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### News Brief

President Md. Abdul Hamid held talks with Zaker Party, Bangladesh Kalyan Party and Bangladesh Jatiya Party-BJP, separately at Bangabhaban yesterday as part of his ongoing dialogue with political parties over forming an acceptable Election Commission. During the dialogue, the President sought a very proactive role of the country's political parties to create conducive environment in politics and motivate the voters to ensure fair and credible polls. The representatives of the respective political parties placed their different proposals, including enacting timely polls law or issuing an ordinance or constituting search committee utilizing modern equipments and using e-voting system.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has laid emphasis on leveraging the research-based knowledge for the country's socioeconomic development, calling upon the researchers to put concentration on basic and practical researches alongside exploring unused resources. The Premier was virtually addressing the inaugural ceremony of the National Science and Technology Complex-NSTC in city's Agargaon, joining from Ganabhaban yesterday. The PM also emphasized on conducting research in health sector. She also mentioned that her government is providing all kinds of assistance including necessary financial grants for research on science and technology. She urged the unvaccinated people to take the COVID-19 jabs immediately to protect their lives from the new variant 'Omicron'.

Bangladesh and Denmark have agreed to work together on climate change and infrastructural development issues for mutual benefits. Both the countries expressed the eagerness when Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen phoned Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last afternoon marking the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence and 50 years of diplomatic relations between the countries. They also expressed their keenness to work on other issues of mutual interest such as business, trade and commerce.

BNP leaders are inciting violence and terrorism in the name of political rallies in different areas of the country, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said this in a statement yesterday. Pointing to BNP he said, the people have boycotted those who are looters of people's fundamental rights, institutional patrons of corruption, flag bearer of extreme communalism and successors of autocratic mentality and evil politics of arbitrariness. Noting that the Awami League will join the President's dialogue over formation of a new EC, the Minister said, "We believe that mutual discussions can bring scopes for resolving any complex issue."

The Agriculture Ministers of D-8 agreed to take a multinational integrated project to innovate climate-smart agriculture technologies as proposed by Bangladesh during a two-day ministerial level virtual meeting, hosted by the Agriculture Ministry of Bangladesh. The meeting approved the Dhaka Initiative on the final day of the meeting at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council in Dhaka with Bangladesh Agriculture Minister Dr. Md. Abdur Razzaque in the chair. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Razzaque said, to sustain agricultural production and food security in the future, innovation and expansion of climate change-tolerant crop varieties and technologies must be expanded.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud while talking to newsmen at his ministry yesterday said, passports of those who are conducting propaganda against the country staying abroad might be cancelled. The decision has been taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order, he added. Replying to another query over human rights issue in the USA, he said, Guantanamo Bay is a notorious prison of the US where prisoners were detained and tortured without trial for 20 years. "... The statement of human rights experts of the United Nations pointed out how human rights are being violated extremely in the US," he added.

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Replying to another query over BNP's rallies, he said, the party leaders and activists are fighting among themselves in those rallies. Criticizing a comment of BNP leader Mirza Abbas, Dr. Hasan said, the comments of those leaders who went to the High Court for bail by wearing burqa are creating fun for the countrymen.

Bangladesh and Singapore have agreed to accelerate the process for concluding the signing of Free Trade Agreement-FTA to further strengthen the trade and commerce ties between the two nations. This was decided during a telephonic conversation between Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen and his Singaporean counterpart Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan yesterday. During the conversation, Dr. Momen sought Singapore's and ASEAN's proactive role in bringing a sustainable and permanent solution to the Rohingya crisis. Dr. Vivian assured of Singapore's continued support for a durable solution of the crisis. Dr. Momen suggested employing more of skilled workers from Bangladesh in Singapore and urged to invest more.

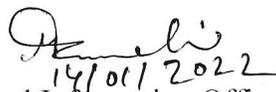
Dr. Momen urged Vietnam to exert their friendly influence on Myanmar to take their forcefully displaced citizens Rohingyas back on an expeditious basis. He made the urge during a telephone conversation with his Vietnamese counterpart Bùi Thanh Sơn on Wednesday. The Vietnamese Minister assured Dr. Momen of their sincere efforts within the ASEAN framework for an early solution to the crisis. Dr. Momen also encouraged the Vietnamese investors and business community to invest in Bangladesh. He sought Vietnam's support in favor of Bangladesh's candidacy as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of the ASEAN.

Bangladesh is expected to be the 24<sup>th</sup> largest economy of the world by 2030 despite the adverse impacts of COVID-19 pandemic that has taken huge toll on life and livelihood globally, the findings of the National Human Development Report-NHDR prepared by the Economic Relations Division-ERD, revealed that. Bangladesh has also become a digital economy and the nation envisages that it will be a developed economy by 2041, the NHDR added. The report said, the country maintained a comparable GDP growth rate for the most recent past 10 years (of FY2010-FY2019) is more than 6.7 per cent as a result, a mere \$35 billion economy of the mid-1990s has grown to a sizeable one of almost \$330 billion. During the same period, the per capita gross national income has registered a more than seven-fold rise from just \$300 to above \$2,064. The headcount poverty fell from 58 per cent in 1990 to about 20.5 per cent in FY2019, it said.

The government has adopted a year-based plan to generate more 2,883 MW electricity by the next six years, an official said. According to the plan adopted this month, 553-MW electricity will add this year, 923 MW will come in 2023, 603 MW in 2024, 200 MW in 2025, 502 MW in 2026 and 102 MW in 2027.

A Dhaka court yesterday set February 1 for holding hearing for two cases, lodged against BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia-on the charges of celebrating fake birthday on National Mourning Day and stigmatizing the War of Liberation by rehabilitating the anti-liberation forces, allowing a time plea of the defence.

The country yesterday recorded 12 fatalities from COVID-19, taking the total death toll to 28,123. With 3,359 fresh cases, the number of infections surged to 16,04,664. The positivity rate stood at 12.03 per cent as 27,920 samples were tested during the time. At the same time, the recovery count rose to 15,51,955, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. Besides, 03 more dengue patients got hospitalized across the country in the 24 hours till 8:00am last morning, DGHS informed.

  
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