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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Metro zooms below Hooghly, India gets 1st underwater link

TNN | Mar 7, 2024, 09.56 AM IST



KOLKATA: History was created on Wednesday when Prime Minister Narendra Modi threw open India's first underwater Metro by inaugurating the underwater Metro link connecting Kolkata and its twin city, Howrah.

PM took an under-river ride with a group of lucky schoolkids with the first Metro zooming along the underwater section. However, the average Kolkata citizen would have to wait a little more, said Metro sources.

The new lines (PM inaugurated two more, apart from the under-river section) would be thrown open to all in seven to 10 days, said sources. Trains in the newly opened Esplanade-Howrah stretch will run at an interval of 12 minutes or less during rush hours. The East-West Metro, of which 2.5km is still incomplete, will be fully operational by Oct-end, they added.

PM also launched two more crucial links: the long-awaited first phase of the New Garia-Airport Metro and the second phase of the Joka-Esplanade Metro.

Kolkata Metro Rail Corporation (KMRC) managing director VK Srivastava, confirming the start of service for all in 10 days at most, added that trains on the route would operate six days a week. There would be no service on

Sundays for maintenance.

The PM, addressing a party rally later, said when he had visited Kolkata for the first time as a youngster, one of the biggest attractions for him was the country's first Metro. "But now the Metro is also an example of how BJP stands for quick and time-bound development. Before 2014, in the first 40 years before this govt took over, a total of 28km of Metro route was operational (in Kolkata). In the past 10 years with BJP govt at the helm, an additional 31km of new tracks has been added to the Metro route," Modi said.

The new section has two other engineering marvels: the 33m-deep Howrah Metro station and the 44m-deep ventilation-cum-evacuation shaft. The Howrah Maidan and Howrah Station are on one side of the river and the Mahakaran station on the other side in Kolkata.

"It is a very special day for the people of Kolkata as the city's Metro system is undergoing significant expansion. This will speed up the communication system and reduce traffic congestion. It is a proud moment that the country's first underwater Metro transport tunnel under a major river of our country has been inaugurated on the Howrah Maidan-Esplanade Metro Branch," said PM on X.