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Irresistible Antarctica



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Women's league starting with concerns over competitiveness



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Cancelling Palestine: Slavoj Žižek



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Ritu Raj blends tradition and panache

ROOPPUR NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

First unit to start production in Dec

Project deadline extended by 2 years, but authorities hope to complete grid line work before scheduled commissioning

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, *Pabna*

One of the two units of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant will be commissioned this December if transmission lines are ready although the deadline for the project's completion has been extended to 2027.

The decision to extend the deadline by two years was made at a meeting between Russian and Bangladeshi officials in Dhaka in the second week of February.

Officials, however, said no specific date for the project's completion has been fixed yet.

The 2400MW power plant is being built in Rooppur, Pabna, at a cost of \$12.65 billion. Of the amount, \$11.38 billion will be provided by Russia as soft loans. It is the most expensive development project in the

country ever.

"Since this is a turnkey project, time extension will not result in additional costs," Yafes Osman, minister for science and technology, told The Daily Star.

Construction work was hampered by the coronavirus pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war and delays in the construction of power lines, said several officials who attended the Joint Coordination Committee's meeting in February.

The original project proposal said unit-1 would be in operation on December 23, 2022, unit-2 on October 8, 2023, and the entire project would be done by December 31, 2025.

Construction of unit-1 formally began on November 30, 2017, and unit-2 on July 14, 2018.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is being received by her Thai counterpart Srettha Thavisin at the latter's office in Bangkok yesterday. Hasina, now on a six-day official visit to Thailand, had a bilateral meeting with Srettha. PHOTO: BSS

BANGLADESH'S FIRST NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

CAPACITY	2 UNITS	PROJECT COST	NEW PROJECT DEADLINE
2,400 MW	1,200 MW EACH	\$ 12.65B	2027



TIMELINE

2010
Bangladesh, Russia signed an agreement for peaceful use of nuclear power (May 21)

Parliament adopted a decision to set up nuclear power plant at Rooppur, Pabna (Nov 10)

2011
An Inter-governmental cooperation agreement signed between Bangladesh and Russia (Nov 2)

2012
Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Act passed (June 19)

2015
Contract for nuclear power plant construction signed (Dec 25)

2016
Nuclear power plant got site licence (June 21)

2017
The power plant got design and construction licence (Nov 4)

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina launched first concrete pouring in unit-1 of the plant (Nov 30)

2018
PM launched concrete pouring in unit-2 of the power plant (July 14)

2023
PM Sheikh Hasina and Russian President Vladimir Putin joined a virtual programme for handing over nuclear fuel (Oct 5)

More than 60pc voter turnout in second phase

No incident of violence reported; SC declines to order any change to vote-counting process

STAR REPORT

India voted yesterday in the second phase of the world's biggest election, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his rivals raise the pitch of the campaign by focusing on hot-button issues such as religious discrimination, affirmative action and taxes.

Almost one billion people are eligible to vote in the seven-phase general elections that began on April 19 and concludes on June 1, with votes set to be counted on June 4.

In the second phase, an estimated 61 percent of nearly 160 million electorates cast their votes covering 88 constituencies across 13 states including some bastions of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

People queued up in front of the polling stations as voting opened at 7:00am and voted well after 6:00pm.

"Phase 2 has been too good. Gratitude to the people across India who have voted today. The unparalleled support for the NDA is going to disappoint the opposition even more. Voters want NDA's good

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Dhaka to boost trade, ties with Bangkok

Says Hasina after talks with Thai PM; two countries sign 5 deals

UNB, Bangkok

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh and Thailand have potential to strengthen cooperation in the fields of trade and investment, food security, tourism, public health, energy, and ICT.

She was speaking at an official luncheon hosted by her Thai counterpart Srettha Thavisin at the latter's office in Bangkok yesterday.

Hasina said she discussed with the Thai prime minister bilateral and regional issues of mutual interests.

"We agreed to make all efforts to enhance our bilateral trade and encourage more interactions between the public and private entities of the two countries. Likewise, we must make all efforts to promote and facilitate bilateral investments," she said.

Addressing a joint press conference following her bilateral meeting with Srettha at the Thai Prime Minister's Office, Hasina said she called on Thailand to explore the possibility of investing in hospitals and medical facilities in Bangladesh.

She also sought Thai investments in Bangladesh's special economic zones and

hi-tech parks.

"We discussed the possibility of cooperation on training and capacity building for Bangladeshi medical personnel," she said.

Five bilateral documents -- an agreement, three memorandums of understanding and a Letter of Intent -- were signed in presence of the two prime ministers following the meeting.

Hasina said Bangladesh sees Thailand as a very important and dynamic partner in its engagement with the vibrant economies of Southeast Asia.

The two leaders discussed measures to enhance the current volume of bilateral trade. They agreed to work together to achieve healthy two-way growth.

The Bangladesh premier said she assured her Thai counterpart of taking necessary measures to facilitate investment and ensure ease of doing business in Bangladesh.

"I proposed that Thailand should invest in our special economic zones and hi-tech parks, and that they should have one SEZ [special economic zone], exclusively for Thailand," she said.

Noting that the two sides agreed

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Seventh grader killed by DSCC garbage truck

Driver held; at least 18 lost lives the same way in last 8yrs

DIPAN NANDY

A 13-year-old schoolboy was killed after being run over by a garbage truck of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) in the city's Madinabagh area on Thursday night.



Mahin Ahmed

The accident took place around 9:30pm when Mahin Ahmed, a seventh grader at Ideal School and College, Motijheel, was walking to his friend's house in Mugda.

Locals took injured Mahin to Mugda General Hospital. Later, he was moved to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he breathed his last around 10:30pm, said his elder brother Mahfuz Ahmed.

The truck driver and his assistant were caught by locals at the scene. The two were handed over to police, said Jajnal Abedin, sub-inspector of Mugda Police Station.

Police have seized the truck. Meanwhile, DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday said a person hired by the truck driver was at the wheel when the road accident took place on Thursday night.

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With the sun beating down outside, some people are spending the afternoon at the national mosque, Baitul Mukarram, to get some relief from the searing heat. A number of them are taking a nap after offering Juma prayers yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ISLAM AS STATE RELIGION The provision not contradictory to constitution

Observes HC in full text of verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court in the full text of a verdict has observed that the provision -- Islam as the state religion -- is not contradictory to the constitution.

Article 2A of the constitution says, "The state religion of the Republic is Islam, but the State shall ensure equal status and equal right in the practice of the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and other religions."

In the full text of judgement, the HC said, "Article 2A of the Constitution, impugned herein, in our view, neither offends the basic principles of the Constitution, as contained in the preamble nor offends any other provision of the Constitution."

"... Therefore, it is our considered view that the impugned amendment through Article 2A recognizing Islam as state religion is not ultra vires to the Constitution," a special HC bench of three judges headed by Justice Naima Haider said in the 52-page full text of verdict, which was released on April 21.

The other two judges are Justice Quazi Reza Ul Hoque and Justice Md Ashraf Kamal.

On March 28, 2016, the bench had delivered the verdict after rejecting a writ petition filed 37 years ago challenging the legality of a constitutional provision in this regard.

Fifteen distinguished citizens had filed the petition with the HC in 1988, challenging the amendment that gave Islam the status of state religion.

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