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Bangladesh joins nuclear energy club

Putin terms Dhaka a tested friend;
Hasina says it's a day of great pride

STAR REPORT

Marking the historic moment Bangladesh became the 33rd nation to be a user of nuclear fuel, Russian President Vladimir Putin termed the Rooppur power plant a symbol of strong bilateral ties between Dhaka and Moscow.

"Both countries have interests in this project, and it will have a huge contribution to Bangladesh's energy and economic security," he said while addressing the uranium handover ceremony at the plant site in Ishwardi yesterday.

Putin joined the ceremony from Moscow via a video link while Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attended the event virtually from the Gono Bhavan.

Adorned with flags of the Russian Federation and Bangladesh, the plant

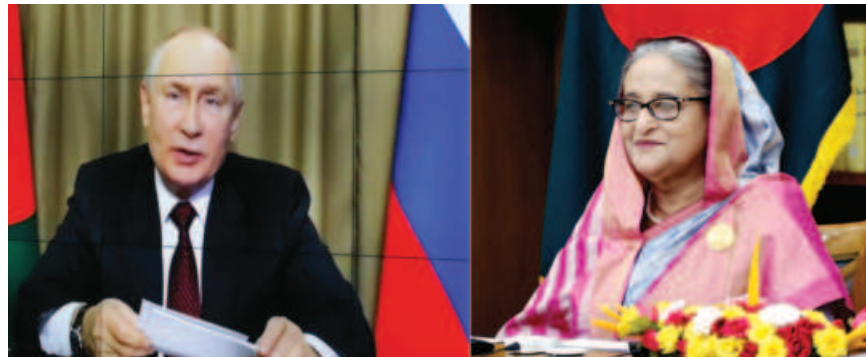
adding, "Sheikh Hasina successfully and with dignity is carrying forward her father's tasks."

Congratulating Bangladesh, he said, "The flagship project meets the interests of both countries and promotes the further deepening of mutually beneficial cooperation."

In her speech, Hasina said, "... the nuclear power plant is another step towards building Smart Bangladesh."

She said the plant has been designed and built keeping in mind natural disasters. She also mentioned that Russia promised to take back the spent fuel.

"We will use nuclear energy to protect peace," she said, expressing her firm commitment to elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide and to the implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, BSS reports.



"Both countries have interests in this project, and it will have a huge contribution to Bangladesh's energy and economic security."

Russian President Vladimir Putin



"The nuclear power plant is another step towards building Smart Bangladesh."

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

site wore a festive look as Bangladesh officially received the first batch of the fuel for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant from the project's Russian contractor Rosatom.

Rafael Mariano Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), joined the ceremony through video conference.

Terming Bangladesh a tested friend and development partner, the Russian president said the relations between the two countries are based on mutual equity and respect, BSS reports.

Putin said Russia and Bangladesh established ties more than 50 years ago. "At the beginning of the 1970s, the Soviet Union had extended support to East Bengal in its struggle for independence and rebuilding the newly independent country."

Russia is one of the first countries to recognise Bangladesh.

Putin also recalled last year's celebration of the golden jubilee of the diplomatic relations between the two countries and Bangabandhu's historic visit to Moscow.

"Bangabandhu's visit to Moscow was a historical milestone for building ties between the two countries," Putin said,

She said it was a day of great pride and joy for the people of Bangladesh.

"Due to the relentless efforts of the Awami League government, Rooppur nuclear power plant is becoming a success today [Thursday] through the adoption of nuclear fuel."

The PM said her government enacted the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Act and established an independent Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority. The BAERA has ensured safety at every level of the plant by maintaining close liaison with the IAEA, she added.

She said the Nuclear Power Plant Company Bangladesh Limited (NPCBL) has been formed through a separate legislation to manage the power plant.

Hasina said the goal is to generate power from the first unit of the plant in 2024 and from the second unit in 2025.

At the outset of the ceremony, a documentary on the manufacturing and delivery of the uranium fuel assembly was screened.

The power plant's Project Director and Managing Director of the NPCBL Md Shawkat Akbar made an introduction to the plant and Science

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LENDING RATE HIKE

Too little, too late to tame inflation?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After criticisms over its seeming inactivity in reining in the spiralling inflation, the central bank, it appears, has jolted into action, coincidentally, when the IMF staff mission is in town for its first review of the \$4.7 loan programme.

The mission expressed concern about the prolonged high inflation in Bangladesh when many countries around the world have managed to bring down their price levels.

A few hours after the meeting on Wednesday, the Bangladesh Bank announced hiking the policy rate -- which is the rate that is used by the central bank to implement or signal its monetary policy stance -- by 75 basis points to 7.25 percent. This made borrowing by banks from the central bank costlier.

And yesterday, it raised the lending rate to 10.7 percent.

"While those are good decisions, they have been

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Rain triggers traffic chaos in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Incessant rain yesterday pounded Dhaka and other parts of the country, causing city dwellers to suffer and disrupting traffic.

In the capital, traffic was crawling on many streets since the afternoon and it got worse in the evening during the rush hour. Many were seen stranded for hours at different parts of the capital. Amid the pouring rain, some walked and waded through stagnant water to get home.

