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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

LIFE STYLE

SHOW OF MIGHT

US, South Korea hold joint military drill in Japan sea

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GOLF KING NO MORE

Legendary American golfer Arnold Palmer dies in Pittsburgh at 87

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As a debate rages over the Rampal power plant and its impact on the Sundarbans, a substantive amount of information is available for us to reach some conclusion. The plant may have a far-reaching impact on the world's unique mangrove forest.

DISASTER

written on the wall

Unique Sundarbans inching towards death with 'development' initiatives

INAM AHMED

About two million years ago, a magnificent forest was born on the landmass created by the deposited silt carried down by two mighty rivers – the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. Over time, human encroachment has changed it irrevocably, changing its shape, area and wellbeing.

But now it seems a more powerful blow is awaiting the forest as the government goes ahead with the controversial Rampal project, a coal-fired power plant in joint venture with India. For the Sundarbans, the one and only forest of its grandeur in the planet, it might as well be its death knell.

But it is not this 1300MW coal power plant alone. With it are sprouting many other industries – shipyards, silos, cement plants, food processing plant and many others. Just as it happened in the Wild West, people with money are rushing in snapping up land to set up industries.

And of course, two more coal projects by a private company Orion are waiting in the wings, probably waiting for Rampal to pave the way for them.

The end result spells disaster if the impact of large scale industrialisation elsewhere in the country is anything to go by. A PICTURE-PERFECT PROJECT ...

The project sounds awesome from its champions, just

like the spiel one of its consultants, who walked into this newspaper office, gave.

One could easily get swayed by the plan of how big vessels would offload coal at Akram Point off the Sundarbans, how dust would be controlled and how the community would soon prosper.

To feed the hungry plant, mother vessels will come with 80 thousand tonnes of coal at Akram Point, a spot tucked in the belly of the forest. Every day the plant will require 12 thousand tonnes of coal, which means 1.5 lighterage vessels will ply the Pasur river slicing through the forest.

The plan says ultramodern vessels would take in coal through a funnel into the cargo hold of the lighterage vessel and fine water mist would be sprayed to contain any dust pollution. And only one percent of the total dust would float out to the river which would sink to the bottom causing no harm to the forest.

Sixty percent of the mercury produced by burning coal would be captured and the rest would thinly disperse into air, sulphur would be kept at a minimum.

...BUT THAT STORY IS FULL OF HOLES

Again, these sound perfect on paper but in reality the plan is full of holes. The plant is not actually a "state-of-the

