

Swanky Bashundhara City set to open today



SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Bashundhara City, the swanky shopping mall one of its kind, opens for customers today.

The mall does not only offer shopping opportunities but also different entertainment facilities to visitors. The authorities claim it is a unique mix of commerce and recreation.

However, many shops are yet to get ready to greet customers on the very first day as only

around 500 of the total 29,000 units on six levels have completed interior decor

"At least 1,200 shops are undergoing decoration," said TIM Latiful Hussain, resident director of Bashundhara City Developers Ltd (BCDL). He said it might take the mall until early next year to run in full swing.

"In fact, we expected the shop owners to finish interior work much earlier," Hussain said. "But sometimes I feel that they are trying to do too much of makeover."

Moreover, a good number of shop owners are expatriate Bangladeshis who bought the shops and went abroad.

"They are quite slow in decorating the shops," he said.

However, Hussain said the ongoing interior work will not create any hindrance to shoppers.

"We are allowing shop owners to do the decoration work only at night and clean the area after work so that it does not disturb others," said Mohd. Ahsanullah, executive director of the BCDL.

Formally inaugurated by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on August 5, the mall was initially planned to open for the general public on September 10.

"However, we shifted the date to October 4 at the request of many shop owners," said the resident director.

"We hope to make good business on the eve of the Puja and Eid," said Farid Ahmed of Western Music. But he thinks the

incomplete shops will pose inconvenience for customers.

Although Shoppers may sulk a little at the thought of the incomplete shops, movie buffs need not worry as the multi-screen movie theatre with digital sound system will be opened on October 9.

Each of the three sections of the theatre that can accommodate 262 people will offer tickets at different prices. Each ticket for the shows before 3pm will cost Tk 95 for the premium seats and Tk 150 for the VIP seats. Evening show tickets cost Tk 175 a piece

for the premium and Tk 250 for the VIP seats. However, prices will be even higher for blockbuster movies. They cost Tk 125 and Tk 175 for the matinee show and Tk 225 and Tk 300 for the evening show.

The theme park inside the mall is also all set for the kiddies to have fun time. It will cost Tk 150 for a child to enter the park and enjoy all the nine rides including the magic carpet of Ali Baba. The video game corner is also ready for teens to enjoy.

Mugging in city on rise



A policeman searches the bag of a student with metal detector as the law enforcers have beefed up security at different points in the city.

SULTANA RAHMAN

Mugging is on an alarming rise in the city despite introduction of a number of crime-busting elite forces over the last few months.

Ahead of Durga Puja, Ramadan and Eid, criminals are flexing their muscles and committing crimes right under the nose of the law enforcement agencies.

Residents are falling victims to mugging every day at different city points and the police records also show an increasing trend of such crimes over the last few months.

According to sources at the Police Headquarters, 140 mugging cases were recorded in different police stations in Dhaka between August 15 and September 20. The number of mugging was only 62 from July 1 to mid-August.

The actual figure of such crimes may be much higher as most of the victims do not report to the police station, sources claimed.

In a bid to stop law and order

downside the government has deployed special forces like Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Cobra and Cheetah now conducting regular raids on the dens of the lawbreakers. But the situation hardly changed.

"On Thursday evening, three muggers boarding a CNG scooter snatched my bag in a flash while I was travelling by a rickshaw near Baitul Mukarram mosque. I informed the police about the incident but they did nothing," said Shahed Maruf who filed a general diary with Motijheel Police Station.

During the last few days a number of snatching incidents took place in Dhanmondi area especially on road number 2 and 3 next to Science Laboratory Police Box, local residents alleged. The snatchers often apply various techniques of mugging.

"Some guys called me as if they are my friends or acquaintance. When I came close to them, one of them pointed a revolver at me and asked me to give everything," said Noton who was intercepted by a gang on Dhanmondi road no 8 last week.

Noton was injured as the muggers shot him though he gave them everything he had at that moment. He lodged a case with Dhanmondi Police Station in this connection.

Local residents said some identified groups of muggers are active in the area.

"Most of the mugging incidents take place in the evening and the muggers target pedestrians who seem to be rich," said Iftakhar Ahmed of Dhanmondi who witnessed several incidents from the balcony of his house. "I called Dhanmondi police two times but none came to nab the muggers or investigate the incidents," he alleged.

In most cases, the police fail to recover the things snatched by muggers from pedestrians and arrest the criminals. "So far we have no success in recovering such things," admitted a Sub Inspector (SI) at the Motijheel Police Station.

He however said the police try to find out the CNG autorickshaw or any type of vehicles used by muggers if the victim provides

them with the number of the vehicle.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) sources said they have taken initiatives ahead of the Ramadan to check mugging, extortion and other criminal activities in the city.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Shahudul Haq told the Star City that the police were active to stop such crimes to ensure security of people. "We urge the people to inform the police about the incidents and help us arrest the criminals."

