

Metro rail test run likely this month

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60,000 people an hour, reducing travel time from Uttara to Motijheel to less than an hour despite having 16 stations. It now takes about two hours to travel the distance on a regular day. The first set of metro trains reached Dhaka on April 21 from Japan, registering a major development for the fast-track project of the government. The second set reached Mongla Port yesterday.

Contacted, MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd, the executing agency of the project, said his company has yet to receive the cars as the contractor is still testing them.

After that, an integrated test, including a test run, of the train will be carried out. "During the test run, the train would be operated on all tracks inside the depot and then on the viaducts," he told The Daily Star on Saturday.

"During the test, people from high-rise buildings will be able to see the operation of metro trains," he said.

Asked when exactly the test run will begin, he said the road transport and bridges minister will make the announcement.

However, officials concerned said they were asked to complete their preparation by May 24. "The higher authority wants to start the test run this month," one of them said, wishing not to be named.

Another top official of the DMTC said the process may get delayed because not all the Indian engineers

involved in the process could reach Dhaka.

"The process may be delayed as people's movement from India to Bangladesh remains suspended," he said, wishing anonymity.

The original implementation period of the project was 2012-2024. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina later directed that metro services from Uttara to Agargaon be made operational by 2019, and from Agargaon to Motijheel by 2020.

Failing to meet the deadline, the authorities in May 2019 said the project would be launched on December 16, 2021, as the country celebrates the golden jubilee of its independence.

But the authorities are unlikely to meet the deadline for early commissioning of metro rail in December this year due to the pandemic.

METRO SITE ABUZZ
The construction site of the much-anticipated metro rail in Uttara was buzzing with activities.

Some five to six workers were painting the rail tracks at Uttara North Station around noon on Saturday.

"We are giving the paint for the third and final time," one of the workers said as this correspondent reached there, climbing two floors of the station being constructed.

Three to four groups of workers were seen busy with other tasks.

On the first floor, some engineers and workers were busy working on one of the four escalators there. There

will be stairs and elevators.

Overhead Catenary System (OCS), which consists of wires over the rail tracks, has already been installed. Commissioning of the OCS inside the depot and nearby lines have been done.

Engineers and workers were busy at Uttara Central Station too. Around 2,300 to 2,400 workers were employed in the first phase - between Uttara and Agargaon.

The development takes place even as the country battles the second wave of Covid-19. It is likely that the country will enter the metro rail era next year.

The overall progress of the project was 63.26 percent in April.

The first phase from Uttara to Agargaon saw 84.79 percent progress and the second phase from Agargaon to Motijheel 59.78 percent. The installation of tracks and other equipment and procurement of cars saw 54.40 percent progress as of April, according to documents.

Thirteen out of 52 structures inside the depot, have been complete and the package witnessed 95 percent progress as of April.

A total 14.4km out of 20.10km viaduct is now visible and 10.50km of rail tracks have been set between Uttara and Agargaon. Besides, over 20km of rail tracks have been set inside the depot.

Physical work at the 16 stations is making progress and at least four stations in the Uttara-Agargaon section witnessed major progress.

Work delayed, wait prolonged

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that the DPP be revised later, sources said.

The project -- which is being implemented with mostly donor funds at a cost of Tk 6504.54 crore -- witnessed 73 percent progress till February this year.

THE BOTTLENECK
The Dhaka-Chattogram rail line, the most important corridor of Bangladesh's railway network, also constitutes a major part of the Trans-Asian Railway and the Sub-regional railway corridor.

A double-track rail line between the capital and country's second largest city is essential for passenger and goods transportation.

Twelve passenger trains use the section for round-trips on the Dhaka-Chattogram, Dhaka-Noakhali, and Chattogram-Sylhet routes daily.

Besides, five freight trains use the section for daily round-trips on the Dhaka-Chattogram route.

All these trains have to spend at least an additional 46 minutes due to the ongoing work. Sometimes, delays last more than an hour, officials said.

All the trains on the single line have to wait at nearby stations to make way for each other, causing delays in their schedules.

