



"China feels no responsibility to hold the Kremlin accountable for the atrocities committed in Ukraine."

US Secretary of State **Antony Blinken** on Xi's visit to Moscow



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ROOPPUR NUKE POWER PLANT

Launching not before 2025

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Rooppur nuclear power plant is likely to be delayed further if the recent revision of one of the associated projects is any indication.

The deadline for the Tk 3,440.1 crore project to construct the physical protection system (PPS) of the Rooppur nuclear power plant has been extended by one year and nine months by Planning Minister MA Mannan on December 6 last year.

Mannan informed the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council about the revision yesterday.

Physical protection (also called physical security) consists of a variety of measures to protect nuclear facilities and material against sabotage, theft, diversion, and other malicious acts.

The PPS-related equipment and materials cannot be fully purchased and physical facilities installed unless the construction work of all facilities is completed, according to the proposal for revision.

Besides, if the physical protection equipment is installed before the completion of the main project, there is a risk that their performance will be compromised and their warranty period will expire before the equipment could even be put to use.

"Therefore, it is advisable to purchase and install the PPS physical facilities once the construction work of the main project is complete. Due to this, the cumulative physical and financial progress of the project has been relatively low," it added.

As of June last year, the project's financial progress is 9.7 percent and physical progress is 30.17 percent.

Subsequently, the project, which was taken up in October 2019 for completion by this month, will now wrap up in December next year.

Originally, Rooppur nuclear power plant was supposed to start commercial operation in December 2023, but in December last year, Nasrul Hamid, the state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, said the plant may start electricity supply by the end of 2024.

This deadline is unlikely to be met given the time extension for PPS. There was a nine-month gap between the completion of the PPS and commissioning in the original schedule.

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ECNEC MEETING

✓ PM was annoyed at plan to limit bike speed to 30kmph

✓ She gave directives to use locally-made vehicles, instead of imported ones, in projects

✓ Govt officials' inefficiency reproached



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Defying a ban imposed by police, a bus pulls over at the beginning of a ramp of Mohakhali flyover in the capital's Mohakhali to drop off passengers. This obstructs the flow of traffic and also puts people in harm's way. The photo was taken on Sunday.

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74pc SMEs victims of corruption

Face bribery, extortion, political influence, says survey on 800 SMEs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About three in four small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are victims of corruption, found a survey of Centre for Governance Studies and Centre for International Private Enterprises.

About 400 manufacturing and 400 service-sector enterprises were interviewed between mid-October and mid-December 2021 for the survey.

The findings were disseminated at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel yesterday at an event, titled "Call to Action

Against Corruption Summit".

"The two most cited forms of corruption faced by the SMEs are bribery [77.9 percent] and use of political influence [60.1 percent]. These are followed by extortion [46.3 percent]," read the report.

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MONEY LAUNDERERS

'ACC couldn't bring them to justice'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even though a huge amount of money is being laundered abroad, the Anti-Corruption Commission could not bring the launderers to book, ACC Commissioner Mozammel Haque Khan said yesterday.

"Some have embezzled a huge amount from banks and financial institutions ... but we failed to address it as per the people's expectations," he said while speaking at the meet the press organised by the anti-graft body on the launching of its Annual Report 2022 at its Segunbagicha headquarters.

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Women collecting water from a pond in Kamarkhola union of Khulna's Dakope upazila. Residents of eight villages in and around the union are dependent on this pond for drinking water due to salinity of other water sources in their areas. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: STAR

COASTAL AREAS OF KHULNA

Struggle for safe drinking water getting tougher

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Waking up before dawn, Dipali Mondal takes a three-km walk every day to collect drinking water from a pond for her five-member family in Channirchak village of Khulna's Dakope upazila.

She needs to walk through a bumpy road to the pond.

"I have to cross a big canal on the way to fetch pond water. On a sunny day, I cannot walk much at a stretch. To have a break, I sit down somewhere. Sometimes, my 10-year-old son comes with me carrying a plastic barrel.

"I carry at least two pitchers of water for my family members every day. If I am not well, my husband carries water," she said.

Like Dipali, hundreds of women and men from eight villages under Kamarkhola union come to the pond to collect water as they cannot use water in their villages due to salinity intrusion and arsenic contamination.

Many of them carry big barrels and hire locally made vehicles known as Nasiman to fetch water from the pond.

"Over 75 percent people from some 5,000 families in my union don't have access to pure drinking water in their areas," said Panchanan

lack of re-excavation.

The DPHE could re-excavate only nine of those ponds as it had disputes with locals over the rest. As a result, most of the ponds have dried up.

