



ILLUSTRATION: BIPOB CHAKROBORTY

INAUGURATION OF MRT LINE-6

Bangladesh ushers in a new era of commuting

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY AND WASIM BIN HABIB

Bangladesh is all set to step into a new era of commuting with a new mode of public transport that has never been seen before -- the electricity-powered metro rail of Dhaka.

A portion of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Line-6 project, commonly known as the metro rail, will be inaugurated on December 28, which is expected to partially ease transportation for over 20 million people in the city facing unbridled traffic congestion.

But how did the idea for this highly-technical, yet reliable, public transport project come about?

It was envisaged in 2004 when the government was preparing a "Strategic Transport Plan" (STP) for Dhaka, which was approved in 2005.

The plan was proposed to be combined with the MRT and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects as the city's unplanned traffic network and overloaded transport system continued to worsen the nagging traffic congestion, which, according to a 2018 Buet report, is costing the city an estimated \$4.4 billion annually.

With a rapid rise in population and increased land use patterns, Dhaka has grown to become one of the most densely populated cities in the world over the last several decades. However, its development and expansion has been scattered and uneven, resulting in a chaotic traffic system plagued with congestion.

A World Bank report in 2017 estimated that city dwellers were wasting 3.8 million work hours daily due to traffic jams in Dhaka.

While searching for a solution to the traffic congestion problem, the planners realized that the existing public transport system would never be able to meet the growing demand generated by the rapid growth of the city. There was also no room to build new roads.

Therefore, after reviewing experiences from other countries, policymakers concluded that developing a system of urban transport that would meet the

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