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### News Brief

The Government yesterday approved a total of 10 projects with an overall estimated cost of Taka 2,216.75 crore, including one to widen the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf Marine Drive Road with Taka 1,092.35 crore, aimed at flourishing tourism industry and improving socio-economic conditions there. The approval came from a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) held yesterday with its Chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair. The Premier joined the meeting virtually from her official residence Ganobhaban while Ministers, State Ministers, planning commission members and secretaries concerned attended the meeting from the NEC Conference Room in the city. Out of the approved 10 projects, six are new while four others are revised projects. The Prime Minister also emphasized on construction of bridges and culverts instead of roads in Haor and flood-affected areas to avert flood water stagnation. The Premier also directed the authorities concerned not to repair roads that were broken by floodwaters in the Sylhet division.

The ruling party is in favour of the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the upcoming general elections, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader told reporters after attending a meeting, organized by the Election Commission (EC), at Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital yesterday. The Minister said, the AL thinks that the EC's acceptability, neutrality and capacity are important in holding a free and fair polls. The EC needs to ensure its responsible and neutral attitude, ensure overall security and increase the EVM use in the elections, he added. The AL also thinks that transparency and accountability have increased in holding polls due to the increase in the use of technology, including EVMs, in the EC's activities, he further added.

Newspapers and electronic media in Bangladesh are enjoying unbridled freedom during the present government, Information and Broadcasting Minister Hassan Mahmud told the Parliament yesterday. Replying to a tabled question by Jatiya Party MP from Dhaka Syed Abu Hossain, the Minister also said, free flow of information has been ensured to help accelerate national development. He also said, the government has formulated national media policy 2014, enacted Right to Information Act 2009 and established Information Commission and formulated online media policy 2017 to help journalists pursue objective journalism.

Earlier, Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud said, BNP made absurd comments at first and now it has become speechless and can't understand what they would say after opening of Padma Bridge. The Minister said these while addressing as the chief guest the triennial council of Awami League units under 74 number ward of Sabujbagh thana in Dhaka City South unit of the party. He hoped that BNP would be able to retrieve their politics from the middle of river Padma and go to people after seeking apology for their previous misdeeds.

Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen sought apology and compensation from those who humiliated Bangladesh through accusing some top officials of a conspiracy of corruption in the Padma Bridge project. The Minister made the remark at a discussion marking the inauguration of the Padma Bridge at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday. He said, there were some "pundits" in the country who had criticized the government by heeding to false allegation made by the foreigners regarding this mega project. He expressed his sympathy to the victims of the allegations.

Children aged between 5 and 12 would be administered vaccines to protect them COVID-19 infection, Health Minister Zahid Maleque told a function at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) in the city yesterday. The Minister said, Bangladesh secured fifth position in the world for its success in combating the highly contagious virus while the country attained top position among the South Asian countries. A total of 27,72,46,485 doses of Covid-19 vaccines including booster dose have so far been administered as the countrywide vaccination campaign was launched on February 7 last year.



Education is a fundamental right of the people and it is the responsibility of the state to digitize the education system, Posts and Telecommunications Minister Mustafa Jabbar said this while inaugurating a day-long workshop titled 'Connectivity for Educational Institutions for Blended Education Bangladesh Broadband Policy 2020' jointly organized by BTRC, A2I and Alliance for Affordable Internet at a local hotel yesterday. Digital content does not mean presenting the power point of the curriculum, the content must be based on quality, the Minister added. He called upon the concerned officials of the government as well as private entrepreneurs to come forward to build a highway to connect digitally and directed BTRC to take initiative so that the mobile operators can take effective steps to expand 5G technology.

Partnerships between Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) nations would help further flourishing tourism among the member states, State Minister for civil aviation and tourism Md. Mahbub Ali made the call while addressing as the chair, the opening session of the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers of the OIC in Azerbaijan capital Baku. Emphasizing on more cooperation and partnership among the public and private sectors of OIC states, the State Minister said, it would expand business as well as strengthen bilateral ties. Terming Bangladesh as a tourist friendly nation, he said, the country with welcoming people, warm hospitality, amazing natural beauty, rich culture and heritage can be a popular tourist destination for the travelers of OIC nations.

Ferries from Mawa terminal will operate as per people's demand, State Minister for shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury said these while talking to reporters after attending an award-giving ceremony at the ministry yesterday. Talking about the ban on plying of motorbikes on the Padma Bridge, the State Minister said, the government banned plying of motorbikes on the Padma Bridge temporarily and a decision will be taken in this regard after the installation of speed guns and CCTVs on the bridge.

Japan will provide some 165,989 million Yen or approximately Taka 11,409.57 crore to Bangladesh for three projects. Out of the total amount, Japan will provide 1,65,861 million Yen or approximately Taka 11,400 crore for two investment projects while another 128 million Yen or approximately Taka 9.57 crore as grant against a grant project. In this regard, "Exchange of Notes" and "Loan Agreements" for two development projects under the 43<sup>rd</sup> ODA loan package (1st batch) and "Grant Agreement" for one project were signed yesterday between the governments of Bangladesh and Japan.

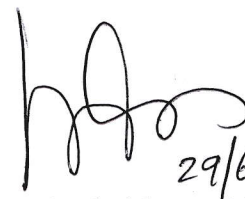
Water levels at 21 river stations monitored by Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) have marked rise while 83 stations recorded fall. Among the 109 monitored stations, five river stations have been registered steady while water levels at six stations are flowing above the danger level.

After a two-year Covid-induced hiatus, the popular cross-border bus service between Bangladesh and India resumed on the Kolkata-Khulna-Dhaka route last Monday. A bus of Shyamoli Paribahan with 28 passengers on board began its journey from Kolkata's Karunamay terminal.

Forty-seven new dengue patients were hospitalized in 24 hours till last morning as cases are rising again in Bangladesh. Forty-six new patients were hospitalized in Dhaka and another case was detected outside it. DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday.

Bangladesh yesterday reported 03 death from COVID-19. With 2,087 fresh cases, the number of infections surged to 19, 69,361. The positivity rate stood at 15.47 per cent, testing 13,489 samples during the time. At the same time, the recovery count rose to 19, 07,067. DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday.

Dhaka Stock Exchange and Chittagong Stock Exchange yesterday witnessed an upward trend like earlier as investors continued their buying spree on large-cap issues amid optimism. DSEX went up by 22.25 points or 0.35 per cent to settle at 6,342. Two other indices also ended marginally higher. The DSE 30 Index, comprising blue chips, advanced 9.37 points to finish at 2,294 and the DSE Shariah Index (DSES) rose 4.84 points to close at 1,385.



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