

UNDERGROUND METRO

First one by 2026

Mass transit company hopes to start construction in July

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Construction of the country's first underground railway may start in July with funds from Japan.

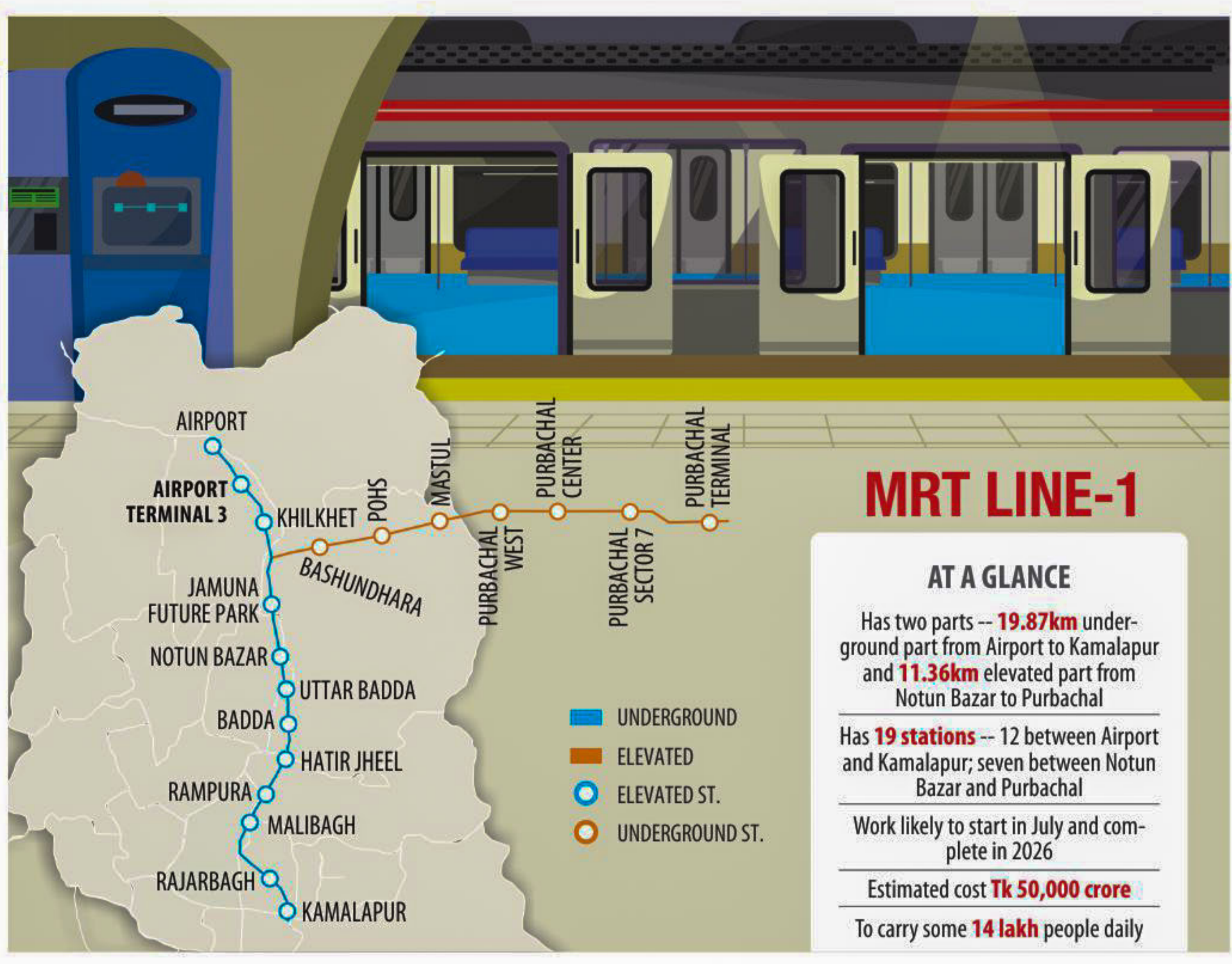
Named MRT Line-1, this track will link the capital's airport and Kamalapur. It will also have an elevated part to connect Purbachal with Notun Bazar. The project deadline is 2026.

