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RAMPAL POWER PLANT First unit all set to start commercial production

STAR REPORT

One of the two units of the coal-fired Rampal Power Plant has started supplying electricity to the national grid on a trial basis.

The unit is ready to go into commercial production, Bangladesh Power Development Board spokesperson Shameem Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

The first unit of the 1,320MW power plant in Bagerhat is supplying 620-630 megawatt of electricity to the national grid a day through the Mongla-Mawa-Aminbazar power line.

"The authorities are yet to fix the date for starting the commercial operation. A committee comprised of officials of the power ministry, the PDB and Power Grid Company of Bangladesh will inspect the plant and set the date soon," Shameem said.

Talking to this paper, Anwarul Azim, deputy manager of the plant, said the first unit started supplying power to the national grid on a trial basis on Saturday night.

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Braving the cold, low-income people wait for an OMS truck to buy items like rice, flour and oil at subsidised rates at Khulna city's Ershad Ali Government Primary School. They started gathering there early yesterday. As prices of daily essentials have gone up, the limited-income people are now heavily dependent on OMS goods.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

A light that shines on Sir Fazle Hasan Abed's third death anniversary today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the third death anniversary of Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, the larger-than-life spearhead of Brac, who passed away from a malignant brain tumour in 2019.

Brac is set to commemorate the death anniversary of its founder, reads a press release.

Sir Fazle died while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Dhaka. He was 83 years old.

He established Brac in 1972, after coming back

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Over 30 girls trafficked by one gang

CID finds after arresting suspected gang member

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They only got payments between Tk 1,500 and Tk 2,000 and for that they trapped girls, especially young and good-looking ones, promising them good jobs in India.

They then took the girls to border districts like Jhenidah, Jashore, and Satkhira, and handed them over to their gang members on the Indian side.

The girls were then forced into prostitution and sex work in the neighboring country.

Over the last three to four years, at least 30 to 40 girls were trafficked by a single gang.

Serious Crime Squad of the Criminal Investigation Department claimed to have found this after arresting Abdus Sattar, 38, a suspected gang member, at Jashore yesterday.

Nazrul Islam, special superintendent of the CID, told The Daily Star that Sattar's job was to deliver the girls to the border areas.

During primary interrogation, Sattar said he acted as per the gang's directives and that they send the girls to different borders depending on security measures there.

"We have come to know that Sattar has been working for the syndicate for the last four years."

The CID claimed to have learnt about

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Illegal migration to Europe spikes



JAMIL MAHMUD

Illegal migration of Bangladeshis to Europe through various Mediterranean routes saw an upsurge this year, raising concerns over the government measures to control it effectively.

In the first eight months of the year, 10,376 illegal border crossings by Bangladeshis on five Mediterranean routes were detected, according to Frontex, the European border and coast guard agency. In 2021, 8,523 such illegal border crossings by Bangladeshis took place.

Between 2017 and 2021, 26,820 illegal border crossings by Bangladeshis on the five Mediterranean routes were detected, meaning 5,364 crossings take place on average in a year.

Frontex data represent detections of illegal border crossing rather than the

number of persons, as the same person may cross the external border more than once.

Of the illegal border crossings as of August, 89 percent were made on the Central Mediterranean Sea route alone, which falls between Libya and Italy.

Last year, Bangladeshis made 7,848 illegal border crossings on the Central Mediterranean Sea route.

The four other routes are the Eastern Mediterranean sea and land routes and the Western Mediterranean sea and land routes.

Between January last year and November this year, the UN Refugee Agency in its Mediterranean situation report said 20,700 Bangladeshi nationals arrived in Europe, which is the third highest after Tunisians and Egyptians.

While these individuals made it

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Govt will ensure diplomats' full protection: FM

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said there was nothing for foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka to worry about and they will be given full protection.

"Our government will guarantee full protection of all diplomats," he told reporters at his ministry.

"Have you ever heard that any diplomat was killed in Bangladesh?" Momen asked, referring to a bomb blast incident during the BNP-Jamaat tenure when the then British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury was injured.

Responding to a question, he said he does not see any scope of the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the US deteriorating over a small incident. "Ours is a multifaceted relationship."

