

FIRST UNDERGROUND METRO RAIL Physical work likely to begin in March

Covid situation delayed start; project officials still hopeful of meeting 2026 deadline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Physical work of the country's first ever underground metro rail -- from Dhaka Airport to Kamalapur -- is likely to begin in March next year, more than a year after the original plan, largely due to Covid-19 pandemic situation.

The works of the Tk 52,561.43-crore project will start with land development for depot at Pitalganj in Narayanganj's Rupganj. Metro rail authority has already floated tender for the work.

Once the line, formally known as Mass Rapid Transit Line-1 or MRT-1, is completed, it would be able to carry 8 lakh passengers daily. The deadline is December 2026.

"The last date for submitting tender bid is September 8. We will be able to start physical works within six months of the submission date," MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), the implementing agency of the project, said.

"We hope that the work will start in March next year," Siddique told reporters at a virtual press briefing yesterday.

The 31.24km MRT Line-1 will have two parts -- around 19.87km from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to

ONCE THE LINE IS COMPLETED

- **25 trains** to operate daily
- **24.5 minutes** to Kamalapur from airport; **20.35 minutes** from Natun Bazar to Purbachal; **40 minutes** from Kamalapur to Purbachal
- Trains to run at **2.5 minute** intervals on airport-Kamalapur route; **4.35 minutes** on Natun Bazar-Purbachal route.
- Each train to have **8 coaches** to carry **3,008 passengers**
- **MRT LINE-1** will carry **8 lakh** passengers daily

Kamalapur underground line and around 11.36km elevated lines from Notun Bazar to Purbachal.

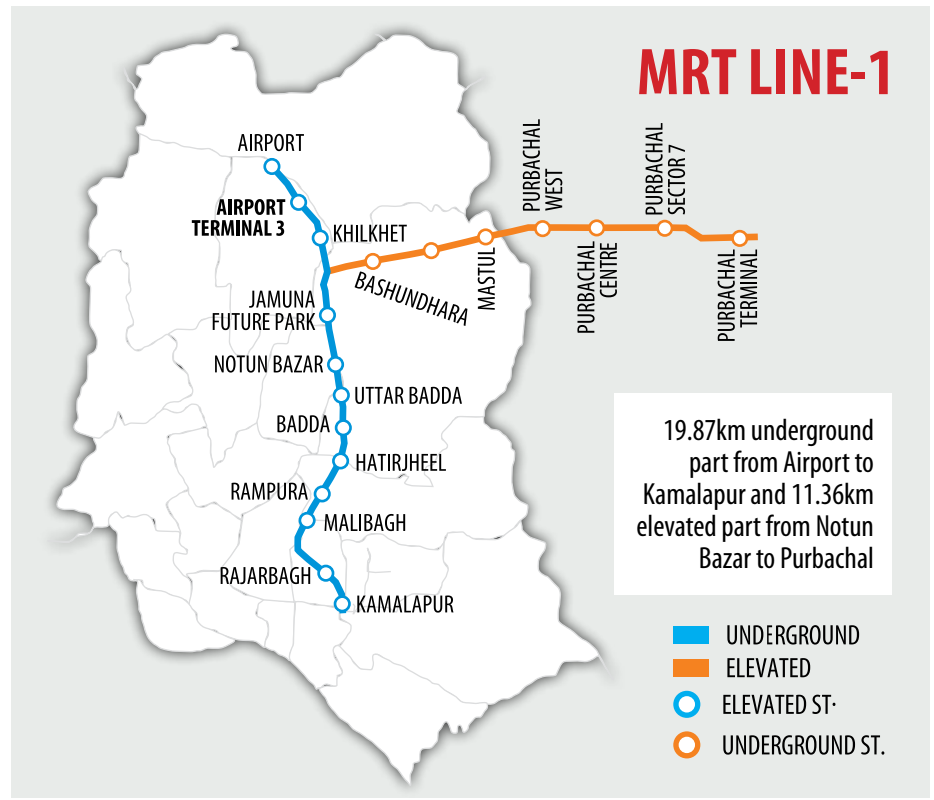
It would have 21 stations, of which 12 would be underground and the rest would be elevated. Two elevate stations -- Natun Bazar and Jamuna Future Park -- will overlap with two underground stations.

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Dumping plastic waste here and there is a major reason behind obstructed drains and canals, which leads to waterlogging. In an effort to tackle this problem in the capital, Dhaka South City Corporation's Ward-21 councillor has set up this bottle-shaped plastic collection point at Dhaka University's TSC area. The sign at the bottom requests passers-by to put their plastic waste inside and help put an end to waterlogging.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Laxmipur-2 by-polls on June 21

SC clears way for holding election to Papul's vacant JS seat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday affirmed the High Court decisions over declaring Laxmipur-2 constituency vacant, and to hold a by-election to this constituency on June 21.

Jatiya Sangsad seat of Laxmipur-2 has been declared vacant after a Kuwait court convicted Mohammad Shahid Islam also known as Kazi Papul, who had been elected an independent lawmaker from this constituency in December 30, 2018 parliamentary election, for his moral turpitude.

A full bench of the SC's Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain made the decision after hearing arguments on two petitions filed challenging the HC orders.

The apex court passed "no order" on a petition filed by BNP leader and former lawmaker Abul Khair Bhuiyan, seeking stay on an order passed by the HC on June 14 clearing the way for holding the by-election.

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Banks, stock market are themselves 'hospitalised'

BNP MP gets creative in slamming govt at House

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Coming down heavily on the government for looting money from different banks and inactions against loan defaulters, BNP MP Harunur Rashid yesterday told parliament that that all the banks were admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital due to their sorry state.

