

EASTERN PLAZA

Once a pioneer, now lost on modern trends

Turanur Islam

Eastern Plaza – the first modern, multi-storied and fully air conditioned shopping centre in Bangladesh – took Dhaka dwellers by storm when it launched in 1990. Widely regarded as a pioneer, the mall catered to the ever changing shopping landscape from 1992 to mid-2000s.

Once a dazzling spending destination, Eastern Plaza gradually became a second choice for most of the capital city's shoppers in recent years.

Many modern malls such as the Bashundhara City Shopping Complex, Jamuna Future Park, and Shimanto Square have emerged over the years, providing grandiose food courts, movie theatres, games and kids centres.

Consumers nowadays look for such amenities when visiting a mall, as it enhances their shopping experience. A number of shop owners and consumers pointed out that the Eastern Plaza fell behind its competitors because it could not keep up with this trend.

But the mall – located in the Hatirpool area – still has its loyal customers who have been shopping here for decades.

Mohammad Anisul Islam, one such shopper hailing from the capital's Wari area, said, "In our time, the Eastern Plaza was the flagship mall of our country. We used to shop here during holidays with family and friends.

"This place used to be very crowded with people of all ages, who spent hours here. Back then, it was the only destination for fashionable, premium clothes for women and children."

Still good for smartphone buyers

Eastern Plaza still has an excellent reputation for offering top quality smartphones and other accessories for sale at affordable prices. Such products currently make up the bulk of its sales,



The mall still has its loyal customers who have been shopping here for decades

- Shamsul Haque Ripon

insiders said.

Golam Rahman, a former banker and a resident in Hatirpool Kacha Bazar area, was visiting the mall to repair his mobile phone.

Sharing his experience, Rahman said, "It has been my favorite shopping mall for years. When they built this mall here, there was nothing like it. People from both Dhaka and across the country used to shop here.

"Drove of people from all ages used to meet and eat here. But now the younger generation has a lot of options. They now prefer more modern malls like Bashundhara City Shopping Complex and Jamuna Future Park."

Rokonuzzaman Toha, a student of Dhaka University, came to the mall to do a smartphone price comparison with the stores in Bashundhara City Shopping Complex.

"I however want to buy my phone from the Bashundhara Shopping Com-

plex. It has a lot of stores which are quite popular on social media, and they run exciting offers. The mall itself is a good place for hangouts."

The business of RK Electronics, one of the oldest mobile phone repair shops in the Eastern Plaza, peaked between 2000 and 2015. After this period, other modern shopping malls emerged and RK Electronics began losing their customers.

Shop employees say they still have a loyal customer base. Though the younger people go elsewhere, most of their customers visit this store for the quality and reliability of services provided by the RK Electronics.

Al Amin Miazi, the owner of Miazi Telecom at the mall, said, "Despite this mall's decreasing popularity, my customers do not go anywhere else as we sell authentic brand products. Most sellers in Eastern Plaza offer quality services."

The stores Shruti Mega Mart and Ha-Za-Ba-Ra-La have been selling women's

dresses in the mall for more than twenty years.

Mohammad Zahir, the owner of Shruti Mega Mart said, "The shops here somewhat failed to keep pace with the younger generation's demands. We lack variety compared to other modern shopping malls. But we are trying to re-shape our business according to popular trends."

Md Mirazul Islam, an official of Ha-Za-Ba-Ra-La said, "The shop owners association has recently taken some initiatives such as installing modern elevators and escalators, CCTV cameras, improving security facilities at the mall, which is helping us get more customers."

The Eastern Plaza Shop Owners Association said the pandemic has severely affected businesses here. After the pandemic, the association is thinking of new ways to enhance customer service and attract more people.

MRT-6 PROCUREMENT

Tk233cr addl fund sought to cover CD VAT

Staff Correspondent

The Road Transport and Highways Division sought an additional Tk 233 crore allocation to cover CD VAT for importing metro train sets, depot equipment, and electrical and mechanical items under the Dhaka Mass Transit Development Project (MRT Line-6).

The division recently sent an application to the Planning Division seeking the additional fund under the Revised Annual Development Programme (RADP) allocation of FY22, a Planning Commission senior official told The Business Post.

To implement this fast track project, the government has allocated Tk 4,200 crore in this fiscal year for the MRT-6 line of the metro rail, the official added.

The Planning Commission is working on preparing the RADP for FY22, which will get approval at a National Economic Council (NEC) meeting – chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina – in the coming days.

On the matter, Secretary of Planning Division Pradip Ranjan Chakraborty said, "We have received an application from the Road Transport and Highways Division seeking additional funds with

the RADP to cover CD VAT for importing metro train sets and other equipment.

The commission's Project Evaluation Committee (PEC) has agreed to provide the additional fund, says the application.

Implementing agency Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL) has plans to procure 24 sets of metro trains with a cost of Tk 4,257 crore from Japan, 10 sets of metro trains have already arrived in the country.

The overall progress of the country's first Metro Rail is currently 75.39 per cent. The construction from Uttara to Agargaon portion has progressed 90.42 per cent, and Agargaon to Motijheel portion 74.42 per cent.

The progress of Electrical and Mechanical Systems and Rolling Stock (Rail Coach), and Depot Equipment Procurement Progress is 73.79 per cent.

