

'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, inset, in the 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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ABDUR RAZZAQUE
Agriculture Minister

Ekushey Boi Mela postponed

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, staff
- 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.

Anypokash'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 nationwide lockdown around that time.

'Children first'

HC observes in full-text verdict on custody battle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court in the full text of a verdict has observed that children's welfare should be considered first, and law should not be applied in relevant cases without their welfare and wellbeing.

"Thus, in respect to the applicability of the 'Comity of Courts' it is our considered view that the child's welfare and wellbeing should be considered first and the above proposition of law should not be applied in each and every case mechanically without considering the wellbeing and welfare of the minors," said the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim (now a judge of the Appellate Division) and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman.

The full text was released yesterday as the HC bench delivered the verdict on November 21 last year in a case regarding the custody of children Nakano Jasmine Malika (11) and Nakano Laila Lina (9), who were brought from Japan to Bangladesh in February last year. In the verdict, the HC directed that they will remain with their father Bangladesh-born US citizen Imran Sharif

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NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

HC directive to stop use of fireworks sought

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking its directive on the government to stop use of explosive substances including lanterns and fireworks during new year celebrations.

Advocate Mizanur Rahman submitted the petition to the office concerned of the HC. It also requested the government to give compensation to the family of Umair, a six-month old child at Mirpur in Dhaka, who reportedly died after being frightened at the sound of fireworks at night on December 31 last year.

Citing the petition, Mizanur told The Daily Star that he prayed to the HC to pass necessary directives so that new years are celebrated without any accident.

Over 2cr people using renewable energy: Nasrul

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid has said the government is exploring options like rooftop and floating solar power plants as alternatives to land based ones due to scarcity of land.

He said it is not possible to set up land-based large scale solar plants as land is being used for agriculture and other necessary purposes.

The state minister made the remarks while presiding over the virtually held "Member Interventions" session of the 12th assembly of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) on Saturday evening.



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, they might 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