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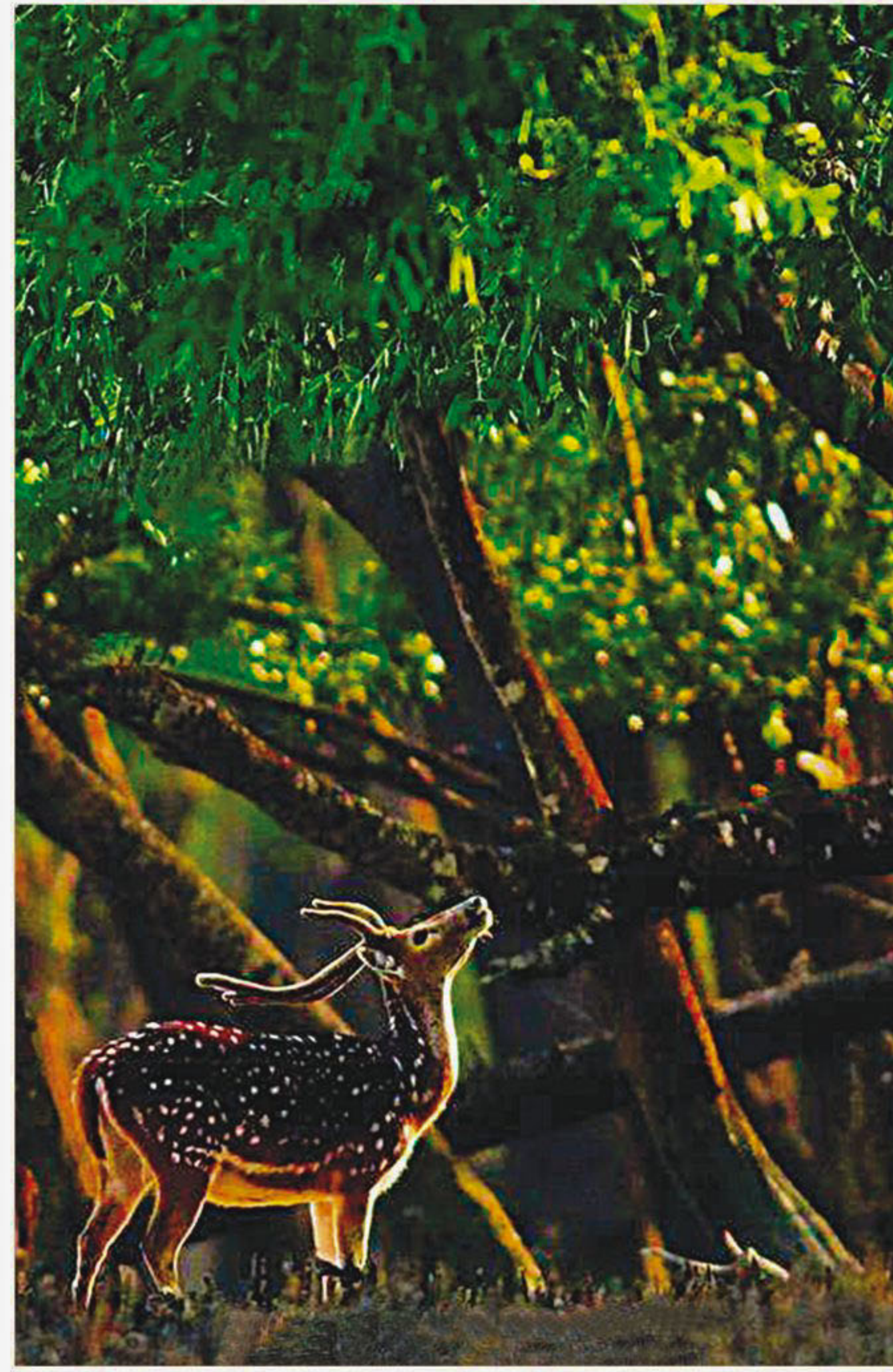


PHOTO COURTESY: STRAJUL HOSSAIN

TAMPACO FIRE Remains of 3 victims recovered

HC orders freezing bank accounts of owners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Firefighters yesterday pulled the remains of three more bodies from the rubble of Tampaco factory building in BSCIC industrial area of Tongi, raising the death toll from the deadly explosion and fire incidents at the plant to 39.

The remains of the bodies were recovered between 11:30am and 1:15pm while removing debris from the partly-collapsed building, said Akhtaruzzaman Liton, deputy assistant director of Gazipur Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Part of the Tampaco Foils Ltd building collapsed following an explosion there on September 10. The blast set fire to the factory, also injuring around 40 people.

A Titas Gas probe found that the factory was consuming gas at least twice over its permitted limit at the time of explosion.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned to freeze the bank accounts of the factory owners.

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WHY SUNDARBANS SO CRUCIAL?

Not merely a forest but life

INAM AHMED

The land mass that rose from the sea bed from the siltation of two mighty rivers, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, supports a thick mangrove forest that took root two million years ago. Unique in the world in many ways, it is our Sundarbans. Of course it was not where it is today. It spanned a huge area--from Lucknow in present day India to the North Bengal and Assam.

Chinese traveller Huen-Tsang visited India between 629 and 645 AD and explored the deep forests of the Sundarbans. He came to Pundrabardhana (Pabna or Rangpur) and mentioned the country was wet, fertile, and prosperous.

Emperor Babur first mentioned a specific animal of the Sundarbans-- the lesser Rhinoceros

that was found in the Bengal Sundarbans.

From the time of the Mughals, Sundarbans lands were being leased out and cleared for habitation.

Today only its sad remnants remain in Khulna. Even at the beginning of the British rule, the forest was spread over 43,252 square kilometres. When the British left India, it had shrunk to 37,813 square kilometres. Today, because of human encroachment, the one and only such place on the planet has shrunk to a mere 10,000 square kilometres – 6000 in Bangladesh and 4000 in India.

Its first map was drawn in 1929 by a British civil servant who dared to enter this formidable forest and listed its vast natural resources.

So why should we care about this amazing

forest? Is it only because it is the home to the Bengal Tiger?

First, let's have a look at its rich biodiversity. "The price of the Sundarbans cannot be monetized," writes Bipradas Barua, Ekushey Padak winner writer and naturalist. "With the annihilation of the Sundarbans the first disaster will be revealed in the change in climate."

The forest offers a solid wall against cyclones and that is why when tropical cyclones Sidr and Aila hit the coast, loss of life was relatively lighter. The forest took the brunt of the storms saving human lives. Once it is gone or depleted, the coastal people will become vulnerable to cyclones which would be a frequent phenomenon because of climate change.

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3 Bangladeshis among 6 'JMB men' held in India

Police say arrestees include two top leaders of the militant group; four wanted in Burdwan blast

SUBRATA ACHARYA, Kolkata

Six suspected operatives of banned militant outfit Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) have been arrested in India.

Three of them are Bangladeshi nationals. They are Anwar Hossain Faruk alias Enam, Mohammad Rubel alias Rafique and Zabirul Islam alias Zahid, Joint Commissioner (detective) of Kolkata police Vishal Garg told reporters at the Kolkata police headquarters yesterday.

Anwar and Rubel are from Jamalpur.

Rubel is trained in making improvised explosive devices (IED), he said.

The three Indians are Maulana Yusuf alias Yusuf Sheikh, Shahidul Islam and Abul Kalam Azad.

Of the six, Maulana Yusuf, Shahidul, Abul Kalam Azad and Zabirul are wanted in the 2014 Burdwan blast case, the police official said.

Vishal said Anwar had been working as the chief of the outfit's West Bengal unit and Maulana Yusuf was the second-in-

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50 species of reptiles, 8 species amphibians, more than 240 species of insects

41 species of mammals, Number of endangered Bengal Tiger only 105

339 kinds of birds; many critically endangered like the Masked Finfoot

237 species of finfish, 24 shrimp, 15 crabs & locust lobsters make it biggest fish reserve

One third area of Sundarbans or 2,000 sqkm is water

Sundarbans generates services worth \$273 to \$714 million per year

Sundarbans spreads on 6,000 sqkm in Bangladesh 4,000 sqkm in India. It was nearly four times bigger in 1947

Sundarbans is also the region's first line of defence against cyclones

90% of commercial fish and 35% of all fish in the Bay of Bengal rely on the Sundarbans region as a nursery for their early stages of life

MP Amanur denied bail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A Tangail court yesterday rejected the bail petition of Amanur Rahman Khan Rana, Awami League MP of Tangail-3 (Ghatail), in the murder case of freedom fighter Faruk Ahmed.

Judge Abul Mansur Miah of First Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after hearing the bail prayer, said Court Inspector Anwarul Islam.

In the prayer, the MP's lawyers said the lawmaker was seeking bail as he would have to join the ongoing session of Jatiya Sangsad.

Amanur, who had been on the run for 22 months, surrendered to the same court on September 18 and sought bail. The court rejected his bail prayer and sent him to jail.

On January 18, 2013, Faruk Ahmed, then publicity secretary of Tangail district AL, was found shot dead near his College Para residence in Tangail town.

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Trump, Clinton go into debate neck and neck

AFP, Washington

Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump yesterday prepared to square off in their first presidential debate -- a keenly awaited clash that comes as they sit nearly neck and neck in the polls.

The debate, which is expected to be watched by tens of millions of Americans, could draw a record number of viewers when it was set to kick off at 9:00 pm (0100 GMT today).

Many Americans are uncertain what to expect from the clash, which pits two vastly different candidates against each other on one tiny stage.

Clinton, 68, enters the fray as a polished former secretary of state and ex-senator, who after almost 40 years of public service is well versed on the issues.

Trump, a 70-year-old billionaire and former reality TV star, is good on his feet, and unpredictable -- more comfortable in the limelight than on issues.

As many as 90 million people are expected to tune in as the pair face off at Hofstra University in New York six weeks before the November 8 election.

The debate is being held one day after a Washington Post-ABC News poll revealed that Clinton's slim advantage over Trump from last month has evaporated.

She is tied with Trump at 41 percent among registered

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