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**NEWS BRIEF**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left Dhaka for Davos yesterday on a five-day official visit to Switzerland to attend the 47th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF). The four-day meeting will be held on January 17-20 in Davos in the eastern Alps region of Switzerland under the theme 'Responsive and Responsible Leadership'. An Etihad Airways flight carrying the prime minister and her entourage left Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 10:35pm.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday joined the Akheri Munajat (concluding prayers) of Bishwa Ijtema as the first phase of the world's largest Muslim congregation after the holy Hajj ended on the banks of the river Turag at Tongi of Gazipur. From her official Ganabhaban residence, the prime minister took part in the munajat.

President Hamid congratulated Mayor of the London Borough of Brent Councillor Parvez Ahmed while he made a courtesy call on President Abdul Hamid at Bangabhaban in Dhaka yesterday afternoon. During the meeting, the visiting Mayor apprised the President of the activities of his council. Mentioning the organizational structure in Bangladesh missions abroad, the Mayor said it is not possible to give the Bangladeshi migrants expected services because of lack of manpower. He suggested appointing Law officer in Bangladesh missions. He also suggested appointing information officer in the mission to project Bangladesh's development and progress.

Over 27 lakh new jobs will be created in the current fiscal year as the government has taken up programs, including providing training to unemployed youths and sending seven lakh workers abroad, said Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal while speaking at a meet the press program at NEC conference room yesterday. He said the economic growth is expected to be 7.5 percent in FY17 as all economic indicators were in good position in the first six months of the current fiscal year. The minister said the World Bank (WB) forecasts the GDP growth at 6.8 percent for FY17. It is a good projection as the WB did never make such a good projection in the past, he added. Kamal said the WB always maintains a conservative approach in estimating GDP growth rate that makes difference with the estimation of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Bangladesh has secured a negotiated cut-down rate of tariff to import around 250MWs of electricity from India, the Power Division official said. The reduction is estimated to save around tk. 128.70 million for the country in power purchase from the Power Trading Corporation of India over the next six month.

State Minister for Power and Energy Nasrul Hamid said that Bangladesh has made a significant progress in increasing power generation capacity to over 15,000MW. He said this while addressing at the seventh session of the Assembly of International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in Abu Dhabi yesterday. Minister said Bangladesh is producing 470MW of renewable energy including 230MW of hydroelectricity, he informed. The government has already installed five million solar home systems with capacity to generate 210MW of electricity. Besides, Dhaka also generates 30MW of electricity from solar rooftop, solar irrigation, solar mini-grid, solar charging station and biomass.

Garment exports to Germany, the second largest export destination for Bangladeshi apparel after the US, will continue to grow in future due to the high quality of products and competitive prices, German traders said. As a member of the EU, Germany will continue its duty privilege for Bangladesh, said Manfred Junkert, deputy general manager of the Confederation of the German Textile and Fashion Industry, at a press conference on the sidelines of the Heimtextil fair in Frankfurt, Germany.

Housing and Public Works Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain yesterday said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has taken initiative to turn Bangladesh as a developed country and as a part of the initiative Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) was developed. The minister said this while addressing as the chief guest at a seminar on 'Investment Promotion' organised by BEZA at hotel 'Radisson Blu Chittagong Bay View' in the city.

Police on Sunday formally launched 'online police clearance' service aiming at reducing time, cost and visit of applicants. Bangladesh Police with the assistance of Access to Information project under Prime Minister Office initiated the digital service. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan inaugurated the service at Rajarbagh Police Lines yesterday. Through the service, someone who is abroad-bound or staying abroad can get police clearance certificate even staying at home within seven to 10 days. Any country can verify the certificate upon its necessity from the police website.

The pre-registration of interested hajj pilgrims for the year of 2017 under the government management began yesterday, said Religious Affairs Minister Principal Motiur Rahman. The Religious Affairs Minister came up with the information while talking to the media after inaugurating the online service at his office. The minister also said this year an IT expert team from BUET was formed to monitor the technical division for making the process transparent and error-free.

DSEX, the prime index of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) settled yesterday at 5,422.80 points.

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