Of total cost Tk 22,000 crore, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will provide Tk 16,595 crore, while the rest of the fund will come from the government exchequer.

Once the project is implemented, 20.1 km of electricity-powered light rail tracks will be able to serve more than 60,000 passengers per hour from both sides.



Tk 4,200 crore has been allocated in this fiscal year for MRT-6 line of the metro rail

- Shamsul Haque Ripon

PHP industries to feature in YouTuber Al-Farook's new video

Staff Correspondent

Popular YouTuber Mohammed Al-Farook's new video will feature leading Bangladeshi conglomerate PHP Family.

Over the last three days, he recorded footage of the country's first green shipyard, PHP Shipbreaking and Recycling Industries, first 'Talking Car' PHP Proton and PHP Reflective Glass, Mirror, and Tempered Glass in Chattogram.

PHP Float Glass Industries Ltd Managing Director Mohammed Amir Hosain Sohail and PHP Automobiles Ltd Managing Director Mohammed Akther Parvez were present during the filming.

US expatriate Al-Farook came to Bangladesh recently to record the South Asian country's development scenario, PHP said in a press release.

His verified YouTube channel 'Adventure Tube21', launched in Sep-



Popular YouTuber Mohammed Al-Farook records footage of different business sectors of the Bangladeshi conglomerate PHP Family in Chattogram

- Courtesy Photo

tember 2015, has more than 3,70,000 subscribers.

PHP Family founded by Sufi Mohamed Mizanur Rahman is a leading business conglomerate in Bangladesh.

The group comprises over 30 companies operating in diversified sectors including steel, float glass, aluminum, textiles, power, petro refinery, financial services, and agriculture.

CAAB to procure 3 EDS machines for Dhaka airport for Tk41cr

Hasan Arif

The Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh (CAAB) is set to procure three sets of explosive detection system (EDS) for Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

The EDSs, which will be used for cargo scanning and New York-bound passenger flights' hand baggage scanning at the airport's cargo village which, will cost Tk 41.46 crore.

A proposal regarding this may be presented before the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs for approval in principle on Thursday (today).

CAAB sources said the airport authorities have plans to launch Dhaka-New York flights from next month, which will require an additional set of EDS.

An audit of New York-bound flights by Transportation Security Administration (TSA) may take place in next June. The EDS machines need to be operated before that.

Local company Update Aviation

Limited will directly purchase the three ESD made by US firm Laidis SDA while each of the machines has been proposed to be bought at Tk 13.82 crore.

Earlier, an EDS machine was procured at Tk 13.55 crore from the same company for Osmani International Airport in Sylhet in 2021.

Currently, four sets of EDS machines are available at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport for baggage and cargo scanning.

Two sets of export cargo scanning machines (model Morfo 980DSI) were made in America that were installed and commissioned on December 10, 2017. Their three-year warranty period concluded in December 2020.

The next year, a machine went out of order and another frequently malfunctioned due to technical glitches, but the CAAB authorities thought fixing the machines by investing more money would not be profitable.

As a result, the two machines still

have old technology and are listed by TSA, and they need to be replaced.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism directed the CAAB to purchase the EDSs through an open tender, but the latter decided to buy them directly.

Regarding its decision, the CAAB said it needs to buy the machines on an emergency basis as explosive scanning is mandatory for New York-bound flights.

The CAAB is considering operating explosive scans for all hand baggage in 2022. Besides, after buying the machines, other work, including installation and validation, will be time-consuming.

Presently, two EDS machines of RTT-110 model are used for safety screening of Europe-bound cargo as per the European Union independent validation.

They were installed in the RA-3 (Regulated Agent Third Country Validation Process) area and were financed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Call for innovative agri tech to improve farmers' outcomes

UNB. Dhaka

A virtual media tour titled "Role of Innovative Technologies in Addressing Agricultural Challenges" has discussed science-based reporting on innovative agricultural technologies, including biotechnology, with media professionals.

The event highlighted the vast potential of innovative agricultural technologies to improve outcomes for farmers, the environment, and consumers.

The State Department, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) at the U.S. Embassy in Bangladesh, organized the virtual tour moderated by Md. Arif Hossain, CEO, and Executive Director of FFB.

"These new technologies promise to speed up crop development, ensure farmers have access to more sustainable solutions, and give consumers safe, affordable access to food," said US Embassy Agricultural Attaché Megan Francic.

This virtual tour was part of a series of events to be organized in Bangla-

desh, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Farming Future Bangladesh (FFB), a science-based communication and community engagement organization, facilitated.

The tour provided an overview of communication practices in agricultural reporting, as well as the current status and importance of agricultural biotechnology in Bangladesh.

Specific topics included genome editing, productivity, biosafety, food safety, consumption and diversified use, and regulatory challenges.

Senior journalists from seven print media outlets attended the media tour.

Media personnel interacted with speakers and shared their views on the status, prospects, and challenges of agricultural biotechnology.

Participating journalists expressed that agricultural news needs to be data-driven and correctly represent the science, and they noted the importance of the media staying updated with the fast-paced innovations in agriculture at the national and international levels.

A HARD LIVING



Two children collect scrap at a landfill in the capital's Rayer Bazar on Wednesday

- Shamsul Haque Ripon