The US said they have raised the December 14 incident at the "highest levels" of the Bangladesh government, as well as the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington, DC.

"The [US] ambassador [Peter Haas] is a little panicked about his security. Our ambassador [to the US] told him there was no reason to be," Momen said.

Haas had ended his "prescheduled" meeting with Mayer Dak at Shaheenbagh area on December 14 due to alleged security concerns.

"The meeting was interrupted by protestors, who attempted to enter the building where the ambassador was located. Other protestors surrounded his vehicle," said a US Embassy spokesperson.

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Original E.T. model sells for \$2.6m at prop auction

AFP, Los Angeles

The original animatronic model used to bring big-eyed alien E.T. to life in Steven Spielberg's classic sci-fi film sold this weekend for a whopping \$2.6 million, according to auction organizers.

The item was sold as part of a two-day mega-sale put on by Julien's Auctions and Turner Classic Movies that included over 1,300 props ranging from Robert DeNiro's Raging Bull boxing gloves to Chris Hemsworth's Thor hammer.



But the highest ticket item was the extra-friendly extra-terrestrial, whose glowing finger and childlike innocence melted hearts in 1982, before the age of ubiquitous computer-generated imagery.

With 85 mechanical joints, nearly everything moves on the E.T. model, from the eyes, to the neck, and of course that pointy finger that was held aloft as the alien informed his new friend Elliott that he wanted to "phone home."

A maquette of E.T. also sold for \$125,000, while one of the bikes used in the film's climatic getaway scene went for \$115,000.

Other movie memorabilia sold at the Beverly Hills auction included the staff that Charlton Heston used to part the Red Sea in "The Ten Commandments" -- which went for \$448,000 -- and Daniel Radcliffe's Nimbus 2000 broomstick from the Harry Potter film series, which fetched \$128,000.

23,968 held in special drive on Dec 1-15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 23,968 people, including 72 suspected militants and listed criminals, were detained during a nationwide special drive from December 1 to 15.

Among them, 15,968 had arrest warrants against them while 8,000 were held in 5,132 cases filed during the drive, according to Police Headquarters (PHQ) sources.

Seeking anonymity, a PHQ official said 33,429 operations were carried out during the 15-day drive, and the law enforcers recovered 24 firearms, including three pistols.

They also seized 2,86,592 yaba pills, 8.6 kilograms of heroin, 5,415 bottles of phensedyl, and 7,580 kilograms of cannabis.

Following the escape of

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A worker spreading boiled paddy for drying in the sun at a yard in Shuklal area of Chattogram's Sitakunda on Sunday. Around 10-20 maunds of paddy are boiled there every day. The dried paddy is sent to rice mills for husking afterwards. A worker earns Tk 250-400 a day.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

UN BIODIVERSITY SUMMIT Nations adopt deal to protect nature

AFP, Montreal

Countries approved a historic deal to reverse decades of environmental destruction threatening the world's species and ecosystems at a marathon UN biodiversity summit early yesterday.

The chair of the COP15 nature summit, Chinese Environment Minister Huang Runqiu, declared the deal adopted at a plenary session in Montreal that ran into the wee hours and banged his gavel, sparking loud applause from assembled delegates.

In doing so he overruled an objection from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which had refused to back the text, demanding greater funding for developing countries as part of the accord.

After four years of fraught negotiations, more than 190 other states rallied behind the Chinese brokered accord aimed at saving Earth's lands, oceans and species from pollution, degradation and the climate crisis.

"We have in our hands a package which I think can give us all to work together to hold and reverse biodiversity loss, to put biodiversity on the path of recovery for the

benefit of all people in the world," Huang told the assembly.

His Canadian counterpart and host Steven Guilbeault called it a "historic step."

The deal pledges to secure 30 percent of the planet as a protected zone by 2030, stump up \$30 billion in yearly conservation aid for the developing world and halt human-caused extinctions of threatened species.

Environmentalists have compared it to the landmark plan to limit global warming to 1.5C under the Paris agreement, though some warned that it did not go far enough.

Brian O'Donnell of the Campaign for Nature called it "the largest land and ocean conservation commitment in history."

"The international community has come together for a landmark global biodiversity agreement that provides some hope that the crisis facing nature is starting to get the attention it deserves," he said.

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