The line will also link the proposed Terminal-3 of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport so passengers can travel to most parts of the country using the route.

It will carry an estimated 14 lakh people a day.

The MRT Line-1 is second among the five Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) lines to be built under state-owned Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd.

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Bus easier, cheaper

Point out transport experts as metro rail project gets priority

TAWFIQUE ALI

Once built two decades from now, the five metro rail lines costing around \$27.6 billion would serve only 11.5 percent of city passengers, said experts citing the capital's transport master plan.

But if only \$1 billion is spent for streamlining bus services, it will serve 40 percent of the passengers by the same time, said the draft of the final report on updating Dhaka's Detailed Area Plan, citing revised strategic transport plan (RSTP) valid from 2015 to 2035.

"In fact, rationalisation of bus service holds the key to resolving the capital city's transport demand and horrendous traffic chaos," said SM Salehuddin, a transport expert on the committee for rationalising bus routes and disciplining the city's public transport system.

The estimated cost for building the five metro lines, according to the city's RSTP, is \$27.6 billion (Tk 2.32 lakh crore), said the draft. It excludes the operation and maintenance costs.

Streamlining -- disciplining, coordinating and synchronising -- bus services and routes would cost \$1 billion, said the report.

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Dhaka into last four

SPORTS REPORTER

The penultimate phase of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) closed with Shakib Al Hasan's Dhaka Dynamites becoming the last team to ensure a spot in the final four following a six-wicket win over Khulna Titans in the final match of the group phase at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

In the day's first game, defending champions Rangpur Riders outplayed Comilla Victorians and registered a comprehensive

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Quiet, cheerful talk over tea

PM discusses no politics, exchanges pleasantries with allies; Oikyafront skips

RASHIDUL HASAN

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's tea party at the Gono Bhaban yesterday was a pleasant gathering of a section of politicians.

The PM and all the other political leaders who attended the programme were in a light-hearted mood and there was no serious discussion. A smiling Hasina went around different tables, enquiring about the well-being of her guests and taking photographs with them.

She hosted the programme for the leaders of political alliances and organisations who had joined dialogues with her before the 11th general election.

According to sources at the Prime Minister's Office, 54 political leaders were invited to the hour-long event that



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Back to cold-war era?

Russia follows US in suspending nuclear deal

AGENCIES

President Vladimir Putin yesterday said Russia was suspending its participation in a key Cold War-era missile treaty in a mirror response to a US move, triggering fears of a new arms race.

Moscow and Washington have long accused the other of violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces agreement, which was signed in 1987 and resolved a crisis over Soviet missiles.

President Donald Trump last year announced plans to withdraw unless Russia fulfilled its obligations.

"Our American partners have announced they are suspending their participation in the deal, and we are also suspending our participation," Putin said of the agreement, following a US deadline for cooperation.

Putin said during a televised meeting with foreign and defence ministers Sergei Lavrov and Sergei Shoigu that Russia would no longer initiate talks with the US on disarmament.

"We will wait until our partners have matured enough to conduct an equal, meaningful dialogue with us on this important topic," the president said.

Brokered by US president Ronald Reagan with last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the treaty ended a super-power buildup of warheads that had frightened Europeans.

It banned ground-launched missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres (300 to 3,400 miles).

The deal addressed Soviet nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles targeting Western capitals, but put no restrictions on other major military actors such as China.

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Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev sign the INF Treaty at the White House on December 8, 1987. PHOTO: RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

DNCC MAYORAL RACE

Shafin's polls hope dashed

EC scraps JP aspirant's nomination papers for defaulting on loan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday rejected the nomination papers of Jatiya Party nominated mayoral candidate Shafin Ahmed for the Dhaka North City Corporation by-polls because he had defaulted on bank loans.

It accepted nomination papers of Atiqul Islam of Awami League, Anisur Rahman Dewan of National People's Party, Bobby Hazzaz of Nationalist Democratic Movement, Shahin Khan of Progressive Democratic Party and Abdur Rahim, an independent.

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