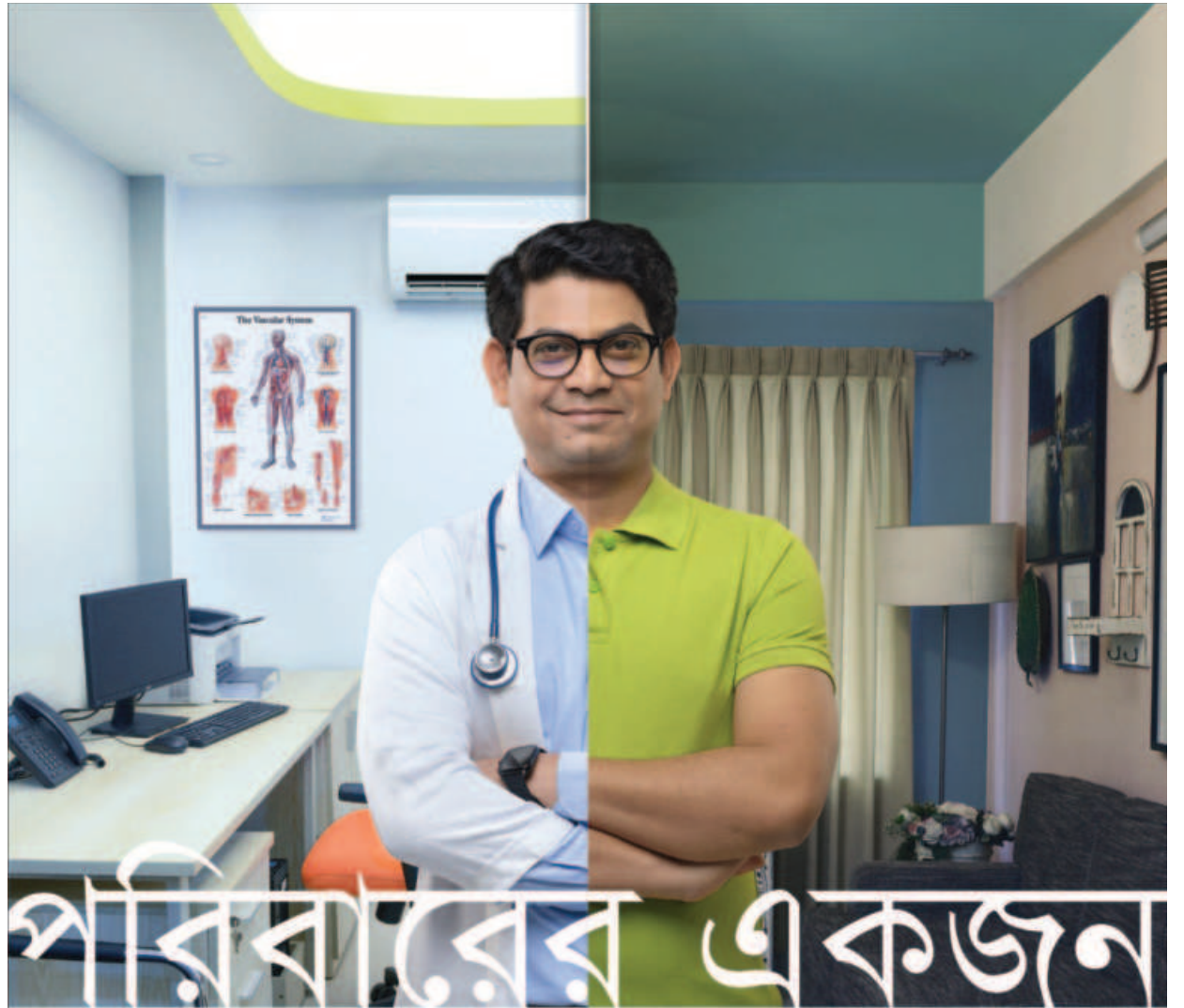
There are only 27 deep tube-wells for around 153,000 people in about 130 villages in Dakope. Water from only two of those is drinkable.

There are over 1,300 shallow tube-wells, but water from most of those is not drinkable due to salinity and arsenic contamination, according to DPHE.

Apart from ponds, Panchanan said, the families are mainly dependent on rain water harvesting, pond-sand filter, reverse osmosis and deep tube-wells for drinking water. But all these technologies are expensive and not affordable to low-income families, he said.

Abdullah Al Mahmood, sub-assistant engineer of DPHE in Dakope, said the department provided 8,000 water tanks to

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