"Besides, operation of trains on a single line often causes safety concerns," a mid-level BR official told The Daily Star recently.

BR cannot operate the increasing number of freight trains on the Dhaka-Chattogram route due to the bottleneck, he said requesting anonymity.

Officials also said Subarna Express, which is supposed to take five hours and 10 minutes for the Dhaka-Chattogram trip, takes around six and a half hours.

CONTRACTS EXPIRING
Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the project works remained suspended for more than two months last year and the authority extended the deadline till next month.

BR signed a four-year contract with CTM Joint Venture in June 2016 for construction work of the Akhaura-Lakhsam double line and conversion of the existing line into dual gauge.

The contract expired in November 2020 and financier Asian Development

Bank (ADB) on February 15 this year gave "no objection" to a proposal of the project authorities for a two-year extension of the contract, documents show.

The tenure of contracts with construction supervision consultants and an INGO engaged for implementation of the resettlement work will expire next month.

Another contract with an INGO for giving training for capacity building and some other work expired on April 23.

In these circumstances, the project authorities initially wanted to revise the DPP but with the revision process being complex and time-consuming, they proposed at a meeting of the railways ministry in February that the deadline be extended till June 2023 without cost escalation, sources said.

But the project authorities were told to place only a proposal for a one-year time extension for now, they added.

No time extension has been approved till date.

REASONS FOR THE DELAYS

The project witnessed only seven percent progress in one year, from February 2020, documents show.

Project Director Shahidul Islam said the work came to a near halt for more than two months last year and the pandemic also disturbed the supply chain of construction materials.

Complications regarding land acquisition and resettlement of non-titled people -- meaning people who are not owners of the land to be acquired but who have been living and doing business there for a long time, he said.

They have to go through a lengthy negotiation process to relocate four food godowns from the construction site and in January the food department agreed to this, he told The Daily Star on March 22.

They also had to change the height of some bridges and subsequently the embankment during the project implementation period, Shahidul Islam said.

"So, we think that the project will take two more years including a one-year defects liability period and we have already sought an extension

of the project deadline without cost escalation," he said, declining to specify the extension tenure.

A defects liability period is the period of time since the completion of a project during which a contractor has the right to return to the site to remedy defects.

"We have sought time extension due to ground realities," the PD said.

The work of a 10km portion from Lakhsam to Lalmai is nearly completed and was set to be opened for the publicly the first week of April, according to the PD.

But restrictions on public transport imposed from April 5 to check the coronavirus spread suspended train operations and so, the 10km portion could not be opened.

The PD further said though they will ultimately have to revise the DPP, the total cost of the project may not be increased.

BEST OPTION IGNORED FOR DECADES

Although full transformation of the "lengthy" Dhaka-Chattogram line into double lines will significantly cut journey time, BR officials and experts don't consider this the best option for reducing journey time.

Construction of a chord line (route across the outer parts of an urban area) between Dhaka and Cumilla would reduce the distance from Dhaka to Chattogram from the existing 320km to around 230km, they said.

Discussion for the construction of a chord line went on for decades, with the railways ministry even sending a proposal for constructing the line under a public-private partnership proposal in 2012 but this did not see much progress due to unknown reasons, they said.

Instead, talks moved to constructing a high-speed rail from Dhaka-Chattogram -- according to a feasibility study carried out by BR, the project will cost \$11.13 billion.

Some BR officials and transport experts termed the project "highly ambitious" and said the authorities should rather build the chord line as the best option to reduce travel time between the two major cities.

BR will now carry a feasibility study for the chord line under a project funded by ADB, sources said.

Junta brands rival govt

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mechanism of the government," the announcement said.

The anti-terrorism law bans not only membership of the groups, but also any contact with them. The junta had previously accused its opponents of treason.

Protesters marched against the junta in dozens of places on Saturday. At least 774 civilians have been killed by security forces and 3,778 are detained, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners activist group.

The junta disputes those figures and says at least two dozen members of the security forces have been killed in protests.

Fighting has also flared on Myanmar's periphery with ethnic armies that have been fighting for decades and some of which have rallied behind the protesters. State television said the army had advanced against the Kachin Independence Army in northern

Myanmar, but there was no independent confirmation.

