



METRO RAIL A relief for female commuters

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

NILIMA JAHAN

In a city where one rarely comes across women-friendly public transportation and harassment is a common phenomenon, a coach reserved for female commuters in the country's first-ever metro rail came as a blessing. The reserved coach not only offers security for women travelling between Uttara to Motijheel, but also aims to encourage more female passengers to use this service.

Take the case of Tilotoma Jahan*, a 30-year-old job holder who has to travel from Kazipara to Karwan Bazar daily with her 7-month-old daughter.

"It is nearly impossible to find an Uber or CNG-run three-wheeler during office hours. It usually takes hours and the fair is never lower than Tk 300," said Tilotoma, who would previously wait for her husband to pick her up after work.

Now, it only costs Tk 36 for the same ride and her husband no longer has to come all the way from his workplace in Gulshan, she said, adding that the money being saved is used for her daughter's nutritional wellbeing.

"The best part of the journey is that others offer their seats to me, as I travel with my toddler," she added.

Most women avoid using public transport as they fear they will be harassed, said Priyanka Roy, a 30-year-old service holder.

According to a 2017 BRAC survey, 94 percent females using public transport in Bangladesh experience some sort of sexual harassment.

"Surrounded by women, I no longer have to worry about the conductors touching my back under the guise of helping me board or endure the discomfort of someone leaning on me intentionally," Priyanka added.

In the past, it was nearly impossible for Noor Jahan Kabir, a lawyer practicing at Dhaka Judge Court, to get on a bus every morning.

"The thought of pushing through a huge crowd of male commuters and finding a seat afterwards was a trauma that I woke up to every morning. However, there is no need for me to endure catcalls, whistles or comments on my outfit during my daily journey from Uttara to Old Dhaka anymore," she said.

Mohsina Ahmed, associate professor at Savar City University, echoed Noor Jahan.

"I had to change three modes of transport every day during my previous commute from Karwan Bazar to Ashulia, and that left me exhausted. However, now, I take the metro which is faster and more secure," she said.

With safety being a concern for most parents, many like Kazi Tajriha

Alam Simi were not allowed to go out randomly.

"However, now I can easily travel to Mirpur, which I believe is a shopping paradise," she smiled.

For 50-year-old Rahima Begum, traveling used to be very difficult. Quite often, she could not visit her aged sister in Motijheel, as her sons did not feel it safe for her to travel alone on public transports.

"Now, my sons encourage me to visit her, but only if I am taking the metro rail," she added.

Two female MRT police officials stand guard in front of the female compartment, preventing entry to male passengers.

According to officers on duty, no incidents of sexual harassment has come to their notice so far.

(Interviewees' identities have been protected with pseudonyms)



The reserved coach not only offers security for women travelling between Uttara and Motijheel, but also aims to encourage more female passengers to use this service.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Hit by police vehicle, man dies in Jatrabari

STAR REPORT

One person was killed and another injured after being hit by a police vehicle in the capital's Jatrabari area on Thursday night.

The deceased was identified as Roman, 30, an employee of a packaging factory. His co-worker Mariyam, 25, suffered leg injuries and was treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The accident took place around 10:30pm in Bhanga Press area when they were crossing the road, said Jatrabari Police Station Sub-inspector Mizanur Rahman.

The vehicle that hit them belongs to the police's Public Order Management division and it is used for carrying police personnel, the SI said.

Roman's father Selim Mistri said he was informed last night over mobile phone that his son was injured in a road accident. Later, he went to DMCH and found him in critical condition.

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Sunflower wonderland!

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

A vast sunflower field, stretching across three acres, bathed in a sea of yellow hues. From a distance, it looks like a million tiny suns dancing in the wind. Ponds and green fields on both sides only add to the field's intrigue, which is situated in Pabna Sadar's Tebunia area.

The place belongs to the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation's seed production farm. Originally focused on cultivating seeds for diverse crops, the farm took a vibrant turn three years ago when it introduced sunflowers to its landscape.

Today, this golden expanse has become a tourist magnet, drawing visitors from different regions who are enchanted by the simple yet breathtaking beauty of the sunflower field. Although not officially designated a tourist spot, the field's allure has inspired hundreds to gather, capturing moments through photos and videos.

Nurunnabi Khan, who works at a private firm, said, "When I saw pictures of the large sunflower field on social media, I came here along with my family to see the beauty first hand."

"I have never seen such a big field of blooming sunflowers in the country, so I have come here," Mostafizur Rahman, a cultural activist, said.



The sea of yellow hues, bowing and swaying in the gentle breeze, is surrounded by lush green fields and ponds on both sides. The land belongs to the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation's seed production farm in Pabna Sadar's Tebunia area.

PHOTO: STAR

'They scalped 500 train tickets daily'

Rab arrests 14 syndicate members in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of railway station staffers and an online ticket selling company aided syndicates in acquiring and distributing tickets at inflated prices. This caused ticket shortages in stations across the country.

The Rapid Action Battalion arrested 14 members of these nexus, including the masterminds, from various parts of the capital on Thursday night, Rab Legal and Media Wing director Commander Khandaker Al Moin told a press briefing yesterday.

The arrestees are – gang leaders Uttam Chandra Das, 30, and Md Selim, 50, gang members Anwar Hossain alias Kashem, 62, Abani Sarker Sumon, 35, Harun Miah, 60, Mannan, 50, Anwar Hossain, 50, Faruk, 62, Shahidul Islam Babu, Jewel, 23, Abdur Rahim, 32, Morshed Miah, 45, Abdul Ali, 22, and Zobayer, 25.

Teams of Rab-3 arrested them in separate drives from Kamalapur and Airport railway stations.

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BNP a master of lobbying: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday criticised BNP for negotiating with foreign countries over the arrest of its activists, saying the party should deal with the cases legally.

"Those who are not involved in crimes will be released following legal process. Will we release them as per America's words?" asked Quader.

He was speaking at a warm cloth distribution programme held at the premises of Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi 32 in the capital. AL's relief and social welfare sub-committee organised the event.

Regarding the number of imprisoned leaders and activists, Quader said, "Whether it is 25,000 or not, our jails cannot accommodate that many people. I talked to the home minister. He told me there are around 11,000 to 12,000 people who have gone to jail after committing crimes."

"They [BNP] are even making United Nations say that 25,000 of their activists are behind bars. They have been lobbying well. This party is a master of lobbying," he added.

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Will increase efforts to bring convicts back

Says law minister

STAR REPORT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said efforts will be increased to bring back those to the country who have been sentenced and convicted by the court.

He made the remarks in response to a query regarding the return of sentenced convicts, including Tarique Rahman, acting chairman of BNP.

On a two-day trip, the minister arrived in Akhaura yesterday to inaugurate different developmental projects organised by local upazila parishad and participate in a public meeting organised by local Awami League.

The minister also said the Labour Act will be passed in this parliament session.

When asked about the letter of 12 American senators to the prime minister to stop the harassment of Prof Mohammad Yunus, the minister said, "As far as I know by looking at the documents of this case, the trial has been conducted in accordance with the law in the judicial court. The person who has been sentenced will surely appeal, so I don't want to affect things."