DMP Commissioner Ashraf Huda said, "Before Eid, 450 to 500 additional policemen will be deployed to patrol the city and check crimes specially snatching."

According to Home ministry officials, the new anticrime force Cheetah will act like other elite forces including Rab under DMP. Initially, four such teams, each comprising 10 members will swing into action in the crime-prone zones. Both uniformed and plain-clothes policemen will be deployed, they added.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.



"Bangladesh is a successful nation"

-- Khaleda Zia
Prime Minister
Said on September 28 at a public gathering at Comilla
Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"Our definition of human rights seem to differ widely with Bangladesh Railway's definition of human rights"

-- Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury
Commented at a protest rally regarding Bangladesh Railway's allotment of land at nominal prices to Bangladesh Manobadhikar Shangstha on September 26.
Source: Prothom Alo

"Now in the ruling alliance, the party (Jamaat-e-Islami), by using its influence, is smuggling arms through Chittagong Port and using those to eliminate pro-liberation forces. They have the clearance from BNP"



-- Motia Chowdhury
Awami League Presidium Member
Alleged while addressing a public meeting at Nilphamari on September 28.
Source: The Daily Star

"We only arrest the alleged suspects, but journalists write about mass public arrests."

-- Rafiqul Islam
Officer-In-Charge Motijheel Police Station
Told journalists on September 27, expressing his disappointment on newspaper reports on arrests under section 54 of CrPC.
Source: Prothom Alo



"I tried to establish a new party (BNP) free from criminal activities but the party (BNP) derailed from its previous track due to mistakes of the leadership"

-- Prof. A. Q. M. Baddrudza
Chief of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB)
Replied when asked whether he committed any mistakes in the past at a press conference on September 28.
Source: The Daily Star

WB asks for master plan to fund Eastern Bypass

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The implementation of the Eastern Bypass Project awaits a master plan for the extended new city in eastern Dhaka as the World Bank (WB) has set a precondition to submit such a plan for funding the Tk 2,500 crore project.

The WB sought a plan for the new city that would develop because of the Eastern Bypass as experts believe it could be another concrete jungle in the eastern side of Dhaka city unless a well-designed city plan is prepared.

A delegation of the WB led by its Country Director Christine I Wallich at a meeting with LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan on September 16 discussed the issues including the funding and master plan of the city.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board (DTCB) has been asked by the higher authority to prepare a master plan for the extended city.

"We have already prepared a macro-plan but we have not yet received any formal letter from the Prime Minister's Office to submit it," said director of DTCB.

While preparing the plan, DTCB examined the surveys done on the city development under Eastern Bypass Project by Halco and Fox, Japan International Co-operation Agency and International Infrastructure Facilitation Centre.

DTCB suggest that private holding companies and government could jointly work for the development of the city with the government playing the major role. A Dhaka United Development Authority could be formed to manage it.

As some developers have already started buying lands in the Eastern Bypass area, it is necessary to have a master plan for proper land management in the area.

"The city would grow in the eastern Dhaka immediately after the Eastern Bypass and embankment are built. The new city should have a master plan otherwise this would be an unplanned area like the existing city," said a WB official. "It may become a big slum."

"The Eastern Bypass and embankment may take 3-4 years to complete but the new city should be built as an ideal city which may take 10-15 years," the WB official said.

The huge project needs a separate authority like that formed for the construction of Jamuna Bridge. Private companies may be engaged to ensure all

civic amenities like water, electricity, sewerage and drainage in the area, WB officials think.

The Eastern Bypass Project was taken by water resource ministry in 1998 but due to unavailability of funds, it could not be implemented. The project's estimated cost is Tk 2476 crore, according to project concept paper.

The project will protect the city from floodwater of Balu river covering Tongi Bridge to Demra road. Total area of the project is 124 square km. A 30km flood protection dam will be built from Tongi railway bridge to Kanchpur Bridge under the project.

The original project also included planned Dhaka city circular railway and road. Already 70 hectares of land has been acquired for this project.

City planners believe traffic congestion in the city will be

eased after the construction of the Eastern Bypass. The transports from northern and southern parts of the country will be able to bypass Dhaka through Tongi-Demra road.

The project officers of Water Development Board said four pump-houses will be built to pump out the stagnant water of city. Sluice-gate and drainage system would cost Tk 1000 crore, embankment Tk 800 crore and the bypass road Tk 700 crore.

On July 29 this year, a visiting team of Asian Development Bank at a meeting with Communications Minister Nazmul Huda in Dhaka expressed interest in the project for the protection of Dhaka city from floods.



A bird's eye view of the eastern part of Dhaka where the Eastern Bypass will be built.