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**NEWS BRIEF**

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) yesterday approved eight projects, including one called the 'Local Governance Support Project-3 (LGSP-3)' involving Tk 5,535 crore. The total outlay of the projects is Tk 12,550.78 crore. The ECNEC approved the projects at its weekly meeting held at the NEC conference room with ECNEC Chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair. Other projects approved in the ECNEC meeting are: Climate Tolerant Rural Infrastructures Project, Khulna Division Rural Infrastructure Development Project, infrastructural facility development of Military Institute of Science and Technology Mirpur Cantonment, Development of Ananna Residential Area (2nd phase) in Chittagong, building connecting road from Natore Road to Rajshahi Bypass, construction of Barisal and Sylhet Armed Police Battalion and Range Reserve Line and construction of Patuakhali-Paira 230 KV Transmission lines.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the month-long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela (book fair) 2017 at 3pm on the Bangla Academy premises. The premier will also distribute prizes among the winners of 'Bangla Academy Sahitya Puroshkar 2016' and inaugurate a 4-day International Literature Conference 2017. A book named "**Nirbachita Probandha**" by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will also hit this year's Book Fair .

World Bank (WB) representatives expressed satisfaction and repeatedly praised Bangladesh for properly implementing all projects of education sector in time. A six-member team of WB led by its Education Practice manager Keiko Miwa met with Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid for at his office yesterday. Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said the projects are being implemented with sincerity.

The EC search committee formed by President Abdul Hamid yesterday shortlisted 20 people examining 125 names proposed by 25 political parties to appoint as new election commissioners. Cabinet secretary Mohammad Shafiul Alam came up with the announcement after a meeting of the search panel.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali yesterday said Dhaka would continue working for a permanent solution to Rohingya crisis on the basis of bilateral friendship and mutual understandings through further strengthening multifaceted relations with Myanmar. The minister said this in the Jatiya Sangsad while responding to a written question from treasury bench member Begum Pinu Khan.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday urged the Myanmar government to take back the Rohingya refugees immediately from Bangladesh. He said while talking to journalists after a meeting with visiting members of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State at his ministry. The Home Minister asked the Commission members to create pressure on Myanmar government regionally and internationally.

State Minister for Power and Energy Nasrul Hamid has said the submission of bids in 1,200 MW coal-fired Matarbari Power Plant project by the pre-qualified bidders-Marubeni Corporation and Sumitomo Corporation will immensely boost up the confidence of the foreign firms who want to invest or engage in Bangladesh. He said this after the two pre-qualified bidders submitted their respective bids for 1,200 MW coal-fired Matarbari Power Plant project yesterday after the incident of Holey Artisan Bakery at Gulshan.

The government set a target to raise Bangladesh's global position in doing-business index to two digits from the current 176th by creating investment-stimulating environment for both local and international investors. Disclosing this at a press conference yesterday at a city hotel Bangladesh Investment Development Authority expressed the hope of meeting the challenging target.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas arrives in Dhaka today on a three-day official visit, aiming at further strengthening the bilateral relations with Bangladesh. During his three-day visit, President Abbas will meet President Md Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and discuss issues, which will strengthen bilateral ties.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today greeted members of the Hindu community on the occasion of Saraswati Puja. In separate messages on the eve of the religious festival, they wished all success of the event. In his message, President Abdul Hamid said the participation of common people irrespective of caste, creed and religion in the festival has added a new dimension to the non-communal spirit and heritage of the country. Prime Minister said Bangladesh is a country of communal harmony.

Finance minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith told parliament yesterday that he would consider the imposition of 14.5 per cent 'fat tax' on junk food while preparing the budget for 2017-18 financial year. Finance minister said this replying to a call attention notice placed by lawmaker Nurjahan Begum in the Jatiyo Sangsad.

DSEX, the prime index of the DSE, settled yesterday at 5468.34 points.

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