



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Types of passengers you meet on metro

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

Metro rail is the commuting solution for thousands of people in the city. For many, the fleeting commute is as much a part of their day as much as their work. Even though most of the commutes last only a few minutes, each ride gives you an experience that only Dhaka can offer.

Here are the types of passengers that you can expect to meet on the metro rail.

THE GATE HUGGER

The gate hugger is the one passenger you cannot miss because he is there, standing at the gate the whole time. Even when his destination may be far away, or even if there is plenty of space inside the compartment, this particular passenger archetype just refuses to move away from the gate.

Of course, this makes it difficult for people to board and get off the metro, but they don't care much about another person's convenience. They just love the gate and they will stand there.

THE ENTITLED ONE

Perhaps the only type of passenger universally loathed are the entitled



ones. These "big shots" refuse to stand in line. Even if they do stand in the queue, you can be certain that they will break the queue as soon as the train arrives and they will attempt to jump into the compartment. It's like the rules just do not apply to them and they don't care how much everyone around them are annoyed by it.

THE APPREHENSIVE ONE

The apprehensive ones are probably just panicking inside, because they start moving towards the gate long before the train even arrives at the destination. Sometimes, they start the journey two stations in advance,

pushing and shoving their way to the gate, probably anxiety ridden over the fear of missing their station and getting dropped off far away. While it is very understandable to move towards the gate before the train arrives at the station, sometimes the apprehensive ones seem to be freaking out for no particular reason.

THE ONE WHO LOVES TO TALK

It seems impossible to find a public transport where there isn't at least one person with an overly active mouth. These people seem to have a lot of opinions, strong ones at that and they are highly interested in

discussing those with strangers on public transport. Of course, even the metro rail gets these passengers. While most office goers are not particularly interested in rambling, there are the occasional lippy ones who keep the compartment alive with the sound of their voice. Annoying as they maybe, most commuters do not bother engaging in a conversation with them, but that doesn't stop them from trying.

THE GROUP OF FRIENDS

While often most people on the metro are office goers, either commuting to or from work, visibly exhausted for what lies ahead, every now and then, a couple or a group of young people will board the metro. These people are way too excited about something and they cannot contain their excitement. They are either talking loudly or moving and gesturing something in the general direction of their friends. Other people will sometimes give them a perturbed look, but that never stops them.

And last but not least, there is another kind of passenger who will watch it all, remember it all, sit on his computer one day and then write about it. I'm that kind.

Which kind are you?

Until the conch shells call her again Durga Puja ends with immersion of idols

UNB, Dhaka

The biggest festival of the Bangalee Hindu community, Durga Puja, ended yesterday with the immersion of idols of Goddess Durga and her children in rivers, ponds and the sea across Bangladesh.

According to Hindu belief, the immersion symbolises Durga's return to her husband's abode at Kailash.

In Dhaka, the Buriganga river turned into the heart of the celebration as thousands gathered to witness the final phase of the festival. Devotees from different neighbourhoods carried the idols on trucks to the riverbanks, singing hymns and playing instruments such as shankha, khol and dhak.

Amid chants and prayers, worshippers bid farewell to the mother goddess and her children — Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik and Ganesh — immersing their idols in the water with hopes of her return next year.

One of the highlights of the concluding day was Shidur Khela, a traditional ritual where female devotees offered vermilion at the feet of the goddess and then smeared it on one another.

The act symbolises blessings of prosperity and pays tribute to the divine feminine power embodied in Durga.

This year's Durga Puja was celebrated at around 33,355 mandaps nationwide, including hundreds in Dhaka alone. The five-day festival began on September 28 with Bodhon (the invocation of the goddess) on Shashthi and culminated on Dashami with the immersion ceremonies.

Durga Puja, also known as Sharadiya Durga Utsab, is regarded as the worship of Shakti — the divine force. It symbolises the eternal triumph of good over evil, as the goddess defeats the forces of darkness.

US GOVT SHUTDOWN Trump threatens mass lay-offs of federal workers

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump yesterday signaled that he plans to follow through on his threat for mass layoffs of US federal workers as he ratcheted pressure on Democrats to back moves to end the government shutdown.

The Republican president announced he would meet budget chief Russell Vought "to determine which of the many Democrat Agencies, most of which are a political SCAM, he recommends to be cut, and whether or not those cuts will be temporary or permanent."

Trump's announcement on his Truth Social website came with the government entering the second day of a stoppage that is expected to see 750,000 employees being sent home without pay across a wide range of agencies.