In western Myanmar, the newly formed Chinland Defence Force said it had overrun an army camp. The army made no comment on the report.

Meanwhile, Myanmar poet Khet Thi, whose works declare resistance to the ruling junta, died in detention overnight and his body was returned with the organs removed, his family said yesterday.

Man sent to jail

FROM PAGE 12
family members. She was admitted to hospital.

The victim's uncle filed a case against Sumon with Alfadanga Police Station on May 1.

Police then conducted several drives to arrest Sumon.

On a tip-off, they arrested him from Bejidanga bridge area under Kashiani upazila in Gopalganj around 12:45am on Sunday, added Jamal Pasha.

Iraqi activist's killing sparks protests against impunity

AFP, Karbala

A leading Iraqi anti-government activist was killed early yesterday, security sources and activists said, sending supporters of a protest movement onto the streets to demand an end to bloodshed.

Ihab al-Wazni, a coordinator of protests in the Shia shrine city of Karbala, was a vocal opponent of corruption, the stranglehold of Tehran-linked armed groups and Iran's influence in Iraq.

He was shot overnight outside his home by men on motorbikes, in an ambush caught on surveillance cameras. His death was confirmed by security forces and activists.

Nazrul pledges socialism

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with any buildings near them. Bangalees working for Electrical Supply Company of East Pakistan were indiscriminately killed by the Pakistan army, added the New York Times.

Browne also reported killing of a large number of Biharis in Chittagong. **PAKISTAN ENVOY, SEEKING AID, MEETS US PRESIDENT**
President Richard Nixon met today with a special emissary from Pakistan President Yahya Khan who was in the US to convince American and international monetary officials to bail out the nearly bankrupt country that had been wrecked by war.

The emissary, MM Ahmad, was Yahya's top economic adviser. He was understood to have been carrying a letter from Yahya to Nixon, but the White House declined to give any details of the 30-minute meeting.

The White House only disclosed, in response to reporters' inquiries, that the meeting was to take place.

Diplomatic sources said the message to Nixon contended that stories of large-scale massacres in East Pakistan had been grossly exaggerated, although Yahya reportedly conceded that his army's initial action was tough.

Yahya reportedly wrote that this was

made necessary because East Pakistan's dominant Awami League party had been taken over by "extremists". But, according to this account of the message, he was ready to implement the party's six-point programme for the province's autonomy once moderates were restored to control of the Awami League.

Ahmad's visit came as congressional pressure was building against any US aid to the Pakistan government that could contribute to repression of the independence movement in Bangladesh. The House Foreign Affairs Committee scheduled hearings on Pakistan for May 11, with Sen Edward M Kennedy scheduled to testify in support of the Bangladesh government and advocate international economic sanctions against the Pakistani central government.

MM Ahmad was said to be proposing a number of measures, including devaluation of the Pakistani rupee by half or more; temporary payment to the international consortium of Pakistan's creditors in rupees instead of in hard currency, and "association" of civilians, including "rational" elements from East Pakistan, with Yahya's military government.

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It may

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THE WHO recently listed B.1.617 -- which counts several sub-lineages with slightly different mutations and characteristics -- as a "variant of interest".

But so far it has stopped short of adding it to its short list of "variants of concern" -- a label indicating it is more dangerous than the original version of the virus by being more transmissible, deadly or able to get past vaccine protections.

Several national health authorities, including in the United States and Britain, have meanwhile said they consider B.1.617 a variant of concern, and Swaminathan said she expected the WHO to soon follow suit.

"B.1.617 is likely to be a variant of concern because it has some mutations which increase transmission, and which also potentially could make (it) resistant to antibodies that are generated by vaccination or by natural infection," she said.

But she insisted that the variant alone could not be blamed for the dramatic surge in cases and deaths seen in India, pointing to "huge social mixing and large gatherings" in recent months.

'TAKING OFF VERTICALLY'

"In a large country like India, you could have transmission at low levels, which is what happened for many months," Swaminathan said.

