

Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 12

promotion and development of relations and understanding between the two countries in the spheres of culture, art, education and science and technology.

CABINET MEETS

A cabinet meeting is held today with Bangabandhu in the chair. The cabinet discusses various pressing issues of the country, including the food situation and the post-war reconstruction effort.

FOOD SITUATION DISCUSSED

Bangabandhu and the UNROD Chief Umrict today have a discussion on agriculture and the food situation in Bangladesh. The UN secretary general's future appeal for help to Bangladesh in the field of food grains and various services are also discussed. The UNROD chief says Bangladesh would need help in various services such as repairing irrigation pumps for paddy fields and in fertiliser and pesticide industries. There is also scope for gearing up the shipyard, he adds.

BHASHANI WILL LEAD

DEPUTATION TO BANGABANDHU

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, president of Bangladesh National Awami Party, will soon lead a delegation of the leaders of the newly-formed seven-party committee of action to Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to discuss a 15-point charter of demands of the committee.

Source: December 31, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Bangladesh Observer and Ittefaq.

BGB shoots

FROM PAGE 12

the spot around 4:15am, the OC added.

On information, he said, police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police recovered the victim's Indian national ID card, 260 pieces of yaba tablets, 12 bottles of wine and two sharp cutters from the spot.

Lt Col Tauhid Mahmud, commanding officer of 39th BGB Battalion, Mymensingh, confirmed the incident.

Meanwhile, a flag meeting was held at No Man's Land near Gubrakura Land Port in Halaughat upazila of Mymensingh this afternoon regarding the killing.

A 15-member delegation led by Col KN Tripathi, commandant of 55th Border Security Force (BSF) Battalion, joined the meeting while Commanding officer of BGB-39 Battalion, Mymensingh Lt Col Tauhid Mahmud led a delegation of the same for Bangladesh side, said Lt Col Tauhid Mahmud.

In 35-minute meeting, both the sides agreed to combat terrorist groups in the borders of Bangladesh and India and hoped to work in friendly atmosphere, said the official.

The body will be handed over after completing all legal procedures, the official informed.

Mercury may

FROM PAGE 12

"It may continue at some places," said the bulletin of Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

The 24-hour weather bulletin was released at 6:00pm yesterday.

"Weather may remain dry over the country. Moderate to thick fog may occur at places over the river basins of the country and light to moderate fog may occur elsewhere over the country," the bulletin added.

"Night and day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country," it said.

The weather may see little changes in next 72 hours, the bulletin added.

EU demands China release citizen journalist Zhang Zhan

AFP, Brussels

The European Union yesterday demanded that China release citizen journalist Zhang Zhan and several other jailed reporters, lawyers and human rights champions.

The EU statement was issued just ahead of Brussels signing a major investment pact with Beijing, despite concerns about China's labour and civil rights record.

Zhang was jailed on Monday for four years over allegations of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" during her coverage of the early stages of the Covid-19 outbreak in epicentre Wuhan, her lawyer said.

"Prior to her detention, Ms Zhang Zhan had been reporting about the coronavirus pandemic in Wuhan," EU foreign policy spokesman Peter Stano said in a statement.

"According to credible sources, Ms Zhang has been subject to torture and ill-treatment during her detention and her health condition has seriously deteriorated. It is crucial that she receives adequate medical assistance."

Brussels also demanded the release of Yu Wensheng, a human rights lawyer jailed on December 13.



People remove debris outside a damaged restaurant on the waterfront of Naples, after a powerful storm hit the city overnight, in Naples, Italy yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

People reaping benefits of democracy: PM

FROM PAGE 12

enabling Bangladesh to fulfil all the criteria to emerge as a developing country. "But coronavirus stalled everything."

The PM said when the entire world got stalled completely, Bangladesh had been able to carry on its economic advancement -- at least on a limited scale. "Maybe we couldn't achieve the fixed goals."

Hasina said the GDP target for

Bangladesh was 8.2 percent for the last fiscal year, but there was a pandemic across the world and the global economy had come to a standstill. "As in the global village, Bangladesh also faced some problems."

