

## Bangabandhu

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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 Umbricht 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

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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 Haluaghat 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

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recorded at 7.3 degrees Celsius in Chudanga and Sreemangal.

A weather bulletin yesterday said, "Mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Khulna division and the regions of Madaripur, Gopalganj, Sreemangal, Rajshahi, Ishwardi, Badalgachhi, Dinajpur, Tentulia, Rajarhat, Barishal and Khepupara." "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 temperatures may remain nearly unchanged over the country," it said.

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

## AL-backed

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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.



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

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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 2000.

"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 need to implement more five-year plans.

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

## SSC in June, HSC in July-August

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The SSC candidates will be informed about the curtailed syllabus by January 15 and the HSC candidates by January 31.

Talking to The Daily Star, NCTB Chairman Prof Narayan Chandra Saha said as per the directive, they will start preparing the syllabuses as soon as possible.

"We will give priority to the minimum basic competence of students for their next level of education. We will hold discussions with teachers, experts and others."

Dipu Moni said they are planning to bring the class-10 and class-12 students, who will sit for next year's exams, back to schools and colleges.

Classes for SSC candidates will be held from February to April and for HSC students from February to May.

All educational institutions have remained closed since March 17 due to the Covid pandemic. The closure has been extended till January 16.

Around 20 lakh students are expected to sit for next year's SSC and equivalent

exams and 13 lakh students for the HSC and equivalent exams.

Expressing satisfaction over the government plan, one of the SSC candidates, Rezwan Rahman from Jashore, said, "If the exams were held in February, I would not have been able to make proper preparation for the exams. But now I will get some more time and more classes."

Shariful Islam, guardian of an HSC candidate in the capital's Mirpur, said the government should prepare the syllabus in such a way that students can learn enough to do well in university admission tests and also in the next level of education.

**HSC RESULTS** This year's HSC, Primary Education Completion, Junior School Certificate and their equivalent exams were cancelled due to the pandemic.

HSC candidates will be evaluated this year based on their results in the JSC and SSC tests.

Yesterday, Dipu Moni said they have completed all preparations for

announcing the HSC results based on the evaluation.

"There is a law regarding publication of public examination results. An ordinance has to be issued to publish the results under special circumstances."

She hoped that the ordinance will be issued by the first week of next month and the results will be published immediately after that.

Prof Shahedul Khabir Chowdhury, director (admin) at the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, told this newspaper that the education boards hold public exams and publish results in line with the Intermediate and Secondary Education Ordinance, 1961.

**TEXTBOOK DISTRIBUTION** All primary and secondary students will get new textbooks free of cost by January 15, said the education minister.

As in the previous years, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the textbook distribution on December 31.

But because of the pandemic, the government will not hold the Textbook

Festival on January 1 when textbooks are handed over to primary and secondary students free of cost every year, she added.

This time, new textbooks will be distributed among the secondary students at their schools in 12 days. They have to show up at the schools to collect those.

The book distribution method will be a bit different for primary students.

State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Zakir Hossen said the guardians of primary students will need to go to schools to collect the new textbooks for their children.

"We will not hand over the new textbooks to the primary students, keeping in mind the Covid situation."

He said a primary school with less than 200 students must distribute the textbooks in a day, while one with more than 200 students will get three days to distribute those.

The NCTB chairman said 34.36 crore textbooks will be distributed among 4.16 crore students across the country.

## Court orders ACC to seize PK Halder's flats, land

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Earlier, the High Court ordered the ACC to submit the progress report of the investigation into the money laundering case against PK Halder and the steps taken for arresting him and bringing him back by January 3 next year.

PK Halder is the former managing director of NRB Global Bank and Reliance Finance.

The court also allowed Uzzal Kumar Nandi, a former colleague of PK Halder, and Halder's cousin

Amitabh Adhikary to submit their statements before this court by January 3 in connection with the allegations against them of assisting PK Halder in embezzling a huge amount of public money.

Earlier, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told the HC bench that the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka on November 25 issued an arrest warrant for PK Halder following an application from the ACC and that the court sent the order of arrest warrant to the Interpol through the home

ministry to arrest him.

The lawyer added that the authorities concerned confiscated 53 bank accounts and immovable properties worth Tk 43 crore of PK Halder.

According to Canadian media reports, PK Halder is now staying in Toronto. He is director of P&L Hal Holding Inc, a Canadian corporation.

In an investigation, the central bank found that Tk 1,596 crore was transferred from International Leasing and Financial Services (ILFSL) in

violation of the rules through 48 accounts of various organisations related to the directors and shareholders of the firm, according to Bangladesh Bank officials.

PK Halder came to the limelight during the anti-casino drives last year.

The ACC opened investigation into the involvement of 43 people, including PK Halder, in the illegal casino business.

The government issued a travel ban on him on October 3 last year. But he managed to flee the country.

## Mourning swan

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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

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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

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of 18-meter. The ship entered into the channel from the Bay of Bengal.

The idea of the deep-sea port 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-sea port 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-sea port 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."

## 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.



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