On the other hand, the opposition MP said country's stock market was admitted to the ICU of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Participating in the discussion on the proposed budget for 2021-22 fiscal, he said the country's banks are being severely attacked by looters today. Thousands of crores of taka are being borrowed, but no one is repaying the loan. They are wandering

around rejoicing. "That is why all the banks today are admitted in all the cabins of Bangabandhu Medical University Hospital."

Harun further said today the constitution is no longer a document of governing the state; it has become a document of deception with the majority of the people.

He said the president as per the power bestowed upon him in the Constitution has pardoned 40-50 people accused of murder during the grand alliance government.

"The report, published in Al Jazeera television channel, has tarnished the country's image abroad."

He said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was given two years' imprisonment on political grounds and the government is not giving her opportunity to go abroad for treatment.

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'Khaleda in vulnerable condition'

Says Mirza Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday urged the government to allow its chairperson Khaleda Zia to receive advanced treatment abroad, shunning "politics of vengeance", as she is in a vulnerable state with various health complications.

"Our chairperson is now seriously ill. As she couldn't receive proper treatment over the last four years since she was in jail, she was affected with many diseases," said party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

"We urge the government to allow the three-time prime minister, who had struggled for a long time for democracy, and made huge contributions to the development of the country, to receive advanced treatment shunning politics of vengeance."

Fakhrul made the call while

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UGC okays Tk 10,000cr budget for public univs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Grants Commission (UGC) yesterday approved a Tk 10,032 crore budget for public universities for the 2021-22 fiscal year.

This is a Tk 1,547 crore increase from last year's budget for the 49 public universities of the country, when UGC approved a Tk 8,485 crore budget.

The commission approved the budget at its 158th meeting, held virtually with UGC chairperson Prof Kazi Shahidullah in the chair. UGC acting secretary Ferdous Zaman placed the budget at the meeting.

Of the Tk 10,032 crore, the revenue budget is Tk 5,875 crore while the development budget is Tk 4,157 crore, UGC said in a statement.

During his speech, Prof Shahidullah said if the universities can spend money in basic and pragmatic research, the research and development sector of the country will be strengthened, while reaching honourable positions in international rankings will also become easier.

For research support, the commission approved Tk 100.74 crore for the upcoming fiscal year. This is an increase of Tk 34 crore in comparison to the outgoing fiscal year's numbers, the statement added.

Govt mulling dedicated TV channel for students

Dipu Moni tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering to launch a dedicated TV channel for students so that they can take part in the digital classes throughout the year, Education Minister Dipu Moni told the parliament yesterday.

The minister said this in response to a question from Awami League lawmaker Shahiduzzaman Sarker from Naogaon-2.

At the beginning of the House sitting, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, who presided over the event, tabled the question-answer scheduled for ministers.

Mentioning that in-person classes at universities will start with students getting vaccinated, the minister said all university students will be brought under inoculation programme as soon as possible on priority basis in line with the prime minister's instructions.

She said the immunisation programme will begin with residential students. The dormitories will be opened after residential students are vaccinated and then, classes will begin, the minister said.

She said each university has been instructed to prepare recovery plans according to their own capabilities and realities, and take steps to implement them.

"A guideline from the University Grants Commission will be sent to the universities in this regard," she added.

The minister said online classes are being taken at all universities at present. Exams are also being held online at private universities, she said.

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DU sends 'clarification' about 'misleading' report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University authorities yesterday sent a press release to the media clarifying what they termed "fragmented and misleading information" about the university.

Without mentioning names, they said a leading English daily in the country recently published a report using cartoon and "fragmented information".

As a result, the authorities felt it necessary to clarify the issue so that "the image and prestige of the university at the national and international arena are not tarnished", said the press release.

In the statement, DU also clarified the intention with which the vice chancellor made some remarks. It said during a freshers' reception at TSC, the VC spoke about the food menu and other facilities the university provides, in a humorous way, along with many achievements of the university over the years.

About the Covid-19 related activities, the DU press release said when the long Eid vacation started in the last week of May 2020, the university faced a shortage of manpower to run the coronavirus testing lab. Meanwhile, some students and volunteers got affected by Covid-19, and they needed to disinfect the lab.

Besides, fund crisis and departmental issues were involved with this matter but that was not the main reason, the press release added.

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HARASSMENT BY ETIHAD STAFF HC berates airline in full text of verdict

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The High Court in full text of a verdict released on Wednesday blasted Etihad Airways for harassing two Bangladesh-born women at Abu Dhabi International Airport in June 2011.

Issuing 12 directives, the court asked Etihad to behave with women passengers more carefully and with honour, and observed that the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has to be more sincere to ensure more security of passengers and their luggage, and owners of goods during travels.

In the verdict, the HC had ordered Etihad to give Tk 1 crore to each victim, considering its condition amid the worldwide pandemic.

It is clear from the foreign ministry probe report that officials and staff members concerned of Etihad had behaved in an "unjust", "rude", "negligent", "unprofessional" and

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ERRATUM

The headline of a report published yesterday on this page, "Bank IT officer arrested for siphoning Tk 2.57cr", mistakenly mentioned that the bank's IT officer was arrested. In fact, four people were arrested, but the official, Mir Md Shaharuzzaman Rony, was not. We sincerely regret the error.



Two youths share an umbrella as they wade through ankle-deep water and splashes from moving vehicles in Khulna city's Khan Jahan Ali Road yesterday. After heavy rainfall, parts of the city, including some of its major intersections got flooded, causing trouble for vehicles and pedestrians alike.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY