



ROOPPUR LIGHTS UP AS POWER LOADING BEGINS

Proud to have supplied 100% rods for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant



Bangladesh enters nuclear energy era

Fuel loading begins at unit-1 of Rooppur plant today



AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh moves a step closer to achieving its long-cherished goal of generating nuclear energy this afternoon with the start of fuel loading into the reactor core of unit-1 at the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, marking the transition from the construction to the startup phase.

With this milestone, Bangladesh is poised to join a select group of a little over 30 nuclear power-producing countries and become the third South Asian country, after India and Pakistan, to generate nuclear energy.

Officials said fuel loading would be completed in less than 45 days, and the reactor core would be warmed up within three months by withdrawing neutron absorbers. Electricity will then be generated on a trial basis and fed into the national grid.

Russia's state-run TVEL Fuel Company is providing the nuclear fuel. Russia has agreed to take back the spent fuel, using its own technology. However, the final roadmap for this has yet to be finalised.

"If the commissioning progresses smoothly, we expect to add a minimum of 300 megawatts by late July or early August to the national grid. Production will then gradually increase by 10 to 15 percent, reaching the ceiling of 1,200 megawatts by late 2026 or early 2027," Md Anwar Hossain, secretary at the science and technology

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RELATED STORIES ON PAGE 2

LOCATION	Rooppur, Ishwardi, Pabna
CAPACITY	2,400 megawatts
UNITS	Two
REACTOR MODEL	Generation III+ VVER-1200
COST (ESTIMATED)	\$12.65 billion
FUEL TYPE	Uranium enriched to 5%
FUEL SUPPLIER	TVEL (Russia)
OPERATOR	Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC)
MAIN CONTRACTOR	JSC Atomstroyexport
LIFESPAN	60 years

Iran 'offers to end Hormuz chokehold'

Reports say; Araghchi meets Putin in Moscow, secures his support

AGENCIES

Iran has made a new proposal to the United States to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and end the war, postponing nuclear negotiations to a later stage to break the deadlock in the high-stakes talks, reports said.

The reports came as Iran's top diplomat yesterday blamed Washington for the failure of Middle East peace talks during a visit to Russia, where President Vladimir Putin promised him Moscow's support in bringing the war to a close.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was in Saint Petersburg on the fourth leg of a whirlwind diplomatic tour, having sandwiched a trip to Oman between two visits to the main mediator, Pakistan, over the past few days.

Islamabad hosted the first and only round of unsuccessful US-Iran talks, SEE PAGE 12 COL 4

LIMON-BRISTY KILLING Murder suspect 'searched AI on body disposal'

STAR REPORT

A suspect charged with killing two Bangladeshi students, Zamil Limon and Nahida Bristy, in Florida allegedly searched an artificial intelligence chatbot about disposing of a body days before the pair were last seen, according to a court filing cited by NBC News.

Hisham Abugharbieh, 26, faces a first-degree murder charge over the deaths of Limon and Bristy, both 27. Limon's body was recovered on Friday, while Bristy remains missing, although investigators believe she is dead.

In a motion filed on Saturday seeking to deny bail, the American television channel reported that prosecutors alleged Abugharbieh asked ChatGPT on April 13, "What happens if a human [is] put in a black garbage bag and thrown in a dumpster."

When the chatbot responded that the scenario sounded dangerous, he SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

DCs' proposals expose health sector ills

Cabinet Division gets over 80 suggestions ahead of conference in May

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Barguna, a southern coastal district with a population of about 10 lakh, turned into a dengue hotspot last year, recording 15 deaths and 9,534 cases -- the highest for any single district except those at divisional headquarters.

(ICU). Critically ill patients are referred to hospitals in Barishal and Dhaka, with many dying in transit, while others cannot afford ambulance transport.

The district has the necessary structure for setting up ICUs but not the equipment and necessary manpower, said Barguna Civil Surgeon Muhammad

Tangail Medical College Hospital, a 500-bed facility, began operations in 2022. It has a 10-bed ICU that remains nonfunctional due to the absence of a central oxygen supply system.

The district has come under the spotlight again this year amid a measles outbreak, as Barguna Sadar upazila recorded the highest infection rate until March.

But, none of the public hospitals, including the 250-bed General Hospital, in the district has intensive care units

Abul Fatha.

Besides, two-third of the posts for health workers at all six upazila health complexes in the district have remained vacant for long, compounding the situation.

Against the backdrop, Barguna Deputy Commissioner has proposed establishing SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

'We pledge to change the fate of the nation'

Tarique tells Jashore rally, warns against attempts to disturb stability

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday warned that no one will be allowed to disturb peace and stability in the country.

"Let us remain alert... We will not allow anyone the chance to disturb public peace or enforce a 173-day hartal," he told a public rally at the Jashore Central Eidgah Ground, organised by the district BNP.

The PM said no attempt will be allowed to mislead the country's people or hold them back through fear or propaganda. "From this rally, we pledge to change the fate of the country."

Tarique, also the BNP chairman, said his party believes in action, not just promises. "The BNP does not want to secure public support through deception

or by 'selling tickets', like other political parties.

"We want to do real work," he said, calling upon the people to work together for the country.

He said the BNP enjoys public trust and has received a mandate in the election. "The people of Bangladesh trust the BNP. That is why they gave us a mandate in the election. They have entrusted us with the responsibility to implement our commitments.

He added that a group of people does not accept this public mandate and has been delivering speeches in different places, claiming that the BNP has become a collaborator of fascism.

He urged people to consider who has actually become collaborators of fascism. The prime minister said his party SEE PAGE 12 COL 4

Anomalies found in Family Card pilot

Finance ministry advises going slow with rollout

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The finance ministry has found a host of anomalies in the pilot of the Family Card programme, as the government seeks to iron out irregularities and ensure the BNP's flagship social welfare initiative can withstand the scrutiny of development partners.

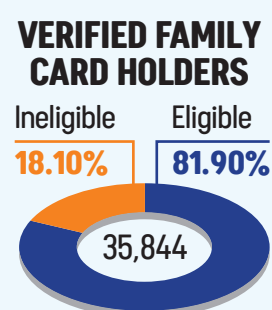
As per rules, government employees, pensioners, savings certificate holders and those already benefiting from other government social safety net programmes such as Vulnerable Women Benefit (VWB) programme and Food-Friendly Programme are not eligible for the Family Card.

Those with Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) cards or vehicles registered with the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) are also not eligible.

In the pilot phase that began on March 10, less than a month after the new government's swearing in ceremony, 37,800 Family Cards were handed out. The finance ministry could verify the details of 35,844 of the recipients and found 6,487 cardholders (about 18 percent) to be ineligible under the criteria set for the programme.

Among them, 38 were government employees, 69 were pensioners, 174 were savings certificate holders, 5,021 had TCB cards, 709 were VWB beneficiaries and 113 were listed under the Food-Friendly Programme, according to the finance ministry findings seen by The Daily Star.

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Prime Minister Tarique Rahman addresses a public rally organised by the district unit BNP at the Jashore Eidgah ground yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: PMO

Fulfil polls pledge, free journalists in prison

CPJ writes to law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) yesterday urged the government to fulfil its election pledge to withdraw politically motivated cases against journalists, and to drop charges and release Farzana Rupa, Shakil Ahmed, Mozammel Haq Babu, and Shyamal Dutta.

"All four journalists have been held for more than 18 months accused of murder which, based on our documentation, testimony from their families, and review by international counsel, no credible evidence has been presented and no charge sheet has been served," it said in a letter to Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman.

It added that the pattern of cases appeared closely tied to their reporting SEE PAGE 7 COL 5