

The future is almost here

A peek into Uttara north metro rail station

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Once you reach the metro rail's Uttara North station, you will see seven staircases on its both sides.

You may take escalators to reach the first floor or concourse. The station is expected to be more inclusive with three elevators for the elderly and those with health complications.

There will be four staircases, four escalators and two elevators to get you to the second floor. At the unpaid zone on the second floor, you will be able to collect a one-time pass if you lack a prepaid card. Punching the card will get you to the paid zone through the automatic fare collection gate.

Once the train gets to a station, a "Platform Screen Door" will open for the passengers.

As the authorities plan to launch the commercial operation of the country's first metro rail partially from December this year, construction and installation of station facilities are also nearing completion.

Works of eight other stations from Uttara to Agargaon -- where the first phase of the operation is expected to be launched in December -- are also going on in full swing, said officials.

Makawadee Sumitmor, ambassador of Thailand in Dhaka, visited the station yesterday to witness the project's progress as the both countries are celebrating 50 years of diplomatic relations.

Italian-Thai Development Plc of Thailand is the contractor implementing around 70 percent of the civil works of the project, according to officials.

The ambassador told journalists that the purpose of the trip is to let people know that Thailand is contributing and playing a supportive role in Bangladesh's development.

Abdul Baquee Miah, additional project director (Civil) of Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 or MRT Line-6, said they are confident that they can launch the commercial operation partially within December.

The project entails the construction of a 20.10km



As the authorities plan to launch the commercial operation of the country's first metro rail partially from December this year, construction and installation of station facilities are also nearing completion. The photos were taken at Uttara north station near Diabari yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

A box that can make dollars!

In the last part of this 2-part series, we look into how a group of Nigerians and Bangladeshis is using social media to defraud people

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

They enter Bangladesh with business or visit visas.

After coming here from Nigeria, they throw away their passports to ensure that they cannot be traced, and start living as illegal migrants.

During their stay, they move into flats by paying a higher than usual rent, so that they would not be requested to give any sort of documents. They would then get involved in criminal activities like financial frauds, narcotics trade and smuggling.

The illegally pocketed money would then be deposited in local accounts, which the syndicate takes for "rent" to avoid law enforcers' eyes.

Finally, the money is sent to Nigeria through hundi.

This is how a section of Nigerians, joining hands with some Bangladeshis, are leading an organised syndicate, which pockets money from people after luring them with attractive gifts from abroad or investment opportunities.

Although the criminals occasionally get arrested, they manage to secure bail with assistance from lawyers, and go back into their lives of crime.

While investigating a fraud case filed with Paltan Police Station recently, police's detective branch (DB) got to know the details and arrested 11 Nigerians and one of their Bangladeshi partners.

The arrestees are Henry Osita Okechukwu, Chisom Emmanuel Obiajulu, Okake Peter, Obina Sunday, Oneka Mba, Chisom Anthony Ekwenze, Okoye Azubike Cyprian, Onuorah Ozoemena Daniel, Anoruka Ginika Francis, Locky, Ndommadu chinedu and Bangladeshi Chadni Akter.

Osita and Chisom are the gang's leaders, who mainly coordinate with the Bangladeshi partners, and one Biplob Lashkar is in charge of managing bank accounts for transactions.

Arrestee Chadni's main role is to act as a fake customs official to dupe people.

Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Gulshan division) of DB, said the arrestees were earlier detained in 2020, but they managed to secure bail within eight to nine months.

"In many cases, as these arrestees have no permanent address, they often disappear after getting bail from jail," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He, however, said they are not supposed to get bail without passport validity. "We will inform these issues to the ministry [concerned] to impose strict restrictions."

The gang lured targets by sending them a video of a box that can create dollars by just putting in some cotton and chemicals. They would say that they already have huge sums of dollars and do not need the box anymore. For an amount, the box can be handed over to the targets.

This newspaper managed to talk to a couple of Nigerians when they were presented before a Dhaka court.

Regarding the fraud, Osita said they mainly defrauded Bangladeshis in a couple of ways.