Vought told House Republicans on Wednesday many of those workers would be targeted for permanent layoffs to be announced in the next day or two, echoing Trump spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt's threat that firings were "imminent."

Loan recovery from top 20 defaulters stalls Unease growing beneath unkept promises

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are being readied: credit embargoes across all banks, asset seizures and digital auctions to ensure transparency, and restrictions on access to government contracts, tenders and facilities.

The roadmap also addresses the vast backlog of cases clogging the courts. "A very large number of cases remain pending across the six banks, constituting the majority share of their NPL burden," Nazma said, adding that 100 priority cases have already been identified based on the highest financial involvement.

"Banks have been directed to intensify efforts toward resolving these cases by ensuring the presence of representatives at every hearing, conducting monthly review meetings chaired by the heads of the respective banks, and taking stronger measures to address writ petitions," she said.

The government plans to establish special loan recovery tribunals with six-to-twelve-month deadlines to fast-track 77 percent of default loans currently tied up in court, according to the finance ministry's report. In parallel, officials are exploring

alternative dispute resolution for mid-tier borrowers. The plan draws on practices in India and Sri Lanka, where arbitration and mediation have been deployed to speed up settlements and ease pressure on overburdened courts.

Alongside loan defaults, thousands of audit objections remain unresolved across the state-owned banks. Then there are weak internal controls, politically influenced lending and poor risk oversight.

"To address this challenge, banks have been instructed to establish stronger monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure timely resolution and effective recovery of audit-related issues," Nazma said.

Rupali Bank Chairman Nazrul Huda, who was appointed in August 2024, "Loans were given in the past without due diligence to bad borrowers who misused or diverted funds, or siphoned money abroad. Many projects are non-existent, and borrowers are not traceable. The recovery of such loans is almost impossible."

The finance ministry has also directed banks to establish

"independent audit compliance cells" to clear objections under strict deadlines, while holding boards and senior management personally accountable for recurring lapses. Plans also include new real-time monitoring dashboards to track audit issues and prevent repeat failures.

Sector-wide, the picture is bleak. Total classified loans at state-owned commercial banks reached Tk 149,140 crore by the second quarter of 2025, with provisioning shortfalls of nearly Tk 640 billion.

To contain the damage, the government is weighing the creation of a state-backed Asset Management Company to isolate toxic assets and manage them professionally. Bank recapitalisations, long a drain on the public purse, are expected to be made conditional on measurable recovery targets, including reductions in NPL ratios.

Nazma said banks have also been ordered to keep the finance ministry fully updated: "All banks have been directed to provide us with regular updates on their recovery progress, covering defaulters, pending cases, and audit objections."

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"We did not sign the accord with any political party but with the state itself, which is bound to implement it," said KS Mong, a central PCJSS leader.

"Yet governments have repeatedly shown no political will to do so."

INTERIM GOVT'S ACTIONS

After the AL government fell in August 2024, the CHT Peace Accord Implementation Movement submitted a list of demands to the interim administration, urging that the accord be prioritised at the national level.

Since then, the platform has held at least eight programmes to press home their demands.

In response, the interim government reconstituted the peace accord implementation and monitoring committee, led by the foreign adviser.

The committee met once in Rangamati and admitted that the treaty had not been fulfilled, KS Mong, who also serves on the regional council, told The Daily Star.

The government also appointed a new chairman for the Land Commission, which had remained inactive since its previous chief died in 2021. However, beyond these steps, no significant progress has been made in the 15 months of the interim rule, he added.

"The treaty promised local government, land dispute resolution, and demilitarisation. Yet the government's claims of progress don't reflect the ground reality."

One of the central provisions of the accord was restructuring the hill district councils to ensure fair representation of indigenous people. Rights activists say this has not been achieved.

"The ratio of indigenous to Bangalee members of the district councils is now the same, but the treaty clearly stated that one-third of members should be from the Bangalee community," said Nirupa Dewan, rights activist and former member of Women Affairs Reform Commission.

She noted that voter lists of permanent residents of hill districts were not prepared and no district

council elections were never held. Instead, ruling parties appointed their loyalists as district council chairmen. As a result, the district councils and the regional council have remained largely ineffective.

This correspondent tried to contact CHT Affairs Adviser Supradip Chakma for comments. But he did not respond to our phone calls or Whatsapp messages.

LAND: THE CORE DISPUTE

The Land Commission, another crucial institution, has also failed to function properly.

"Addressing the land issue is the single most urgent priority," said Khairul Chowdhury, professor at Dhaka University's sociology department, who has been the joint coordinator of the CHT Peace Accord Implementation Movement since 2020.