The PM went on saying, "Taking risks, all are working in their respective fields. As a result, we've been able to maintain the pace of advancement."

She expressed her gratitude to the people of the country for electing her

government for the third consecutive time and for that it has been able to take long-term development plans for the country.

Hasina said the government has taken up five-year plans, Vision 2021 and Vision 2041, apart from Delta Plan 2100.

"To execute these visions and plans what we need is the five-year plans. We've implemented the 6th and 7th five-year plans, we're undertaking the

8th Five-Year Plan today [yesterday], we'll take ahead the development phase by phase for the Vision 2041," she said.

By the time, she mentioned that the government will require to implement more five-year plans.

"We'll be able to build Bangladesh as a developed and prosperous country if the future governments, no matter whether we'll be there in power, formulate these five-year plans," she said.

WHO warns of worse pandemics

FROM PAGE 12

Cyril Ramaphosa announced a ban on selling alcohol and said face masks will be compulsory in public after his nation became the first in Africa to record one million cases.

"We have let down our guard, and unfortunately we are now paying the price," said Ramaphosa, blaming "super-spreader" social events and an "extreme lack of vigilance over the holiday period" for the spike.

Ramaphosa said data showed "excessive alcohol consumption" leads to an increase in trauma cases reported at hospitals, causing an "unnecessary" strain on public health facilities.

Surging cases also forced

authorities in Rio de Janeiro -- one of Brazil's worst-hit cities -- to announce Monday that they will block access to beaches on December 31 to prevent crowds celebrating New Year's Eve.

And in Spain, where the death toll has topped 50,000, the health minister said the government would set up a registry of people who refuse to be vaccinated, and share it with other European Union member states.

Vaccinations in Spain and other EU countries started over the weekend, and authorities fear vaccine hesitancy and rejection could hamper those efforts -- especially because of misinformation campaigns on social media.

That was not a concern with

75-year-old Jacques Collineau, resident of an old people's home in Joue-les-Tours, France.

"Fear? Fear of what? I've been vaccinated for the flu before, now it's the same thing," Collineau said as he got the shot.

"We don't make vaccines to kill people, we make vaccines to try to save them."

Belarus yesterday began a vaccination drive against coronavirus using the Sputnik V jab, becoming the first country outside Russia to use the vaccine developed by Moscow.

Belarus, with a population of around 9.5 million people, has registered more than 188,000 cases of coronavirus infections and nearly 1,400 deaths.

'THIS IS NOT THE BIG ONE'

The coronavirus has devastated lives and economies across the globe, but the WHO warned Monday that worse pandemics could like ahead, urging the world to get serious about preparedness.

"This is a wakeup call," WHO emergencies chief Michael Ryan told reporters at a briefing marking a year since the UN agency first learned of the new virus spreading in China.

"This pandemic... has spread around the world extremely quickly and it has affected every corner of this planet, but this is not necessarily the big one," Ryan added.

"We need to get ready for something that may even be more severe in the future."

Algeria seizes nearly \$100,000 militants' ransom cash

AFP, Algiers

Algeria's army has retrieved a "slice of the ransom" cash paid out to free hostages held by "terrorist groups" in the troubled Sahel region, the defence ministry has said.

Soldiers "recovered the sum of 80,000 euros" (\$97,900) during an operation in Algeria's northeastern Jijel province, a statement issued late Monday said.

Algerian authorities use the term "terrorist" to describe armed Islamists who have been active in the country since the early 1990s, including

members of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

The defence ministry said the cash was an "instalment of the ransom" paid out in a controversial October agreement, where neighbouring Mali released some 200 prisoners including militant leaders to secure the release of four hostages, including French aid worker Sophie Petronin.

Algeria condemned the deal, and Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad said the payment of ransoms "undermines our counter-terrorism efforts".

Algiers said it had subsequently arrested several extremist fighters who had fled across the porous desert border from Mali.

Earlier this month, in the same Jijel province, three Islamists fighters and an Algerian soldier were killed in clashes, while on December 16, troops arrested a man they described as "dangerous terrorist", named Rezkane Ahcene.

One of the men later arrested in Algeria alleged that a ransom was paid totalling "millions" of euros.

Rumours of ransoms paid for the release of western hostages in the

Sahel region are common but rarely confirmed, and France has denied any involvement in negotiations for the release of the hostages.

France has deployed over 5,000 troops across the arid Sahel region of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger as part of its Operation Barkane mission fighting jihadist groups.

Three French soldiers were killed on Monday in Mali when their armoured vehicle struck an explosive device, taking the total deaths to 47 since Paris first intervened militarily in 2013.

Mourning swan

FROM PAGE 12

Its companion then sat beside the body in mourning, resisting attempts by officials to lure it away and temporarily closing the line to traffic.

Firefighters with special equipment were later called in and managed to lift the dead swan and its surviving companion away from the area.

Twenty-three trains were delayed for about 50 minutes while the rescue operation took place, the police statement said.

The surviving swan was unharmed and later released onto the river Fulda, it added.

According to Britain's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, swans try to find a mate for life.

50 journalists

FROM PAGE 12

channel that rallied regime opponents, and who was executed in December.

His execution "confirms Iran's record as a country that has officially put the most journalists to death in the past half-century," it said.

COVID WHISTLEBLOWERS

Ades-Mével said RSF had also noted the "developing" trend of violence against media workers covering protests, notably in the United States following the killing of George Floyd, and in France against a controversial new security law.

The total number of journalists killed in 2020 was lower than the 53 reported in 2019, although RSF said fewer journalists worked in the field this year because of the pandemic.

In the first part of the report, published this month, RSF said it was concerned that measures imposed by governments to fight the pandemic had contributed to a "significant peak in violations of press freedom".

It listed 387 jailed journalists, which it called "a historically high number".

Fourteen of those had been arrested in connection with their coverage of the coronavirus crisis, it said.

On Monday Chinese citizen journalist Zhang Zhan, who sent dispatches from Wuhan during the chaotic initial stages of the outbreak, was jailed for four years for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble".

Chinese authorities have punished eight virus whistleblowers so far as they curb criticism of the government's response to the outbreak.

First ship docks

FROM PAGE 12

with the width of 250 meter and depth of 18-meter. The ship entered into the channel from the Bay of Bengal.

The idea of the deep seaport in Matarbari was conceived after the government started a coal-based power plant project in the area, as a wider channel and a port would be required to bring in the fuel for the plant.

The deep seaport project worth Tk 17,777 crore got the approval from the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) on March 10.

Export and import activities have increased significantly in recent years, so the country needs a deep seaport to support the growing international trade and the economy, Planning Minister MA Mannan told journalists after the meeting on that day.

Officials concerned said the project is expected to be completed by 2025 to 2026.

Once it is completed, Matarbari will be the fourth port in Bangladesh. The Matarbari port will help the country handle rising volumes of exports and imports and ease the pressure on the Chattogram port, said officials concerned.

Under the project, a 26.7-kilometre approach road will be constructed. The approach road will be an elevated expressway.

Talking to journalists yesterday, Captain Ataul Siddique, assistant harbor master of Chattogram Port Authority, said, "It has now been proved that vessels can be moved through this channel and anchored in this jetty. The depth and width of this channel will be enlarged gradually. Now, maximum 320-meter long vessel can move through this channel."

AL-backed

FROM PAGE 12

Fakrul Islam Alamgir yesterday rejected the election result, saying that no election can ever be fair under this government and the Election Commission.

He was talking to reporters over the elections at his residence at Kalibari of Thakurgaon yesterday.

He alleged that if 10 voters cast their votes pressing button of the EVM, eight will automatically go for boat, the electoral symbol of the Awami League while two will go for paddy sheaves, BNP's electoral symbol.

The machine will work the way the programme will be fixed, he said, adding, "I'm not saying anything ridiculous, that's true."

He said they have only one proposal which is the formation of people's government.

"We want a neutral government during election, we want a neutral election commission. We also want to restore ballot system instead of EVM as our people are yet to understand about EVM," he added.



A woman receives an injection during the first trial phase of a locally-made Iranian vaccine for Covid-19 coronavirus disease in Iran's capital Tehran yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP