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From: PIO, PID, Dhaka
Fax: 9540553/9540026
E-mail: piddhaka@gmail.com
Web: www.pressinform.gov.bd

News Brief

Bangladesh created a history claiming an eight-wicket victory over world champions New Zealand on day four of the first cricket Test at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. This is Bangladesh's first victory on New Zealand soil across three formats in 33 attempts. President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in separate felicitation messages, greeted the national cricket team for their victory against New Zealand in their first Test.

President Md. Abdul Hamid held dialogue with left-leaning Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal (M-L) yesterday at Bangabhaban as part of the ongoing dialogue with the registered political parties in an endeavor to form an acceptable Election Commission. During the dialogue, a six-member delegation of the party placed a five-point proposal, including enactment of a time-befitting law over formation of an acceptable Election Commission. The party also proposed formation of an election-time government under the leadership of the Prime Minister in line with the Constitution. They proposed to form a council comprised of constitutional bodies to form a "Search Committee" in the absence of the specific law in this connection.

The ECNEC yesterday approved a total of 10 projects involving an overall estimated cost of Taka 11,211.44 crore, including a Taka 6,316.71-crore scheme to give new homes to another 2.50 lac homeless families under the Ashrayan project. Chaired by ECNEC Chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, virtually joining from Ganabhaban, the day's meeting also approved a Taka 2,490.96 crore project to develop important infrastructure and roads, including airport under the Chattogram City Corporation. The other projects approved in the meeting are 'Building Logistics and Fleet Maintenance Facilities for Bangladesh Coast Guard (1st revision)' with an additional cost of Taka 135.94 crore, 'Upgradation of Kumargaon-Badaghat-Airport Road to National Highway means 4-Lane' with Taka 727.63 crore, 'Modernization, Digitization and Automation of Bangladesh Television's Central Broadcasting System (Phase 1) (1st revision)' with an additional cost of Taka 35.68 crore, 'Mobile Game and Application Skill Development (3rd revision)' with an additional cost of Taka 48.28 crore, 'Polder 43/1 and 44 Rehabilitation under Barguna District and Prevention of Risky Parts from Erosion of Payra River' with Taka 751.29 crore, 'Erosion Prevention of Brahmaputra River in Chilmari and Ulipur Upazilas of Kurigram District' (1st revision) with an additional cost of Taka 145.71 crore, 'Basic and Applied Research on the Jute (3rd revision)' with an additional cost of Taka 6.92 crore and 'BEPZA Economic Zone, Mirsarai-1st Phase (1st revision)' with an additional cost of Taka 552.32 crore. During the meeting, the Prime Minister unveiled the cover of a book titled "Bangladesh at 50: Realization of Dreams through Humane and Patriotic Leadership".

During the ECNEC meeting, the Prime Minister directed the authorities concerned to prepare a design for the metro-rail project in Chattogram. Later, designs for metro-rail-like projects in large cities where there are big airports, would be considered, the Premier said. Planning Minister M A Mannan while briefing reporters after the meeting said, the Prime Minister at the meeting also stressed the need for the construction of satellite cities and towns.

Bangladesh Chhatra League-BCL, the students' wing of Awami League celebrated its 74th founding anniversary yesterday with elaborate programs. Commencing the five-day-long celebration, BCL leaders paid tribute to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing wreaths at his portrait at Dhanmondi road-32 last morning. At the same time, a delegation, consisting of some leaders of the central executive committee, paid rich tribute to the Father of the Nation by placing a wreath at his graveyard at Tungipara and offering doa. Marking the anniversary, a discussion will be held at Krishibid Institution Bangladesh today at 11:30 am. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, is expected to virtually join the discussion from Ganabhaban.

The Directorate General of Health Services-DGHS yesterday issued 15-point guidelines to prevent the highly contagious COVID-19 variant 'Omicron'. The guidelines are-strengthening of medical test and screening of passengers, who are arriving from Omicron infected countries, at all gateways. All types of public gatherings have to be discouraged. People must follow all essential health rules including wearing facemasks while going outside the house. Limiting dining facility at restaurants, limiting people's gathering at different places and social programs, should be ensured. Health rules must be maintained at all places of worship, public transports. Passengers arriving from the infected countries have to be kept for 14-day quarantine. All educational institutions and coaching centers must maintain health rules. Healthcare professionals and health service recipients must follow health guidelines strictly. Unvaccinated people must receive COVID-19 vaccines. People with suspected coronavirus cases, positive patients and other people who have come in close contact with COVID-19 patients have to be kept in quarantine. The suspected COVID-19 people have to be kept at isolation as well as they have to be brought under testing facility. Wearing face masks must be made mandatory at offices besides maintaining other health rules. Vaccinated people must wear facemasks while going outside.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud said, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's directives for building metro-rail in Chattogram city is a New Year gift for the port city people. Dr. Hasan further said, the Premier has approved many development projects in Chattogram for water-logging mitigation, sewerage, construction of flyovers and other infrastructural development and most of the projects have already been implemented and others are being implemented. The people of Chattogram have already started getting benefits of the projects, he mentioned.

Dr. Hasan, while talking to newsmen after a meeting with the leaders of Television and Digital Program Producers Association of Bangladesh at his Ministry yesterday said, BNP leaders are overestimating themselves seeing only a few hundred people in their rallies in different districts whereas these public meetings even could not draw a few thousand audience. Dr. Hasan said, in fact, BNP has realized that there is no possibility of Taimur Alam Khandakar's winning in Narayanganj City Corporation elections. Now, they are trying to get rid of the shame of defeat by pulling out him from different posts of the party, he added. About the founding anniversary of BCL, the Minister said, the role of BCL in the movement of attaining independence, in freedom movements and in the Liberation War will be written in golden letters in the history. Replying to another query over comments of BNP leaders on the President's dialogue issue, he said, the President is holding the dialogue with different political parties to make the process of forming the EC transparent. BNP can give their statements to the President. But they are not doing that, he said adding, by this, they are proving that they have no belief in democratic norms.

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen has said, the government wants to find out the reasons if there is any "dissatisfaction" of some countries towards Bangladesh, stressing that they will try to address those issues. He said these while sharing New Year's thoughts with a small group of journalists yesterday, media reported. Dr. Momen said, the government will try to maintain the basic principle-"Friendship to all and malice towards none", in terms of its relations with foreign countries. As per the Prime Minister's roadmap, Dr. Momen said, they will continue to work to create "gainful employment" at home and abroad.

Amid the surge in COVID-19 cases, the government is going to put some restrictions, including plying public transport at their half capacities and closing shops and markets by 8pm, media reported quoting Health Minister Zahid Maleque. Public buses will operate at half of their capacities while shops and shopping malls will have to be closed by 8 pm instead of 10 pm, the Minister said while talking to reporters at the Secretariat. Deputy Commissioners have been asked to enforce the directives within seven days, he added. Besides, shops and shopping malls will be allowed to keep open till 8 pm instead of 10 pm, and no one will be allowed in shops and shopping malls without masks. The government is not considering any lockdown in the country right now and it will think about it if the infection rate goes up further, he said.

The government has strengthened the research of Hilsa, to increase its production, Fisheries and Livestock Minister S M Rezaul Karim said this at a Hilsa research ship handover ceremony on Khulna Shipyard Ltd premises yesterday. He added, production of Hilsa is increasing every year as after government is taking various steps. Khulna Shipyard Ltd built the Hilsa research ship with its own design. The ship has modern equipment and technology, portable mini hatchery, netting system, Hilsa research laboratory, fish finder, echo sounder, navigation, modern telecommunication and fire control system.

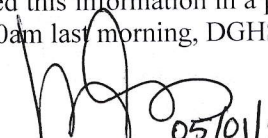
Bangladesh has called for early, voluntary, safe and sustained repatriation of the Myanmar nationals temporarily sheltered in Bangladesh. The country has also expressed its willingness to work together to further the relationship with Myanmar alongside ensuring early repatriation of the Rohingya to their place of origin in Rakhine state. "As an immediate and friendly neighbor, the people of Bangladesh have been persistent in developing mutually beneficial relations with the people of Myanmar and will work together to further the relationship," the Foreign Ministry said in a message of felicitation on the occasion of the Independence Day of Myanmar.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has announced the reduced airfare to Middle Eastern cities including Jeddah, Riyadh, Dubai and Abu Dhabi on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the national-flag carrier. The maximum fare for each one-way economy class ticket on Dhaka-Jeddah route has been reduced to Taka 64,620 from Taka 72,455 inclusive of tax. Similarly, the fare has been reduced to Taka 63,123 from Taka 70,758 for Dhaka-Riyadh and Dhaka-Dammam routes, to Taka 68,784 from Taka 75,508 for Dhaka-Dubai route and to Taka 58,542 from Taka 67,025 for Dhaka-Abu Dhabi route inclusive of tax. The price of each ticket carries a fixed tax ranging from Taka 7,644 to Taka 9,680, a press release said.

The government has allocated a total of 19,700 blankets for the poor and distressed cold-stricken people of 39 unions and three municipalities in the three upazilas of Narail district. A total of 36 beautician and owner of beauty parlors received Taka 92 lac from Prime Minister's incentive package during the period of COVID-19 pandemic in Rajshahi, so that they can get back to normal life after overcoming the adverse impact of the pandemic.

Balloting in the elections to some 708 Union Parishads-UPs in 48 districts of the country is underway in the fifth phase of the countrywide elections to the lowest tier of the local government. EVMs are being used in 40 UPs while traditional ballot papers in the rest of the UPs, according to the Election Commission.

The country yesterday recorded 06 fatalities from COVID-19, taking the total death toll to 28,087. With 775 fresh cases, the number of infections surged to 15,87,915. The positivity rate stood at 3.91 per cent as 19,838 samples were tested during the time. At the same time, the recovery count rose to 15,49,956, 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.


Md. Shahinoor Miah

Principal Information Officer (Acting)

Phone- 9546091