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### News Brief

President Md. Abdul Hamid said, the formation of an acceptable Election Commission as well as the cooperation of all concerned, including political parties, is a must to ensure a free, fair and credible election. The Head of the State called upon the country's political parties to come forward to motivate the people in this process for the betterment of the country and its people as he held dialogue with Bangladesh Islami Front and Jamiat Ulema-E-Islam Bangladesh, separately at Bangabhaban yesterday as part of the ongoing dialogue with the registered political parties, aiming to form an acceptable Election Commission. During the dialogue, the parties separately proposed for enactment of time befitting law and empowering the Election Commission during the polls-time. They sought the President to enact a new law, hand over the charges of Home, Public Administration and Defense ministries during the election-time government as they believe it would be helpful to hold a free, fair and credible poll.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked Bangladesh Chhatra League-BCL leaders and activists to prepare themselves as skilled manpower to utilize their innovative power and avail themselves of the advantage of upcoming technology (4IR), keeping away from corruption, militancy and terrorism. The Premier was addressing the 74th founding anniversary function of BCL at Krishibid Institution Bangladesh yesterday, virtually joining from Ganabhaban. Reminding the BCL leaders and activists Bangabandhu's quote "Great achievement requires great sacrifice", the Prime Minister urged them to pay special attention so the country can move forward on the path of peace and development. Mentioning that her government's goal is to move forward along the path of technology, the Prime Minister said her government has made computer education, technology education, internet use and mobile phone available to all. Referring to the Fifth five-year plan and perspective plans, she called upon the BCL leaders and activists to become well educated to attain the desired goals. She hoped that, "Bangladesh will become a prosperous and developed country by 2041 and you (BCL) have to take preparation to be the soldiers of developed-prosperous Bangladesh of 2041."

The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase-CCGP yesterday in a virtual meeting chaired by Finance Minister A H M Mustafa Kamal approved ten proposals, including one, under which state-owned Bangladesh Power Development Board-BPDB's Power Purchase Agreement with private firm Venture Energy Resources Limited will be extended for another 4 years to get electricity from the existing 40 MW gas-fired rental power plant in Bhola, with a cost of Taka 380.90 crore. The CCGP also approved a proposal of Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board to procure 32,400 SPC poles at a cost of Taka 31.59 crore. Along with approving other proposals from different entities, the committee approved three separate proposals of the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation-BCIC to import 30,000 MT of bulk granular urea from the UAE at a cost of Taka 246.77 crore, 30,000 MT of bulk fertilizer from Qatar at Taka 246.77 crore, 25,000 MTS of rock phosphate from the UAE, at Taka 81.49 crore. Besides, the committee approved two separate proposals of the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation to import 40,000 MT of DAP fertilizer at Taka 309.06 crore and 30,000 MT of MOP fertilizer at Taka 152.92 crore.

The government is working on the prospects of blue economy, Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen came up with the remarks while addressing a press conference in the capital yesterday. Dr. Momen said, Bangladesh was able to resolve its maritime disputes with India and Myanmar peacefully in 2012 and 2014 under the firm leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Bangladesh now owns a maritime area of 1,18,813 square kilometers. As a result Bangladesh's prospects of utilizing blue economy including the exploration of sea resources, movement of commercial ships, exploration of energy, advancement of tourism have now come at the country's fingertips, he said. It may be added that MOFA has successfully completed two research programs on offshore energy and blue biotechnologies and seaweed with assistance from the United Kingdom and Netherlands. Bangladesh sees huge commercial potential of marine "Seaweed" and its domestic use reducing import dependency and its subsequent export to global market, according to the latest research.



No further land survey will be required once the Bangladesh Digital Survey-BDS is conducted throughout the country, Land Minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury came up with the remarks while inaugurating the land services through postal service, digital payment and call center at Bhumi Bhaban in the city yesterday. He also hoped that land management will be brought under the purview of the digitalization in the coming days. Apart from digitalization of land services, laws and rules are being amended, he said, adding that under the Hat and Bazar Act, development work will be done in the land jointly with the local municipality.

South Korea resumed taking Bangladeshi workers through the Employment Permit System-EPS program. In the first batch, 92 Bangladesh workers left for Korea from Dhaka Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday. The South Korean Government suspended accepting foreign workers in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ambassador Lee Jang-keun welcomed the resumption of receiving Bangladesh workers and hoped that Korea would be able to accommodate more EPS workers from Bangladesh in the coming years.

An exclusive documentary film titled "Freedom Does Not Breathe Money", on the removal of mines at the Chittagong port by the then Soviet Navy was premiered in Moscow on December 28, marking the 50 years of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Russia. The film has depicted the removal of mines immediately after the independence of Bangladesh at the Chittagong port during 1972-1974, a PMO press release said. Bangladesh Ambassador to Russia Kamrul Ahsan, alongside Evgeny Barkhanov, the Director of the documentary, and Captain (retd) Nikolay Nikolayevich Koloskov, who was involved in mine clearing as a young Navy officer were present.

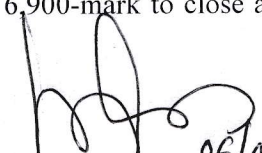
Bangladesh is gradually getting ready to cater garment work orders worth up to US\$8 billion a month as the local apparel manufacturers are receiving more work orders from the international retailers and brands, President of BGMEA, Faruque Hassan said this at the ERF Dialogue held at the office of the Economic Reporters' Forum-ERF in Dhaka yesterday, media reported. For the first time in the history of Bangladesh, the monthly export of garment items crossed \$4 billion with the recovery of the global business from severe fallouts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government through a statement, yesterday reminded unregistered online news portals of their obligation to secure registration from Information and Broadcasting Ministry to run services in line with National Online Mass Media Policy 2017 (amended in 2020), to ensure their accountability. But, the statement said, it appeared that without securing the registration several such portals were running their sites, only procuring domains from Bangladesh Telecommunications Ltd (BTCL). "This, in most cases, results in dissemination of wrong, untrue and baseless information and news, misleading the public mind and affecting Bangladesh's image abroad," it said.

The government has appointed new Deputy Commissioners-DCs to 13 districts- Gazipur, Narayanganj, Brahmanbaria, Naogaon, Pirojpur, Rajbari, Noakhali, Chuadanga, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Sylhet, Jhenaidah and Chapainawabganj. The Ministry of Public Administration yesterday issued a gazette notification in this regard.

The country yesterday recorded 03 fatalities from COVID-19, taking the total death toll to 28,090. With 892 fresh cases, the number of infections surged to 15,88,807. The positivity rate stood at 4.20 per cent as 21,251 samples were tested during the time. At the same time, the recovery count rose to 15,50,168, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. Besides, some 04 dengue patients got hospitalized in the last 24 hours till 8:00am last morning, DGHS informed.

DSEX, the prime index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange-DSE crossed the 6,900-mark to close at 6,929 points yesterday, going up by 36.93 points or 0.53 per cent.

  
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