"Coming out of my Karwan Bazar office around 8:30pm, I found vehicles stuck on the road. I could not avail any transport to go home. So, I started walking in rain," said Alamgir, a resident of Mirpur-10.

The Met office said the rain, which was caused due to the low pressure over Bangladesh, is likely to continue for one or two more days.

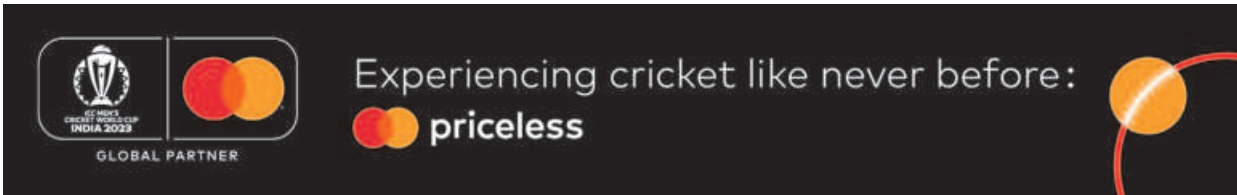
"Rain is likely to continue in Dhaka and northern areas of the country tomorrow

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Defending champions England did not stand a chance yesterday with New Zealand securing a whopping nine-wicket victory in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 opener in Ahmedabad, courtesy of two unbeaten centuries from Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra. Conway and Ravindra ran riot at the Narendra Modi Stadium, stitching together a 273-run unbeaten stand -- the fourth-highest in World Cups.

PHOTO: REUTERS



New Zealand humble holders England

REUTERS, Ahmedabad

New Zealand steamrollered defending champions England by nine wickets in the opening match of the ICC ODI World Cup yesterday, demonstrating again their knack of punching above their weight in showpiece events.

Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra smashed rapid unbeaten centuries to set up New Zealand's successful pursuit of a 283-run victory target, which came with 13.4 overs to spare.

It was a rematch of the heart-stopping 2019 final at Lord's in which England were declared winners via a now-scrapped boundary countback rule after the contest had ended in a tie.

Electing to field on Thursday, New Zealand's bowlers restricted their opponents to 282-9, a modest total considering the firepower in England's usually formidable batting lineup.

England's batters did not really fire but Joe Root (77), Jos Buttler (43) and Jonny Bairstow (33) provided some resistance.

However, England could not string together enough partnerships and kept losing wickets at regular intervals.

Matt Henry claimed 3-48 for New

Zealand, while their three spinners shared five wickets on a hot afternoon at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

All 11 England batters made double figures -- the first time any side have managed that in ODIs -- but it was a patchy batting display overall.

New Zealand lost Will Young for nought in the first over but Conway, who made a career-best 152 not out, and Ravindra immediately turned the heat back on England with their free scoring.

The left-handers appeared to be competing with each other to reach the 50-mark -- both getting there in 36 balls in the end.

Conway brought up his hundred in 83 balls. Ravindra, meanwhile, who collaborated in an epic unbroken 273-run partnership with Conway, took one delivery fewer to notch up his maiden ODI hundred in his memorable World Cup debut.

New Zealand rested regular captain Kane Williamson (knee) and fast bowler Tim Southee (thumb) to give them more time to recover from surgery, while England rested Ben Stokes, who is nursing a minor hip injury.

Opener misses the fans

AL-AMIN

It was not an ideal start to a World Cup in India after all the hype and expectations.

The absence of an opening ceremony that was supposed to add spice to



the global showpiece event and a very thin attendance at the 1,32,000-capacity Ahmedabad Stadium, named after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, made the opening game between holders England and runners-up New Zealand look like yet another one-day fixture at someplace.

There were a few English and Kiwi fans among the few thousand spectators,

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Poet Asad Chowdhury no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Freedom fighter, eminent poet, radio and television personality, journalist and cultural activist Asad Chowdhury died at the Lakeridge Health Oshawa hospital in Ontario, Canada yesterday.

He was 80.

A recipient of the Bangla Academy Literary award in 1987 and the Ekushey Padak in 2013, Asad was born into an illustrious family from Barishal's Mehediganj upazila.

He studied at Dhaka University and began his career as a lecturer in Bangla language and

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The Mirpur Road is packed with vehicles near Shyamoli amid the pouring rain yesterday evening. City dwellers endured severe traffic, triggered by incessant rain, since the afternoon and it got worse during the rush hour when the intensity of rain increased.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

I'm not worried, committed no crime Says Prof Yunus at ACC office



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday said he had not committed any crime and he is not afraid.

Talking to reporters at the Anti-Corruption Commission, he said, "I came here as I was asked to present my statement regarding the case. This is a legal issue. My lawyer will give you the details."

Walking out of the ACC office, his lawyer Abdullah Al Mamun said the money laundering and embezzlement case against Prof Yunus was motivated, baseless, and it was "filed to demean Professor Yunus".

During the ACC interrogation, Prof Yunus categorically refuted the allegations, saying that they were not based on facts.

During the quizzing, Prof Yunus said in accordance with the contractual agreement, Grameen Telecom paid the workers Tk 25.22 crore which is the subject of embezzlement allegations, Mamun told reporters.

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