

# Stories that drove the news

## RAMPAL POWER PLANT

The proposed 1320 megawatt coal-fired Rampal power plant is probably the most talked about issue of 2016. A joint partnership between India's state-owned National Thermal Power Corporation and Bangladesh power Development Board, the proposed project, on an area of over 1834 acres of land, is situated only 14 kilometres north of the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest and a UNESCO world heritage site. Activists and experts fear that the coal will slowly destroy the site - already under threat from forest fragmentation and overpopulation - due to air and water pollution, changes in water quality and increased traffic. Expressing concern over the potential damages to the Sundarbans, the Unesco in September requested the government to conduct a revised Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) before going ahead with the Rampal Power Plant.

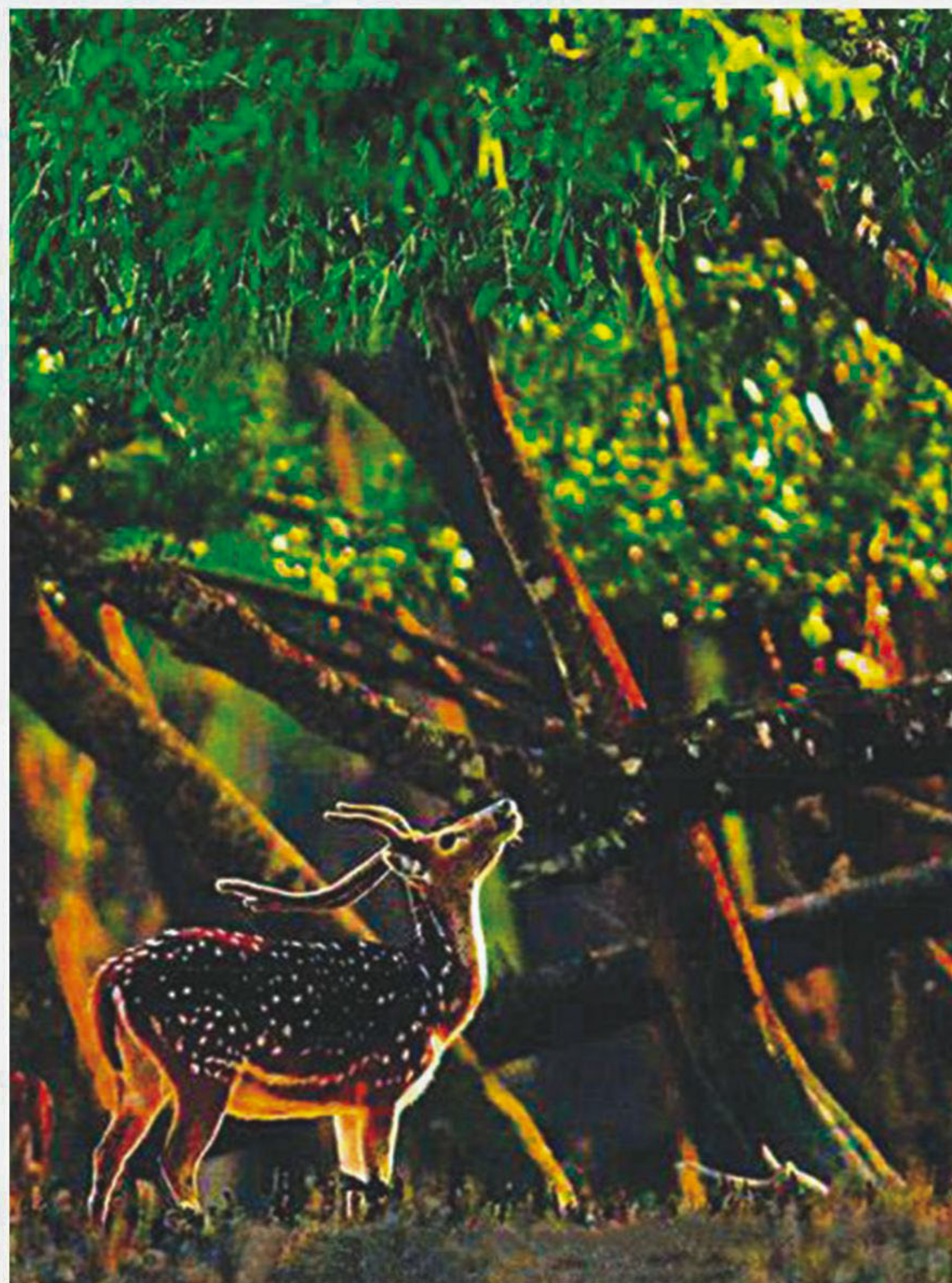


PHOTO: STAR

Experts believe that the power plant will slowly destroy the Sundarbans.

## THE HOLEY ATTACK

In the worst terrorist attack in the history of Bangladesh, on July 1, a gang of about seven militants, armed with semi-automatic rifles and improvised grenades, attacked the Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan—an affluent area that hosts several embassies. The assailants entered the bakery with crude bombs, machetes, pistols, and took several dozen hostages (foreigners and locals). Twenty hostages were brutally murdered, most of them foreigners—nine Italians, seven Japanese, an Indian national and a US citizen of Bangladeshi origin, along with two Bangladeshis. Accounts from survivors confirm that the attackers sought out the foreigners sparing most of the Bangladeshis trapped inside the restaurant. In the immediate response, while Dhaka Metropolitan Police tried to regain control of the bakery, two police

officers were shot dead by the assailants. The Bangladesh Army launched Operation Thunderbolt early morning on July 2 during which all the attackers were reportedly killed in a gunfight with the

commandos. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack but Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan stated that the perpetrators belonged to JMB and were not affiliated with ISIS. The prospect of

any imminent terrorist activities following attacks in Gulshan prompted the government to beef up security measures across Dhaka city by several folds. Following the attack several anti-militancy drives were conducted by law enforcement agencies. On July 26, nine alleged militants were killed during a special drive of the joint forces in Dhaka's Kalyanpur. On August 27, three militants including Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, a mastermind of Gulshan café attack, were killed during a joint forces' raid at a house in Narayanganj Sadar upazila. And on December 24, counterterrorism officials conducted a raid on a militant hideout in the capital's Ashkona during which a woman militant blew herself up.

The carnage at the Holey Artisan Bakery turned the world's attention on rising extremist violence in the country, raising tough questions for the government. Some countries issued travel advisory warning citizens travelling to Bangladesh. The violence left the country in a state of utter shock. A sense of fear and confusion prevailed for months to follow. Restaurants became less crowded, parents were more watchful of what their children were up to. After a long hiatus of fear and panic things are slowly coming back to normal with shopping malls, restaurants and cafés buzzing with customers again. These include foreigners too though not in great numbers.

## AYNABAJI

The crime thriller directed by Amitabh Reza, starring Chanchal Chowdhury, Masuma Rahman Nabila and Partha Barua in lead roles altered the way commercial movies made in this country have been perceived by the mainstream audience. With a solid storyline, melodious songs, powerful acting and superb directing, the movie attracted



Army personnel secure the Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan after they stormed the restaurant in armoured personnel carriers breaking through its fences on July 2, 2016.



People of all walks of life rushed to movie theatres to watch the film.