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গবেষণা প্রস্তাব আহ্বান

'সম্বিত স্বাস্থ্য-বিজ্ঞান গবেষণা ও উন্নয়ন তহবিল কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা সম্পর্কিত মীতিমালা ২০১১ (সংশোধিত)'এর আওতায় স্বাস্থ্য শিক্ষা ও পরিবার কল্যাণ বিভাগ কর্তৃক অর্থ বিভাগের তহবিল থেকে গবেষণার জন্য আর্থিক মঞ্জুরি প্রদানের লক্ষ্যে নিম্নোক্ত বিষয়বস্তুর ওপর গবেষণা প্রস্তাব আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:

- Public Health issues: Detection, Epidemiology, New treatment, prevention etc.
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- Clinical studies in different common and emerging diseases in all branches of medical science.
- Pre-clinical trial unit setup & viral lab setup etc.
- Fundamental research in basic medical science (anatomy, physiology, Biochemistry, Pharmacology, Microbiology, Pathology, Immunology & others) and forensic medicine.
- Study on endemic and pandemic outbreak of any diseases like Covid-19, Dengue, Malaria, Tuberculosis and others.
- Genetic study and experimental and translational medicine- Vaccine development, new drug development, etc.
- Biomedical engineering its necessity, deficits and future perspective.
- Medical education: standard setup in undergraduate and postgraduate level, Status of current medical education system and its merits and demerits.
- Modernizing current health delivery system, including updating health administration.

(২) আবেদনের শর্তাবলী:

- আবেদনকারীকে/আবেদনকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে বাংলাদেশি হতে হবে। আবেদনের সাথে আবেদনকারীর জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র/পাসপোর্টের কপি/জন্মনিবন্ধন সনদ দাখিল করতে হবে;
- আবেদনকারীকে/প্রতিষ্ঠানকে বাংলাদেশে গবেষণা করতে হবে;
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- আবেদনকারী উক্ত গবেষণার জন্য অন্য কোন সরকারি, বেসরকারি, স্বায়ত্তশাসিত অথবা দেশের অথবা বিদেশের যে কোন প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে আর্থিক সহায়তা নেননি মর্মে অঙ্গীকারনামা দিতে হবে;
- আবেদনকারীর বয়স হবে (দরখাস্ত করার সময়) সর্বোচ্চ ৬০ বছর। দক্ষতা, অভিজ্ঞতা ও সুনাম বিবেচনায় বয়সসীমা শিথিলযোগ্য হবে;
- আবেদনকারীকে আবেদন ফরম অনুযায়ী আবেদনের সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্যাদি সন্নিবেশিত করতে হবে। অসম্পূর্ণ আবেদন/গবেষণা প্রস্তাবনা বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।
- গবেষণার অভিজ্ঞতা, পাবলিকেশন ইত্যাদিসহ আবেদনকারীর পূর্ণ জীবনকৃত্য সংযোজন করতে হবে;
- আবেদনকারী কোন প্রতিষ্ঠানের কর্মকর্তা হলে উক্ত প্রতিষ্ঠান প্রধানের নিকট হতে অনুমতি গ্রহণ করতে হবে;
- যে প্রতিষ্ঠানে গবেষণা করা হবে, সে প্রতিষ্ঠান প্রধানের কাছ হতে অনুমতি নিয়ে তা জমা দিতে হবে;
- প্রাথমিকভাবে নির্বাচিত হলে আবেদনকারী/আবেদনকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে স্ব স্ব ইনস্টিটিউট থেকে ইথিক্যাল ক্লিয়ারেন্স নিতে হবে। ইনস্টিটিউট-ভিত্তিক আবেদনকারী না হলে বিএমআরসি থেকে ইথিক্যাল ক্লিয়ারেন্স নিতে হবে;
- গবেষণাকাল হবে অনূর্ধ্ব ২ বছর;
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- আগামী ২৩ জুন ২০২১ তারিখ অফিস সময়ে মধ্য মিথিরািত প্রোফর্ম অনুযায়ী ইংরেজিতে প্রস্তুতকৃত প্রটোকল/গবেষণা প্রস্তাবের ০১টি সিডি/পেনড্রাইভ সহ হার্ড কপি যুগ্মসচিব (চিকিৎসা শিক্ষা), স্বাস্থ্য শিক্ষা ও পরিবার কল্যাণ বিভাগ, কক্ষ নং-২৯, তবন নং-৩, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা বরাবর এবং সফ্ট কপি hsr.mefwd.gov.bd মেইলে আবশ্যিকভাবে প্রেরণ করতে হবে।