One way is targeting a Facebook profile and sending them a friend request using an account with a foreign woman's picture. Once the request is accepted, they build rapport with the target, and talk about sending an attractive gift from abroad as a token of gratitude, said Osita.

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Focus now on food industry to boost export: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government is prioritising the food processing industry to boost export of food items alongside meeting the growing domestic demand.

The prime minister said this while laying the foundation stone of "Ghorashal Palash Urea Fertilizer Factory" in Narsingdi, with an annual production capacity of nearly 10 lakh tonnes, the country's largest.

She unveiled the foundation stone of the Tk 10,461-crore project, joining a programme from Gono Bhaban through a videoconference.

Besides, the PM opened four other development projects, including the newly constructed 14-storey head office of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) in the city's Tejgaon industrial area.

Hasina said the government is paying special attention to the development of the agro products and food processing industry as

Bangladesh has gained a huge success in agricultural production.

Talking about the urea project, she said they took initiative to set up a new high-capacity, state-of-the-art, energy-efficient and environmentally friendly new fertiliser factory on the site of two old urea fertiliser factories at Ghorashal and Palash in 2014.

The new factory can produce some 2,800 tonnes of granular urea fertiliser a day. The PM extended her thanks to the Japanese and Chinese governments for providing loan assistance.

Farmers still facing water crisis Say rights activists on Barind region

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even after the suicide of two farmers recently, water distribution for agricultural lands of marginal people in Barind areas has not improved, said rights activists yesterday.

"Poor farmers are yet to get sufficient water for their agricultural lands," said Shamsul Huda, executive director of Association for Land Reform and Development.

This (two indigenous farmers dying by suicide due to water crisis) is not an isolated incident. It is a reflection of discrimination, irregularities and corruption, which have been going on in the areas for a long time.

SHAMSUL HUDA
ALRD Executive Director

On March 23, two Santal farmers -- Abhinath Mardi and Robi Mardi of Nimghutu village in Rajshahi's Godagari -- drank pesticide standing on their land at Issoripur village in protest, after Shakhawat Hossain, deep tube-well operator of Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA), reportedly refused to provide them with water.

Nine organisations jointly held a press conference to disclose findings on "suicides of indigenous farmers" at Jatiya Press Club.

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elevated metro rail from Uttara to Motijheel, at the cost of Tk 21,985 crore.

The authorities are working to expand the line to Kamalapur. In that case, the project's cost is likely to increase as well.

The project witnessed overall progress of 77.82 percent by March, while the Uttara to Agargaon phase saw 91.41 percent progress.

There will be a total of 16 stations from Uttara to Motijheel. The number will increase once the route is extended to Kamalapur.

Visiting the Uttara North station yesterday, this correspondent observed that almost all the staircases were prepared. Two escalators to reach the first floor were also set up but not functional yet. Another one to reach the second floor is functional and was also used by the visitors, including the ambassador. Platform Screen Doors have also been installed but kept undercover.

A project official said all the other stations would have the same facilities. There might be fewer staircases on the ground floor of the other stations, considering the number of passengers.

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Ensuring safe female migration National-level alliance formed to empower women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To establish equal rights for female migrant workers, a national-level alliance of rights groups working on women empowerment was launched yesterday.

The Alliance for Women Migrant Voices (AWMV) will strengthen networking among women's rights organisations for taking a proactive role in ensuring safe female migration and addressing issues of discrimination and violence in their workplaces.

Besides, it will advocate for new laws and policies upholding female migrants' rights and build awareness among them to voice their needs and demands.

Supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and funded by Global Affairs Canada, the alliance was launched at a ceremony held by Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS) at the capital's Probashi Kalyan Bhaban.

Initially, AWMV comprises 22 members-- seven national-level and 15 local NGOs.

Inaugurating the alliance, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad hoped that by working collaboratively, it will be possible for the ministry and AWMV to successfully ensure safe migration and skills

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Speakers at the launching event of The Alliance for Women Migrant Voices yesterday. This national-level alliance of rights groups will strengthen networking among women's rights organisations for taking a proactive role in ensuring safe female migration and addressing issues of discrimination and violence in their workplaces. The event was held at the capital's Probashi Kalyan Bhaban.

PHOTO: COLLECTED