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**News Brief**

President Md. Abdul Hamid on Wednesday stressed the need for creating a strong social movement against corruption at the grassroots level to make people aware of the adverse impacts of graft on society. "There's no alternative to creating awareness at all levels to fight graft," he said when a four-member delegation of the national anti-graft agency, led by its chairman Iqbal Mahmood, presented its Annual Report-2016 to him at Bangabhaban. President Hamid advised the Commission to conduct probes against graft suspects properly so that those can bring positive results.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday said her government successfully resolved the ethnic problems in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) through talks without any third-party mediation. She made the remarks when former Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga met her at her official residence Ganobhaban.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina extended her heartiest congratulations to Bangladesh cricket team for their emphatic victory against New Zealand in the Tri-nation ODI Series at Clontarf Cricket Club Ground in Dublin yesterday. In a congratulatory message, Sheikh Hasina greeted all the players, coach and officials of the national team as well as Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials concerned for defeating New Zealand. "The whole nation is proud of seeing the team spirit of our players and their tremendous performance," she said. The premier expressed the hope that the winning spree of the Bangladesh cricket team would continue in future.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed deep shock at the horrendous attack in the northern English city of Manchester, which killed 22 people and injured dozens more. "We strongly condemn such a barbaric act," Sheikh Hasina said in a message to her British counterpart Theresa May on Tuesday. "On behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh, I extend my deepest condolences to you and the people of the UK. Our thoughts and prayers are with the grieving families at this difficult hour," she added.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has expressed its satisfaction over the security in the country after the last year's militant attack at the Holey Artisan Bakery cafe in the city, said Finance Minister AMA Muhith Wednesday. "JICA is satisfied over the government's security steps in response to the last year's militant attacks. They are also very happy with our existing relations," he told newsmen after a meeting with a Japanese delegation, led by JICA President Shinichi Kitaoka, at Finance Ministry. During the meeting, Muhith said, JICA president reaffirmed his commitment to continue assistance to the development of the country.

Stressing the need for expansion of Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) industry, Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu on Wednesday said the government is developing a planned industrial city for the light engineering manufacturing enterprises scattered across the country. "It is possible to create huge employment in the country through expansion and modernising the light engineering sector", said Amu. The minister came up with the observation while inaugurating the construction work of Tool Institute Building of Bangladesh Industrial and Technical Assistance Centre (BITAC) at Tejgaon in the city.

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed on Wednesday said country's exporters should be more active for new markets to boost export. "Now, many countries are providing duty and quota free access to Bangladesh, that is why, we have to expand our market in those countries and buoyant role of exporters is required for it," he opined. The minister passed the observation while speaking at a roundtable discussion organised by the Policy Research Institute (PRI) as the chief guest in Dhaka. Only pinning upon the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) markets will not be practical for the country rather "we have to move where Bangladeshi products have demand", he added.

Water Resources Minister Barrister Anisul Islam Mahmud on Wednesday said strengthening regional cooperation is a must to manage trans-boundary rivers in South Asia. "It's very difficult to manage rivers in the region unless there's regional cooperation involving Bangladesh, India, Bhutan and China," he told a seminar at Cirdap in the capital.

The 10 special initiatives taken by Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina will play a pivotal role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and turn Bangladesh into a middle-income country by ending poverty by 2021. Principal Information Officer (PIO) Kamrun Nahar said these while addressing a views-exchange meeting with journalists of national and local media on the 10 special initiatives of the PM at Chittagong Circuit House on Wednesday. The PIO said the initiatives are the ideas of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to turn the country into middle-income one by 2021.

India wants Bangladesh to exploit sea resources in the best possible way for enormous economic benefits of the two neighbouring countries and create a 'secure and sustainable' Bay of Bengal and beyond. "Certainly, I think, that is a sort of cooperation we want to see," said Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Wednesday. He mentioned that Bangladesh and India reached an amicable settlement of the maritime boundary between them which opened up 'enormous potential' of cooperation on blue economy. The high commissioner was speaking as the chief guest at the annual conference of International Business Forum Bangladesh (IBFB) at a Dhaka hotel.

The prime index of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) settled yesterday at 5,412.69 points.

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