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METRO LINE 5

Physical work to start in July

The 20-km northern line from Savar to Bhatara to cost Tk 41,239cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Physical work of the country's third metro rail, namely Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Line 5 (northern route), will begin in July.

The construction work will begin with the development of the depot at Hemayetpur, on the outskirts of the capital.

The project to build 20km rail line from Savar's Hemayetpur to Bhatara via Gabtoli, Mirpur, and Gulshan would be implemented at the cost of Tk 41,239 crore. The project's deadline is 2028.

"We have a meeting tomorrow and hope that [the contractor] for CP-1 [contract package I] will be approved there and the construction work will start in July," MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), said yesterday.

The development comes at a time when the Roads and Highways Department still maintains its reservations over the proposed alignment between Hemayetpur and Aminbazar as the rail line will "frustrate" its Dhaka-Aricha highway development plan.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Eid holidaymakers throng Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday, the first day of special train service ahead of the festival. Thousands of people leave the capital for their homes every year to celebrate Eid with their near and dear ones. The Eid holidays begin tomorrow.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Entire society will be under surveillance

Says TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Data Protection Act will put the entire society under surveillance, said Transparency International Bangladesh.

One of the reasons why the TIB thinks so is because the draft law makes it mandatory for every person or organisation dealing with data to enrol in a "data protection register" where they must state what type of data they are collecting, processing, and why.

Not only is this logically impractical, but it also makes the general citizens liable, said the TIB at a press conference held at its office yesterday.

"While it may be appropriate to incorporate a registration requirement in the act for certain data controllers... several questions should be considered before doing so. Which entities are required to register? What is the registration requirement and for which data? Are there any exceptions to the registration requirements?" it said.

Furthermore, even though stakeholders have been demanding that an independent commission be formed to oversee the implementation of the law, the bill puts a government-controlled agency in charge, observed the TIB.

"No reference is found in the draft regarding the independence of the data protection agency," it said, adding that along with operational independence, the agency should have in-built provisions to check abuse of authority.

"The government is a user of data so this creates scope for abuse," said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, addressing the press conference.

He also pointed out that the data protection agency has "unlimited powers" to access the data of any controller or processor without any judicial oversight.

The agency also has the right to ban anyone from processing data



Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, said the draft law mandates storing of sensitive, user-generated and classified data within Bangladesh's geographical boundary, but this will impede freedom of expression and citizens' privacy could be violated. This is because the law gives the government access rights.

without any judicial process.

The TIB recommended that requests for data access should be published in a monthly transparency report.

Iftekharuzzaman said the draft law mandates storing of sensitive, user-generated and classified data within Bangladesh's geographical boundary, but this will impede freedom of expression and citizens' privacy could be violated. This is because the law gives the government access rights.

In addition, the TIB pointed out that the head of the data protection agency will prepare the standard operating procedures or code of conduct for every organisation or group of organisations.

The act considers these codes of practice as regulations, indicating that they will be treated as the law; non-compliance with the code resembles non-compliance of the law itself," said the TIB.

It said the scope of data protection act should be strictly restricted to personal data only. Extending the scope beyond that will be counterproductive, the TIB said.

EU to send observers if election participatory

PORIMOL PALMA

The European Union has told the government that it is ready to send election observers if the next parliamentary polls are participatory.

"I said that a participatory election is necessary for the deployment of an election observation mission, according to the decision of High Representative Josep Borrell," Charles Whiteley, EU ambassador to Bangladesh, told The Daily Star after meeting Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday.

The EU had written to the foreign ministry on February 16, seeking confirmation that Bangladesh would welcome EU election observers.

Yesterday, Momen confirmed to Whiteley that international election observers would be welcome.

The minister also made similar statements during his meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington earlier this month.

Whiteley said Joseph Borrel considers Bangladesh a priority country for sending election observers.

Sending observers takes place in

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Life expectancy declines for first time in 4 yrs

Shows BBS survey; Covid main reason behind it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The average life expectancy for Bangladeshis declined by six months to 72.3 years in 2021, bucking the upward trend seen since 2017.

"It is not a big drop statistically," said Md Matiar Rahman, director general of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, at the launch of the Sample Vital Registration System (SVRS) 2021 yesterday.

The impact of Covid-19 and its post-effects, such as reduced access to healthcare facilities, poverty, lifestyle, nutrition, delayed vaccination and other biological factors

are the reasons behind the decline in life expectancy and the rise in crude death rate, said Mohammad Mainul Islam, former chairperson of Dhaka University's population sciences department.

The crude death rate increased from 5.1 per thousand people to 5.7.

Men's life expectancy declined more than women's.

In 2021, men's life expectancy came down to 70.6 years from 71.2 years and women's from 74.5 to 74.1.

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of disability.

As of January 1, 2021, Bangladesh's population stood at 170.26 million. Among them, 84.33 million were men and 85.93 million were women.

About 96.9 percent of households in 2021 use electricity, according to the report.

Planning Minister MA Mannan highlighted the positive indicators, including the increase in literacy rate and more people coming under the electricity connection.

Shamsul Alam, the state minister for planning, and Shahnaz Arefin, secretary of the Statistics and Informatics Division, also spoke.

Oldest machine-printed book on show in Paris

AFP, Paris



The oldest known work printed on a mechanical press -- a Korean book that predates the first European example by several decades -- went on display in Paris for the first time in 50 years on Wednesday.

The "Jikji", a collection of Buddhist teachings, was printed in 1377 -- some 78 years before Johannes Gutenberg produced his famous Bible using his printing press in Germany.

The Korean treasure is being shown as part of a new exhibition at the National Library of France (BnF), running until July.

Since no examples of the Korean machinery have survived and the technique did not become widely used at the time, it did not have the revolutionary impact of the Gutenberg press -- and the exhibition mostly focuses on European history.

But it marks the first time the "Jikji" has been shown publicly since 1973, according to reports in the Korean press -- reigniting hopes of its return.

"With this exhibition as an occasion, if we collaborate and build a good relationship based on trust, I think we could have a valuable opportunity to see Jikji in person in Korea in the future," said Kim Jung hee, chair of the Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation.

The BnF says Gutenberg was probably not aware of the Korean invention, and was combining various forms of reproduction using wood and copper engravings that had been in use in Europe since around 1400, though they themselves were influenced by techniques imported from East Asia.



Workers harvesting boro paddy under the scorching sun in Agarhati village of Jashore's Keshabpur upazila. The labourers are paid Tk 600-Tk 700 for a day's work. Farmers are happy with a good yield this season due to favourable weather. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN