

## 'People are the source of power'

President urges all to participate in govt activities to make democracy more effective

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Abdul Hamid yesterday told parliament that democracy needs to be made more effective by establishing transparency and accountable good governance by ensuring proper participation of people in all government activities.

He said this while addressing the first session of the New Year in parliament as the 16th session of the 11th parliament began yesterday.

In his brief written speech, he said the government's expenditure has increased due to huge increase of development activities over the past one-and-a-half decade.

"Therefore, caution should be maintained in all matters related to the project to prevent misuse of government funds," he added.

The full text of his speech was tabled in parliament. Earlier, the House went into the sitting around 4:00pm.

Hamid in his speech said the people are the source of all power and the centre of all their hope is the Jatiya Sangsad. "As people's representative, public interest should be given priority over everything else," he said.

"I strongly urge people, irrespective of party affiliation, class and profession, to take concerted action on fundamental issues like democracy, rule of law and development."



Police disperse job seekers after they blocked Nilkhet intersection yesterday morning to press home their demands including extension of age limit for entering government service. Their other demands include stopping corruption in the government's recruitment process, and making public the scores of both preliminary and written tests.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 'Warning, not punishment'

Says agri minister about sanctions on Rab after meeting with US ambassador

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US sanctions on Rab and seven of its current and former officials were not meant to punish Bangladesh but to warn on human rights, Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque said referring to his meeting with outgoing US Ambassador Earl R Miller yesterday.

"I had a meeting with him [Earl Miller] for quite some time. He said the US sanctions on the law enforcers were not aimed at punishing Bangladesh, but to warn us," he told reporters at the ministry.

Summarising the discussion details with Miller, Razzaque said the US is attaching high importance on human rights and they perceive that the law enforcers in Bangladesh have violated human rights in some cases and that those need corrections. They hope that Bangladesh will make the corrections.

In response to Miller's observations, the minister said it was regretful that the US has put Bangladesh on the same category of North Korea and Myanmar.

"I said the human rights situation in Bangladesh is good. No human rights violations have happened here," Abdur Razzaque said. However, law enforcement agencies may have made mistakes in some cases, and 190

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**"The US is attaching high importance on human rights and they perceive that the law enforcers in Bangladesh have violated human rights in some cases and that those need corrections. They hope that Bangladesh will make the corrections."**

ABDUR RAZZAQUE  
Agriculture Minister

## Ekushey Boi Mela postponed till Feb 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to an ongoing spike in Covid-19 infections, the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela – which was set to begin on February 1 – has been postponed for two weeks. If the cases are under control, the biggest cultural event in Bangladesh may start in the third week of February.

However, in that case, compliance with hygiene guidelines will be strictly ensured.

State Minister for Culture KM Khalid told The Daily Star that due to the recent spike in cases, the fair has been postponed till February 14.

"People's lives are more important than any event. However, preparations for the fair will continue," he said.

A meeting was held at the ministry yesterday before the official announcement of postponing the fair. There were also discussions regarding

how the book fair can be organised when the Covid situation gets under control.

In this regard, KM Khalid said publishers, salespersons and those involved with the fair will have to take their booster doses and keep their vaccine certificates with them.

"We will constantly monitor the matter," said the state minister.

"We are also thinking of limiting the number of people attending the fair. We are considering an online booking system," he added.

Meanwhile, publishers have expressed their satisfaction over the decision of postponing the book fair.

Farid Ahmed, president of Academic and

**Though the fair starts on February 1 every year, the tradition was broken last year. It started on March 18 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.**



- May begin in the 3rd week of February
- Vaccination certificate a must for publishers and staff members
- Online booking may be introduced for visitors to control crowd

Creative Publishers Association of Bangladesh, said there should be no compromise with the Covid-19 situation as the numbers are increasing every day.

"We welcome this decision," he said. "Publishers have been facing losses for the past two years. The last fair was not successful. We are hoping for a good one this year if it starts in February," added Farid.

Anyapokash's chief executive Mazharul Islam also expressed his support, saying that there is no other option than suspending the fair under such circumstances.

Though the fair starts on February 1 every year, the tradition was broken last year. It started on March 18 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The fair also ended early – on April 12, instead of April 14 – after the government enforced a countrywide lockdown around that time.

## Govt to check misuse, abuse of DSA

Says law minister at diplomatic briefing

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government has expressed readiness to check misuse and abuse of the Digital Security Act, said Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday.

He said the government is engaging with the relevant UN Offices to understand best practices in this regard, during an hour-long meeting with the diplomats, the first one this year, organised by the foreign ministry at the Foreign Service Academy.

He elaborated on the procedure of the formation of new Election Commission and the current dialogue of the president with political parties.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, LGRD Minister Md Tazul Islam, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam and Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen were present during the briefing.

Regarding holding free and fair elections, the foreign minister said, "We are pledge bound to uphold our constitutional obligation," according to a statement.



He briefly touched upon the ongoing local government elections. This is the first time the country elected a UP chairman from the third gender, he mentioned.

The LGRD minister briefed the diplomats about the different phases and results of the ongoing local government elections. He mentioned that a large number of independent candidates were elected during these elections.

The ministers clarified the issue of "uncontested elections" which takes place in other countries including in the developed parts of the world.

Around 40 diplomats joined the briefing. It was followed by an interactive session in which questions on LDC graduation, business and investment, Rohingya repatriation, among other topics, were addressed.

About the briefing, a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star that the government tried to give a message to the diplomats that if they have any issues that need to be addressed, they should let Dhaka know.

The ministers said if the diplomats are not satisfied, they may then inform their headquarters about the issues, the official added.

The government also shared with the diplomats the plans for fair elections in 2023, a diplomat who was present at the briefing told this correspondent.

Some diplomats also wanted to know the government strategy in the aftermath of LDC graduation of Bangladesh. They also pointed out the issues of business climate in Bangladesh, suggesting further improvement.



## TH Khan passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted jurist Justice Tafazzal Hossain Khan, popularly known as TH Khan, passed away yesterday at a city hospital due to cardiac failure. He was 102.

He is survived by three sons and a daughter.

His son Afzal H Khan is The Daily Star's former news editor.

Afzal, also a lawyer, said his father breathed his last around 4:45pm at Bangladesh Specialized Hospital while undergoing treatment there.

TH Khan was admitted to the hospital yesterday morning with old-age related complications. He

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The nurseries near Dhaka University's Doyel Chattar sell flowers, plants, and saplings of all kinds. To fetch a better price, vendors sometimes adorn a less flattering plant with some artificial nests or clay pots, which adds to the beauty created by the rows of shops on the road. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

PRAYER  
TIMING  
JAN 17



|        | Fazr | Zohr  | Asr  | Maghrib | Esha |
|--------|------|-------|------|---------|------|
| Azan   | 5:30 | 12:45 | 4:15 | 5:40    | 7:00 |
| Jamaat | 6:05 | 1:15  | 4:30 | 5:44    | 7:30 |

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION