



Israt Akter Mahi, a student of City Govt Girls High School, poses with her smartcard before she sets off for her first ride on the “smart school bus”. Alongside paperless transactions, CCTV cameras and online tracking, many other modern services have been installed in the 10 buses for ensuring safety of students in Chattogram. The buses will be fully operational on January 10 next year.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

‘Smart’ school bus for students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To ensure safe commuting of students to and from their educational institutes, Chattogram District Administration has initiated smart school bus services.

The project was inaugurated by the prime minister on Monday.

The first bus made its first trip on Tuesday with 70 students from 12 educational institutions from the gymnasium ground of MA Aziz Stadium in the port city, said Chattogram Deputy Commissioner Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad Fakhruzzaman.

“Ten more buses are in plans for the students of Patenga-Halishahar areas,” he added.

The buses have been made “smart” by installing GPS trackers, GIS technology, digital attendance-keeping services and IP cameras. Ten such buses will run in full swing from January 10 next year, he said.

“Parents will now be free of worries and anxieties. Meanwhile, traffic congestion will also lessen,” said Chattogram Divisional Commissioner Tofail Islam, before formally starting the first trip with his smartcard.

Educationist Abul Momen urged residents and authorities to maintain the buses properly so that they can be operational for a longer period.



ECO PARK IN RANGUNIA

Hills being razed for aviary

The area is home to various species of flora and fauna, including over 200 native species of endangered birds. Several species of exotic birds, including African pelicans, swans, Eclectus parrots, and macaws, have been added to the aviary.

SIFAYET ULLAH

A hill is being cut using an excavator, while a portion of another one has already been levelled – this was what this correspondent saw during a visit to Sheikh Russel Aviary and Eco Park in Chattogram’s Rangunia upazila.

Several hills are being razed by the eco-park authorities for building a bird aviary without permission from the Department of Environment. An aviary is a place where birds are kept, such as a zoo or a bird sanctuary.

According to project data, the Forest Department is constructing the aviary in the park on a 45,000 square feet area.

They have already razed a chunk from two hills since October and started making cages for the aviary.

The park, opened to the public in 2013, has been developed on over 500 acres of hill and plain lands in



Nischinta Pur village under the upazila, with the Chattogram South Forest Division overseeing its operation.

The area is home to various species of flora and fauna, including over 200 native species of endangered birds. Several species of exotic birds, including African pelicans, swans, Eclectus parrots, and macaws, among others, have been added to the aviary.

“We are guarding this park. The higher authorities know about the hill cutting,” said a forest guard of the park, wishing anonymity.

A firm is constructing the bird aviary under the supervision of the Public Works Department.

Contacted, Bipul Krishna Das, director of the eco-park development project and conservator of the forest (Chattogram region), said he was not aware of this matter.

“Neither PWD nor the construction firm informed us officially about the hill cutting,” he



claimed. Abhijit Chowdhury, executive engineer of PWD (Ctg circle-1), admitted to not obtaining permission to raze hills.

“We just verbally informed the Forest

Department before levelling these hills but didn’t take permission from the DoE,” he said.

Razing a hill without DoE’s approval is an illegal and punishable offence under the Bangladesh Environment

Preservation Act.

The punishment for breaking the law is up to two years’ imprisonment or Tk 2 lakh fine, or both for first-time offenders. For subsequent offence, it is up to 10 years’ imprisonment or Tk 10 lakh fine or both.

“We will take legal action against hill destroyers based on evidence found through investigation,” said Ferdous Anwar, deputy director of DoE Chattogram.

Around 120 hills disappeared from the port city and neighbouring areas in the last four decades due to development works by many government and private organisations, which has become a major environmental concern, according to Bangladesh Environment Forum.

“Hills are natural aviaries. There was no need to destroy these hills to build an artificial one,” said Mohammad Kamal Hossain, former professor of Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science at Chittagong University.

“The act will cause habitat loss for our native wildlife species and adversely affect the natural ecosystem,” he added.

CANAL RE-EXCAVATION

Residents worry over tilted buildings

SIFAYET ULLAH

Scenes of tilted buildings, residents being evacuated and owners facing financial losses, have become a regular occurrence in some areas of the port city.

Over the last two years, several structures collapsed during re-excitation of nearby canals, including two buildings, a place of worship, and a tin-shed house in Majirghat area nearby Gulzar canal in December 2021, while a four-storied building tilted in Sholoshohor area near Chasma canal in January.

Bangladesh Army’s 34 Engineering Construction Brigade has been implementing the project under the Chattogram Development Authority. They are re-excavating around 36 canals to improve drainage systems across the city.

On Saturday, residents of five buildings in Shahid Nagar of



Residents of five buildings in Shahid Nagar of Chattogram city’s Bayazid area were evacuated after a building in the area tilted during re-excavation work of a nearby canal on November 25. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Korshed Mansion in Shahid Nagar.

After the incident, a team of firefighters evacuated around 100 families from five buildings in the area, including Korshed Mansion.

Visiting Shahid Nagar area recently, this correspondent saw many residents of the evacuated buildings still waiting there while some had already left for relatives’ houses.

“We are forced to shift to a relative’s house. I could not go to the office as I had to collect some important things from my house,” said Noman Ahmed, a resident of the tilted building.

Lt Col Md Shah Ali, director of the CDA project, said they instructed building owners near the canals to protect their assets before the works started, but some of them did not pay heed.

“We are now working to place steel sheets at the canal’s bank for

constructing retaining walls,” he added.

WAS IT AVOIDABLE?

“These mishaps could have been avoided if steel sheets were piled around these risky buildings as it can protect those from subsidence,” said Md Delwar Hossain Mazumdar, former chairman of Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB).

“Korshed Alam constructed the building near a canal without leaving at least 12 feet of space as per the Building Construction Act,” said Kazi Hasan Bin Shams, CDA chief engineer.

Korshed, however, claimed he constructed the building maintaining all existing laws.

Meanwhile, the district administration has formed a seven-member committee to investigate the incident.

CHATTOGRAM MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL Patients suffer as CT scan service halted for a month

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Many patients are being deprived of CT scan service at Chattogram Medical College Hospital for a month as the hospital’s lone CT scan machine has been out of order since October.

CMCH is the only government hospital that provides CT scan service in the greater Chattogram region, serving around 100 patients daily.

At CMCH, the service can be availed for Tk 2,000-4,000, greatly benefiting poor patients as private diagnostic centres offer it for Tk 6,000-15,000.

Doctors advise for CT scan to diagnose suspected brain stroke, head injury, complications in chest or abdomen, or any injury

stopped working in 2014, the service remained halted till 2019.

A new Hitachi machine was then commissioned for Tk 7 crore, which worked seamlessly until it went out of order on October 24.

“The machine first malfunctioned on June 6 and service remained halted for 17 days. As the warranty of the machine is till 2026, we informed the local agent Meditel Private Limited as they are responsible for its maintenance until the warranty expires,” said Prof Subas Majumder, head of Department of Radiology and Imaging at CMCH.

“They fixed the problem and the service resumed on June 24. The machine, however, went out of order again on October 24,” he said.



or lesion in the body, said Prof Dr Sujat Paul, former head of medicine department at CMCH.

CMCH began CT scan service in 2006. After its first machine

“Meditel officials said a tube of the machine needs replacement, but they are yet to replace it,” he added.

“Our enquiry found that

someone cut the earthing cable from outside the CT scan room, which caused a tube of the machine to malfunction when it was turned on,” said Babul Miah, technical manager of Meditel.

“They fixed the problem and the service resumed on June 24. The machine, however, went out of order again on October 24”

Prof Subas Majumder
Head of Department of
Radiology and Imaging at CMCH

Now the company said they would not replace the tube unless CMCH authority buys it, as the damage was due to a security issue which is not under the purview of warranty conditions, he said, adding, “We have informed the CMCH authority about it.”

“Two Meditel staffers have been working at the CT scan room every day for the machine’s maintenance so they would know better. Two other earthing cables are still there, why would the machine’s earthing cable be damaged?” said CMCH director Brig Gen Shamim Ahsan.

“Actually, they are dilly dallying to fix the machine. I sent the company a letter on November 15 for taking immediate steps to solve the issue,” he added.