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News Brief

President Md. Abdul Hamid held dialogue with Gano Forum-GF and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh-BDB at Bangabhaban yesterday, as part of the ongoing dialogue with the registered political parties, aimed at constituting an independent, neutral and acceptable Election Commission. During the dialogue, an eight-member delegation led by GF's acting President Muqabbir Khan, placed some proposals, including enactment of a time-befitting law while a seven-member BDB delegation led by Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan, placed three proposals, including formation of a 'search committee'.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said, the government has taken a step to formulate a 'National Smooth Transition Strategy', aiming to make the graduation of Bangladesh from LDC group to a developing one smoother. The Premier was virtually addressing a function, arranged to celebrate the formal recognition of Bangladesh's graduation to a developing nation by the United Nations, at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday. Describing the UN recognition as a great achievement for Bangladesh, the PM said that Bangladesh's graduation from the LDC to a developing country has been possible due to her government's planned initiatives that included short, medium and long-term plans alongside unwavering support of the countrymen, development partners and friendly countries. The Prime Minister promised that she would never stop the journey to take the nation forward and make it a developed and prosperous one confronting all the odds, to materialize the dream of the Father of the Nation. The Premier further said, the government has already implemented the UN's MDGs and it is implementing the SDGs and also working to transform Bangladesh into a developed country by 2041. Highlighting various development programs taken by the government to ensure the country's overall progress, she also said that they have formulated the Delta Plan-2100 which is now being implemented to continue the development spree.

Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury addressing the aforementioned program said, Bangladesh's graduation to developing country is a milestone progress. She added, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is the epitome of this historic achievement at the juncture of Mujib Year and the golden jubilee of victory. The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman laid the foundation for building a 'Golden Bengal' in just three and a half years while the Premier has been working tirelessly to materialize "Sonar Bangla" as dreamt by Bangabandhu, she said.

Newly-appointed Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique has vowed to combat the hundreds of thousands of cases trapped in legal logjam, clogging up Bangladesh's judicial system. Speaking at a reception organized by the Supreme Court Bar Association and the Attorney General's Office yesterday, he also welcomed constructive criticism to resolve the issue. He said, eight monitoring cells, each headed by a High Court judge, will be formed to ease the backlog of cases. Terming corruption as like cancer, the CJ said that he would not compromise on this.

Bangladesh sent 6,17,209 workers overseas and received a record US\$ 22,070.87 million as remittance in 2021 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Ministry official said. Never before, so much remittance came to the country in a single year. Bangladesh has become the 8th largest remittance-receiving country and the 6th largest migrant-sending country in the world, according to the World Migration Report 2022.

The Country's export earnings grew a record 48.27 per cent year-on-year to stand at US\$4.90 billion in December 2021 riding on massive apparel shipments. Earnings were \$4.72 billion in October last year, \$4.16 billion in September and \$4.04 billion in November, according to Export Promotion Bureau-EPB. During the first six months (July-December) of the current fiscal year, the exports recorded a robust growth of 28.41 per cent to \$2,469.85 crore, which was up by \$546.51 crore from the same period of last fiscal year.

A credible Election Commission will be formed and it will ensure a level playing field for all during the polls, Agriculture Minister Dr. Md. Abdur Razzaque said this while speaking at a seminar in Tangail yesterday, on the occasion of National Social Service Day. During the election, the EC will control everything including the army, law enforcement agencies and administration, he said. Proper law must be enforced with an iron hand in dealing with the payment and withdrawal of government allowances, he said.

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Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, while inaugurating a training course for the newly joined 3,000 trainee recruit constables-2021 at Bangladesh Police Academy at Sarda in Rajshahi yesterday said, Bangladesh's police will be world standard and they will brighten the country's image in both home and abroad. He said, the present police have been transforming into peoples' friendly police gradually as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has pledged to transform police into people-friendly.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud has hoped that the 'Mass Media Employees Bill' will be placed in the upcoming winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad, scheduled to start on January 16. The Law Minister has already signed the draft of the bill, he said. Journalists who work at broadcast medium, online, radio and newspapers will receive a legal safeguard if it is turned into a law, the Minister added. The Minister was addressing the biennial conference of Chattogram Bibhagh Sangbadik Forum, Dhaka at the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday. He said, mass media should praise the good works of the government alongside criticisms. But the criticism should not be like that which will create the possibility of seizing power by those who patronize the communal evil forces, he opined.

Law Minister Anisul Huq has said, all have to wait to learn about the outcome of President's ongoing dialogue on the formation of Election Commission till the conclusion of the dialogue. The Minister said this after exchanging greetings of the New Year with the officials of his ministry and journalists yesterday. He reiterated that there is no time left for an act to be formulated now for formation of the next EC.

Democracy and human rights are the basics of Bangladesh, Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen made the remarks while briefing media on a letter he wrote to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, requesting to reconsider the sanctions the US imposed on RAB officials. "In my letter, I wrote to him (Blinken) that the practice of democracy here is not of today. When America was not discovered, there was democracy in this region in the sixth centuries. Jadu was elected with people's mandate. So, our democracy experience is very old. And the birth of our country was to establish democracy," he said. Mentioning that the US allegations against the RAB are baseless, the Minister said about 600 people went reportedly missing in Bangladesh in the last 10 years, while over one lac people are getting disappeared in America every year and more than 1,000 people are being killed by police there. But, he said, none raises question against the US to this end and they term those "line of duty". If something small happens here, there are much talks, calling it 'extra judicial killing', he said.

The National Moon Sighting Committee will hold a review meeting at Islamic Foundation conference room in Baitul Mukarram National Mosque around 6pm today, with State Minister for Religious Affairs M Faridul Haq Khan in the chair, on moon sighting of the holy Jamadi-us-Sani month.

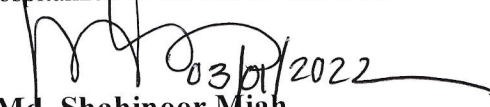
As per the National Board of Revenue-NBR's directive, all the commercial banks have deducted excise duty from customers' accounts whose minimum balance reached Taka 1 lac within 2021. If the balance of customers' bank accounts reached Taka 1 lac within the year, banks would cut minimum excise duty of Taka 150.

With a view to seizing illegal fishing nets, the Fisheries Ministry started a special combing operation from December 30, 2021. The drive will continue to stop the use of illegal fishing nets in 17 districts in the country till February 20 this year. Besides, sea fish eggs, jhatka, larvae and fries will be saved due to the operation, according to the Fisheries and Livestock Ministry.

The third death anniversary of former Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam is being observed today. Syed Ashraf was the eldest son of Syed Nazrul Islam, acting President of the 1971 Mujibnagar Government and one of the key organizers of the country's independence struggle. Marking the day, Awami League will pay homage to Syed Ashraf by placing wreaths on his grave at Banani in the capital.

A total of 24,90,780 doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine arrived at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka yesterday from the USA under COVAX facilities. Another 46 lac shots of Pfizer vaccine will arrive on January 10, the Health Ministry sources said.

The country yesterday recorded single fatality from COVID-19, taking the total death toll to 28,077. With 557 fresh cases, the number of infections surged to 15,86,466. The positivity rate stood at 2.91 per cent as 19,130 samples were tested during the time. At the same time, the recovery count rose to 15,49,557. DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. Besides, some 11 dengue patients got hospitalized in the last 24 hours till 8:00am last morning, DGHS informed.


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