recently revised the total ADP allocation. The NEC has downsized the ADP by about 12.5 percent, to Tk 208,935 crore (3.3 percent of GDP) from its original budget allocation of Tk 230,000 crore (3.7 percent of GDP). This amount includes Tk 8,935 crore from autonomous bodies and corporations' own funds. Excluding this amount, out of Tk 2 lakh crore, Tk 128,000 crore is expected to come from domestic sources, and Tk 72,000 crore is to be financed from foreign sources. Out of the total cut of Tk 30,000 crore in the revised ADP, Tk 16,000 crore cut is from

and higher education, reduced by 55 percent from the original allocation of Tk 28,557 crore. The slow implementation rates of the two biggest social sectors, over the first six months of the current financial year, prompted the NEC to cut down their allocation in fear of underutilisation, which may improve from its original budget allocation rate at the end of the year. While this makes immediate sense, the underlying causes of historically low ADP implementation of these two sectors should be assessed properly and measures should be taken to ramp up the performance of the two prime social sectors in the country in future.

The Revised Annual Development Programme (RADP) consists a total

amenities received Tk 22,730 crore (10.87 percent), while education received Tk 18,550 crore (8.87 percent), and local government and rural development were allocated Tk 15,142 crore (7.24 percent).

Notably, the local government division received the highest allocation of Tk 37,534 crore in the RADP, which includes social safety net programmes and other community-based interventions focusing on poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and operation and maintenance in city corporations, municipalities, and unions.

The substantially reduced allocations for health and education in the RADP could significantly affect the population. Several ongoing projects—such as the establishment of cancer, kidney, and heart treatment centres in eight divisional cities and 500-bed hospitals in Jashore, Cox's Bazar, and Pabna—will likely experience major delays in construction work and equipment procurement, resulting in locals not receiving essential medical services in the near future. These critical health initiatives should aim to resume work early in the next fiscal year, given that low-income families cannot access treatment for cancer, kidney and heart conditions at private hospitals due to high costs of service.

Budget cuts in the education sector could push more children out of school. The trend already did much damage during the Covid pandemic, when parents either shifted children from private schools to public schools or madrasas, or took them out of school altogether. Lower expenditure in the education sector may give rise to this tendency once more. Meanwhile, major infrastructural deficiencies exist within government-run educational institutions and training facilities. Additional classrooms are necessary to accommodate students and a lower student-teacher ratio is needed to enable a conducive learning environment. More teachers should also be recruited to this end. A reduced budget for education in the RADP will likely delay the achievement of targeted improvement in the sector.

While reduced allocation is likely to impact the performance of the health and education sectors, the substantial increase in allocation

for the local government division may facilitate the creation and improvement of essential infrastructure and services in the city corporations, municipalities, upazilas, and union parishads.

Although no basic reform in local

governance is expected over the next six months, ongoing local-level projects (some dependent on donor assistance) will benefit from timely funding and technical and managerial support. Many of these projects/programmes

will also contribute to poverty alleviation through employment generation. Ultimately, securing timely development benefits and delivery of expected public services depend on a successful execution of the ADP.

Several sectors have been hit hard by the ADP downsizing, among which health is losing much at a 74 percent reduction from its original allocation of Tk 18,148 crore. This is followed by secondary and higher education, reduced by 55 percent from the original allocation of Tk 28,557 crore.

domestic financing while Tk 14,000 crore is cut from foreign sources.

Now, what triggered the ADP budget cut in the first place? Three traditional factors are at play here: 1) slow spending; 2) lower than expected revenue mobilisation; and 3) slower external fund flow. But another factor has emerged, which is the “shortage of projects” mentioned by Planning Adviser Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud at a media briefing. The ADP spending in the first six months of the current fiscal year reached Tk 41,876 crore, which was only 17.54 percent of the total ADP budget.

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of 1,330 projects, including 1,108 investment projects, 35 feasibility studies, and 121 technical assistance projects. Another 66 projects are being implemented by autonomous bodies and corporations, using their own funds.

In the RADP, 60.54 percent of the total allocation has been earmarked for five sectors: transport and communication, power and energy, housing and community amenities, education, and local government and rural development. The transport and communication sector received the highest allocation of Tk 38,500 crore, or 18.42 percent of the total RADP. The power and energy sector received the second-highest allocation of Tk 26,186 crore, or 12.53 percent of the total RADP.

The housing and community

BANGLADESH COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS & SURGEONS (BCPS)
67, Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani, Mohakhali, Dhaka.

INVITATION FOR TENDER

Date: - 29/01/2026

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
2. Agency	Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS)
3. Procuring Entity Name	Secretary, BCPS, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.
4. Invitation for / Tender Package Name	Supply of SUV (Sport Utility Vehicle)
5. Tender Ref. No & Date	BCPS /CAR/916/2026/ Date- 29/01/2026
6. Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (As per PPR-8)
7. Budget and Source of Funds	BCPS Own Fund Package Name BCPS/CAR/917/ 2026
8. Tender Publication Date	29/01/2026
9. Tender Last Selling Date	15/02/2026 at 02:00 P.M.
10. Tender Last Submission /Dropping/ Closing Date and Time	16/02/2026 at 12:00 P.M.
11. Place of Selling and Receiving/Dropping Tender Documents	Office of the Secretary, BCPS, Mohakhali, Dhaka.
12. Tender Opening Date , Time and Place	16/02/2026 at 02:00 P.M., Office of the Secretary, BCPS, Mohakhali, Dhaka. In presence of Tenderer if any.
13. Place, Date and Time of Pre-Tender / Pre- bid Meeting	Place: Office of the Secretary, BCPS, Mohakhali, Dhaka. Date: 05/02/2026, Time at 12:30 P.M.
14. Eligibility of Tenderers	1. The Tenderer shall have minimum of years of general experience in supply of similar goods and related service as Manufacturer/ Supplier shall be 03(three) years. 2. The minimum amount of credit line/credit facility/ liquid assets shall be Tk- 65 lacs.
15. Brief Description of Goods and Related Services	Stated in Tender document/ As per TDS. The items will be accepted after considering suppliers sample.
16. Guarantee / Warranty & after sales service	The SUV will be brand new (0 mileage) and should be in good condition during use. Payment will be made as per quoted rate after supply of the items and submission of bill.
17. Price of Tender Documents Taka	Taka 2000/- (Two Thousand Taka) only in cash (Non-refundable).
18. The Tender Security & Completion time	Tender Security Amounts in Bangladeshi Taka will be 3% of the total quoted price. Completion time in weeks: 06 weeks.
19. Name & Designation of Inviting Tender	Prof. Abul Bashar Md. Jamal, Secretary, Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS).
20. Address and Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS) 67 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212. Phone No.222295006, 222284189 Web. www.bcps.edu.bd, Email: bcps@bcps.edu.bd

The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders without assigning any reason.

(Professor Abul Bashar Md. Jamal)
 Secretary, BCPS
 Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.

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