METRO RAIL

2 more stations to open by Mar 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Metro rail authorities will open the Uttara Centre Station to the public on February 18 and the Mirpur-10 station on March 1.

All nine stations from Uttara to Agargaon will begin partial operations within the next month, while full operations– from morning to midnight – will start fromJuly.

MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd, made the announcement at a press conference at the DMTCL office in the capital's Eskaton area.

On December 28, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the country's first metro rail and the service was opened partially to the public the following day.

At the initial state, the metro trains were being operated between Uttara and Agargaon without any stoppage.

On January 25, the authorities made the third station -- Pallabi station -- functional.

Siddique said they will open all nine stations within March this year and will take three months to start full-fledged operation.

He added that the trains will start 15 minutes after the Fajr prayers and will continue till midnight.

However, the frequency of trains will be changed depending on the number of passengers, he said, adding that it will be higher in the mornings for office hours and will lessen after 10:00pm.

He also said the PM will open the Agargaon-Motijheel section of the Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 (MRT-6) in December this year and the authorities are hopeful to

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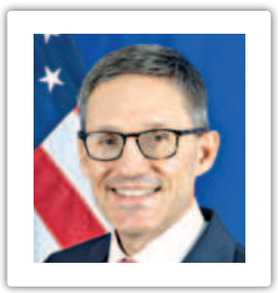
Soil traders are razing hillocks in Tarafpur of Tangail's Mirzapur upazila, putting the environment at risk. The earth extracted from the hillocks would be used for making bricks, filling low land and building roads. The photo was taken recently. Story on page 5. PHOTO: STAR

US state dept counselor to arrive Feb 14

Rohingya crisis to be on agenda



Derek Chollet

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US State Department Counselor Derek Chollet will be visiting Bangladesh on February 14-15 with a focus on the Rohingya crisis and the sustainable solutions in this regard.

Speaking at the weekly media briefing at the foreign ministry yesterday, Spokesperson Seheli Sabrin said, "He is expected to discuss ways of bolstering the US-Bangladesh relations. He will see the situation of the Rohingyas on the ground."

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NEWSPAPERS

Noab seeks duty waiver, tax cut

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newspaper owners have urged the government to help the newspaper industry overcome the difficulties it is facing during the current economic crisis.

They said the sector is suffering multiple problems beginning from increased cost of newsprint to falling advertisement revenue and circulation. Under the circumstances, it has become tougher for the newspaper industry to survive.

To help the sector withstand the challenges, newspaper owners yesterday demanded the government withdraw import duty, value added tax and taxes on newspapers.

"It is not possible for the sector to survive without the support of the government

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SUPPORTING MEDIA FREEDOM

9 foreign missions roll out Diplomatic Network Initiative

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Nine foreign missions in Bangladesh yesterday launched the Diplomatic Network Initiative aimed at supporting media freedom in the country.

Diplomats from member countries of the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC) met in Dhaka to discuss issues related to media freedom, according to a statement of the US embassy in Dhaka.

Envoys from Canada, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, the US, and the Netherlands attended the event.

Civil society members and journalists also took part, it said.

"The attendees discussed the current media landscape and developments related to media freedom in Bangladesh, including the censoring of online news portals and recent cases of harassment and intimidation of journalists."

The MFC is a cross-regional partnership of countries working together to advocate for media freedom, and for the safety of journalists and media workers, while holding accountable those who harm journalists and restrict them from doing their jobs, the statement added.

Established at the Global Conference for Media Freedom in July 2019, the MFC now has over 50 member states from six continents.

"The diplomatic missions of the MFC member states are able to closely monitor the media freedom situation

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Ukraine is 'defending you'

Zelensky tells EU as he urges faster arms supplies; Russia vows 'response' if UK sends planes to Ukraine

AFP, *Brussels*

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky received a hero's welcome in Brussels yesterday as he lobbied star-struck EU leaders to speed the delivery of modern weapons to halt a Russian offensive.

Two weeks ahead of the first anniversary of Europe's most brutal conflict since the 1940s, Zelensky embarked on only his second foreign trip since Moscow launched a full-scale invasion.

After Wednesday's visits to London and Paris to lobby Britain, France and Germany for modern fighter jets and long-range missiles, the former actor turned war leader came to Brussels to address EU leaders and MEPs.

The European Parliament treated Zelensky to cheers and a standing ovation as he portrayed Ukraine as the country fighting to defend Europe's eastern borders and urged a rapid welcome into the EU fold.

"We are defending against the most anti-European force of the modern world -- we are defending ourselves, we Ukrainians on the battlefield, along with you," Zelensky told MEPs.

Parliamentary speaker Roberta Metsola, reflecting the warm response of other senior EU officials, declared: "Ukraine is Europe and your nation's future is in the European Union.

The European Parliament treated Zelensky to cheers and a standing ovation as he portrayed Ukraine as the country fighting to defend Europe's eastern borders and urged a rapid welcome into the EU fold.

"States must consider, quickly, as a next step, providing long-range systems and the jets you need to protect the liberty too many have taken for granted," she said.

After the parliamentary address,

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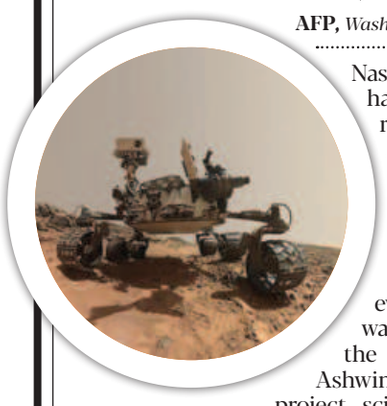
Mars rover finds rippled rocks caused by waves

AFP, *Washington*



Nasa's Curiosity rover has found wave-rippled rocks -- evidence of an ancient lake -- in an area of the planet expected to be drier, the US space agency said.

