



Safer, Earthquake-Resistant Construction will be the New Norm in a Growing Dhaka

By Dr. Kit Miyamoto, CEO, Miyamoto International and California Seismic Safety Commissioner

Dhaka is on track to become the fourth most populous city in the world by 2030, yet unsafe construction practices continue to put the expected population of 28 million at alarming risk – especially if an earthquake occurs along the two major fault lines just 60 km from the city.

Last month, Bangladesh's *The Daily Star* published two important articles about Dhaka's earthquake risk – an [article on early warning systems](#) by Dr. Dhiman Ranjan Mondal and an [interview about unsafe construction practices](#) with Dr. Jamilur Reza Choudhury.

Together, the articles highlight a major safety problem for Dhaka residents – the threat of a major earthquake, coupled with a lack of adherence to the Bangladesh National Building Code. This reality means that unsafe buildings and high-rise structures go up without any regard for simple building standards that could prevent catastrophic collapse and save thousands of lives.

As Dr. Choudhury mentioned, RAJUK has been named the regulatory agency in charge of enforcing the Building Code in Dhaka. Citywide efforts to improve compliance are underway in collaboration with institutions like BUET. In 2018, the [World Bank](#), [Miyamoto International](#) and [RTI International](#) partnered with RAJUK to improve construction review and enforcement, including disaster risk management and electronic permitting systems.

This summer, the Ministry of Housing and Public Works and RAJUK approved the formation of an Urban Resilience Unit (URU) – which will respond to emergencies, reinforce building approval systems and create a risk-free environment that everyone in Dhaka will benefit from. The URU will also help low, medium and high-profit projects access financial capital to build the right way – with the correct materials, using seismic-resistant practices and, most importantly, in compliance with the National Building Code.

Most contractors and building owners believe it is too expensive to incorporate earthquake-proof designs, but this is not true. With simple, cost-effective solutions and proper technical training for designers and builders, code compliance is a negligible increase to total expenses. And, it will lead to a longer-lasting structure that may not need as many repairs nor expensive reconstruction in the event of an earthquake.

As a structural engineering firm with experience responding to over 100 earthquakes worldwide, Miyamoto International provides training to government, engineers and students – the future of Dhaka.

In a rapidly growing city, it is the responsibility of everyone to understand the importance of safe structures – ask your landlord if your building is compliant, or request your contractor build to code. With the right training and support from the government *and* the public – building by building – we can create a safer Dhaka. It is not difficult, it seems.

For more information:

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