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ও
সদস্য-সচিব

সম্বিত স্বাস্থ্য-বিজ্ঞান গবেষণা ও উন্নয়ন তহবিল
কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা সম্পর্কিত জাতীয়/বাহ্যি কমিটি

Virgin

FROM PAGE 12
Executive Josh Giegel, who gave Reuters an exclusive tour of the pod used in its November test run, where it was propelled along a 500 meter (1,640 ft)tunnel. "You won't even have turbulence because our system is basically completely able to react to all that turbulence. Think noise-canceling but bump-canceling, if you will."

Off-white materials and a back mirror make the pod seem bigger and more "inviting" for new users, Giegel said.

"This pod was really the embodiment of 'How do we take something that's an idea and make it into something that's a reality for us to sit in?'" Giegel said.

The pods will seat 28 passengers and could be customized for long and short distances, and for freight.

While it is still at an early stage, Giegel predicts commercial operations as early as 2027. It could be the first form of transport in 100 years to revolutionize travel, just like cars, trains and planes did, Giegel said.

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তারিখঃ ২৭/০৪/২০২১খ্রিঃ

ইজারা কোটেশন বিজ্ঞপ্তির সংশোধনী

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাইতেছে যে, অত্র দপ্তর কর্তৃক আহবানকৃত ইজারা বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০১ (ইজারা)/বিআরডি/২০২০-২০২১(৪র্থ আহবান), ০২ (ইজারা)/বিআরডি/২০২০-২০২১ (৪র্থ আহবান), ০৩(ইজারা)/বিআরডি/২০২০-২০২১(৪র্থ আহবান), ০৪ (ইজারা)/বিআরডি/২০২০-২০২১ (৪র্থ আহবান), ০৫(ইজারা)/বিআরডি/২০২০-২০২১(৪র্থ আহবান), ০৬ (ইজারা)/বিআরডি/২০২০-২০২১(৪র্থ আহবান), ০৭ (ইজারা)/বিআরডি/২০২০-২০২১(৪র্থ আহবান) এবং ০৮ (ইজারা)/বিআরডি/২০২০-২০২১ (৪র্থ আহবান)-এর কোটেশন তফসিল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ, গ্রহণের তারিখ এবং খোলার তারিখ অনিবার্য কারণবশতঃ নিম্নরূপভাবে পরিবর্তন করা হইলঃ-

ইজারা কোটেশন বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	মুখবন্ধ অবস্থায় ইজারা কোটেশন গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	ইজারা কোটেশন খোলার তারিখ ও সময়
১৮/০৫/২০২১খ্রিঃ তারিখ বিকাল ৫.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।	১৯/০৫/২০২১খ্রিঃ তারিখ দুপুর ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।	১৯/০৫/২০২১খ্রিঃ তারিখ বিকাল ৩.০০ ঘটিকা।

উক্ত ০৮(আট)টি ইজারা বিজ্ঞপ্তি আহবানসমূহের নোটিশ এবং সিডিউলের অন্যান্য সকল নিয়মাবলী ও শর্তাবলী অপরিবর্তিত থাকিবে। এই সংশোধনী বিজ্ঞপ্তি ইজারা কোটেশনের অবিচ্ছেদ্য অংশ হিসাবে গণ্য হইবে এবং বিনামূল্যে ইজারা কোটেশন সিডিউলের সহিত সরবরাহ করা হইবে।

মাসুদ মাহমুদ সুমন

পরিচিতি নং-৬০২১৬৫

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ

সড়ক বিভাগ, বরিশাল

জিডি-৯৪৪