"If the land issue is resolved sincerely, 80 percent of other disputes will be automatically settled," he said. "Without resolving land claims, it is impossible to prepare a proper voter list, hold district council elections, or empower the regional councils."

The Land Commission has received more than 2,200 applications since the law for the commission was amended in 2016. Yet it has remained ineffective due to a lack of rules of business, inadequate funds, and weak institutional support, said Prof Khairul.

Another unfulfilled pledge is demilitarisation.

Dipayan Khisa, a PCJSS central committee member, said, "After the signing of the accord, only 66 out of over 500 temporary military camps in the CHT were removed in two phases. Another 35 temporary camps were removed between 2009 and 2013. However, many of them were later reinstated."

Dipayan said the government has established 16 new military camps, and a BGB camp since 2022, citing a military operation against the KNF in Bandarban.

"If the accord had been properly implemented, the hill people and the Bangalees would not see each other as enemies, and there would be coexistence between the two groups,"

said Nirupa Dewan.

Prof Khairul said the hill people and Bangalee settlers continue to live in uncertainty and fear due to non-implementation of the peace treaty.

They both said violence in CHT would have been prevented had the accord been properly implemented.

Prof Khairul said that with local councils ineffective, governance has been left largely in the hands of bureaucrats and security agencies. Many residents describe this as a "colonial pattern of control", where the population remains subjects rather than active citizens.

"The accord was meant to be a political settlement. If we only count clauses numerically instead of addressing their spirit — land, self-rule, reconciliation — then the crisis will persist," Prof Khairul warned.

He cautioned that without meaningful steps, the CHT risks being trapped in a permanent limbo, similar to unresolved conflicts in places like Kashmir and Palestine.

A CALL FOR FRESH REVIEW
Many rights activists are now calling for an independent review of the treaty to assess whether and how it can be implemented.

"The CHT problem is not unsolvable," said Prof Khairul.

"With dialogue, justice on land issues, and genuine political commitment, Bangladesh can transform the hill from a source of tension into a reflection of its democratic and humanitarian values."

He argued that the accord should be reviewed independently to judge its relevance in today's context. "Circumstances have changed. Geopolitics, leadership, and ground realities are not what they were in 1997."

Such a review, he suggested, should involve credible experts, the military, political leaders, and civil society members. The army, he added, could also undertake an internal review of its role in the CHT.

"The question is whether the CHT will remain a permanent conflict zone, or whether a solution will emerge to bring peace to the region," said Prof Khairul.

Global outcry as Israel stops Gaza-bound flotilla

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The Global Samud Flotilla later said the vessel's name is Marinette, and it is "still sailing strong".

Meanwhile, Conscience, a ship carrying renowned Bangladeshi photographer and rights activist Shahidul Alam, was still sailing towards Gaza, according to the photographer's Facebook page.

According to social media, Bangladeshi-origin British human rights activist and health specialist Ruhil Loren Akhtar is also taking part in the flotilla.

With the war in Gaza dragging on, solidarity with the Palestinians has grown globally, with activists and, increasingly, governments condemning Israel for its conduct.

Rights group Amnesty International criticised Israel for blocking the flotilla, saying it was an "act of intimidation intended to punish and silence critics of Israel's genocide and its unlawful

blockade on Gaza".

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) also criticised Israel for seizing news workers travelling with the flotilla. The media watchdog said it identified 32 journalists on board the vessels, but it remains unclear who has been detained by Israeli forces at sea.

The boats, with dozens of activists from around the world on board, initially set sail from several European ports. After a 10-day stop in Tunisia, where organisers reported two drone attacks, the flotilla resumed its journey on September 15.

Across Europe, thousands of protesters took to the streets in Dublin, Paris, Berlin and Geneva to condemn Israel's interception of the flotilla. Rallies also took place in Buenos Aires, Mexico City and Karachi.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro said he will expel all remaining Israeli diplomats in the country over the interception.

Turkey called the interception "an act of terrorism," and said it had opened an investigation after Israeli forces arrested Turkish citizens on board the flotilla.

Spain yesterday summoned Israel's top representative in Madrid, the foreign minister said, saying that 65 Spaniards were travelling with the flotilla.

Israel blocked similar flotilla attempts in June and July.

'LARGE SCALE MASSACRE' FEARS
On the ground, Israeli tanks blocked the main road to Gaza City yesterday, preventing those who have left the besieged city from returning, and Defence Minister Israel Katz said it was now the last chance for hundreds of thousands of people still inside to escape.

Israel has threatened that any Palestinians who remain in Gaza City will be defined as "terrorists or terror supporters".