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Relief on cards as subway linking E-W, Howrah stns set for June launch

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Kolkata: Commuters using Howrah railway station and the metro station embedded in it can expect some relief soon. Come June, an L-shaped subway connecting the East-West Metro station with Asia's busiest railway station will be thrown open to the public, officials said.

Once the facility is functional, commuters will not need to come out of the metro station premises to access Howrah railway station.

Through the Metro station concourse, they can easily access the Howrah railway station, which accommodates trains from two zones — Eastern and South-Eastern.

While planning the subway, Kolkata Metro Rail Corporation (KMRC), which is implementing the 16.6km East-West Metro that will eventually link Salt Lake Sector V with Howrah Maidan, and Afcons, contractors of the 3.8km Howrah Maidan-Esplanade section, thought of the high footfall. After all, the subway is linking Howrah metro station, which is not only India's deepest Metro station but is also the country's largest, with a 52,000 sqm floor area, with one of Asia's busiest railway stations.

"The floor area of Howrah metro station was created to accommodate the rush-hour traffic, which according to a RITES study would be 43,000 an hour during peak time," an official said. The subway, 9m from the ground level, has been also designed to accommodate very high pedestrian traffic, with a total length of around 100m and a width varying between 8m and 13m and a floor area covering 915sqm. Its access would lead to the railway station's platforms 15 and 16.

"The subway is being built as a crucial component of the Howrah Metro station, which, at 33m, is India's deepest metro station," a KMRC official said.

There are two escalators and a staircase at the subway's access points. When completed, it will have canopied cover, synchronizing with Howrah metro station's aesthetics. Other features include CCTV surveillance and a public address system for the ultimate commuter experience.

According to officials, water will be transported to pumps near the entry emergency staircase by a network of covered channel drains at the subway's floor level. At these sites, pumps with the necessary capacities have been installed so that water could flow into the metro station's drainage system.

Top-down construction method is being used to build the subway coming up beside Howrah station's platform 15 and between the DRM building and the Metro station.

The construction is an engineering challenge because of the sheer footfall of the railway station and now, the metro station. Careful planning and collaboration were required between KMRC, Eastern and South-Eastern railway authorities and construction contractors Afcons.