"This is the best evidence of water and waves that we've seen in the entire mission," said Ashwin Vasavada, Curiosity's project scientist at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California.

The rover, which has been exploring Mars since 2012, beamed back stunning pictures of rippled patterns on the surface of rocks caused by the waves in shallow lake billions of years ago.

Curiosity had previously found evidence that lakes once covered parts of Mars in the salty minerals left behind when they dried up.

But Nasa scientists were surprised to find such stark evidence of water in the Gale Crater that the rover is now exploring.

"We've climbed through many lake deposits during our mission but have never seen wave ripples this clearly," Vasavada said in a statement.

"This was especially surprising because the area we're in probably formed at a time when Mars

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

THOSE GOOFY GULLS ... Two Brown-headed Gulls relaxing on the calm waters of the Muhuri Project in Feni's Sonaigazi upazila. These bold, opportunistic birds are distributed across India, China, Bangladesh, Nepal, and many more countries across south and south east Asia. Often misconstrued to be "goofy", these birds are generally quite intelligent. They can learn, remember and even pass on behaviours such as stomping their feet on the ground to imitate rainfall and trick earthworms to come to the surface. They know to go to ploughed fields, where they can find upturned grubs and other food sources, and also drop molluscs onto rocks to break them open. They even have an impressive sense of smell, which helps them detect the faintest trace of food from as far as three miles away! While the IUCN has listed the Brown-headed gulls in the "least concern" category, degradation of their wetland's habitats may come as a threat to their survival. PHOTO: ARIF AHMED

ICC WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP SOUTH AFRICA 2023

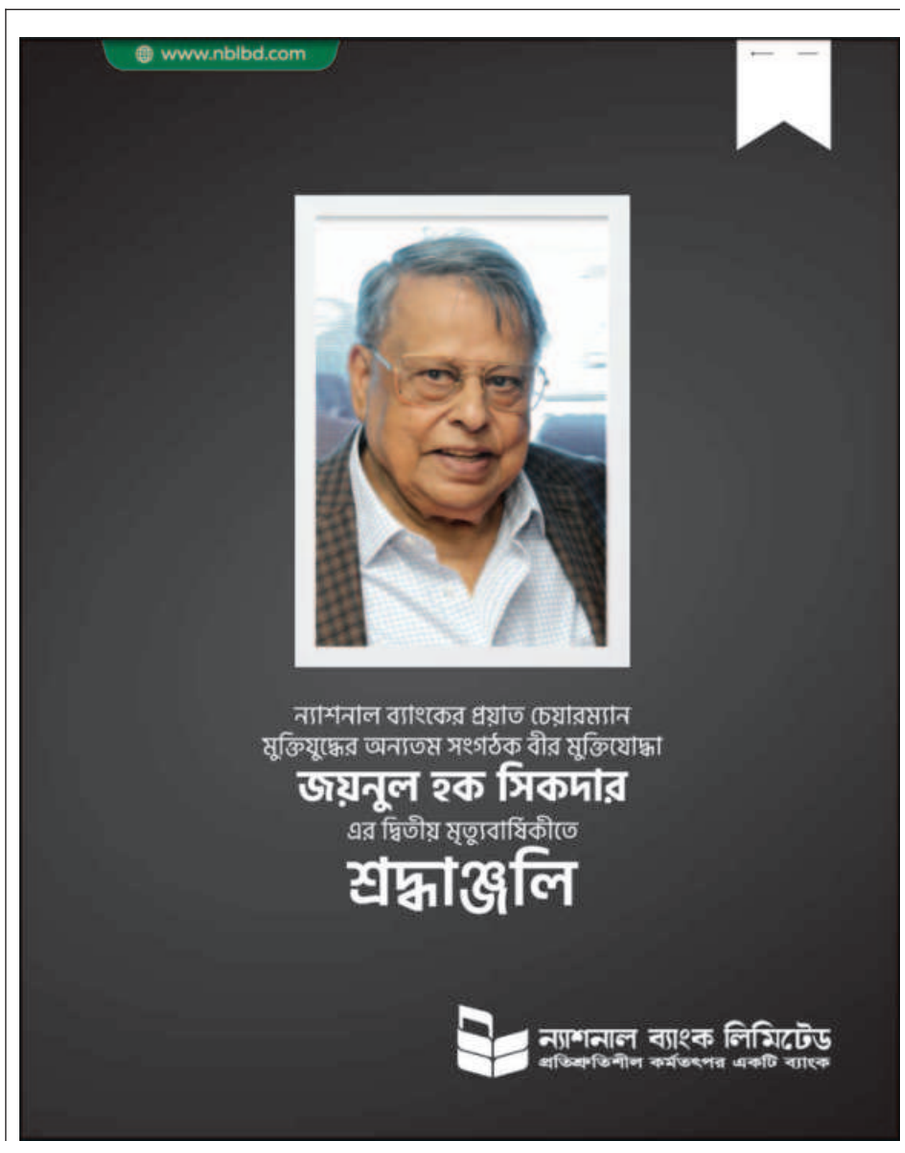
Bangladesh have their work cut out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will have their work cut out in the eighth edition of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, set to begin today with hosts South Africa taking on Sri Lanka in Cape Town in the day's only fixture.

The Tigresses will be looking for their first win in nine years in the mega event. The Tigresses lost 15 of the 17 matches played in the tournament, with both their victories coming in the 2014 edition at home against Sri Lanka and Ireland.

In fact, the Tigresses also suffered heavy defeats in their two official warm-ups against Pakistan and India.

Bangladesh have been pitted in tougher of two groups with hosts South Africa, defending champions Australia -- who are also the most successful side in the tournament with five

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