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From: PIO, PID, Dhaka
Fax: 9540553/9540026
E-mail: piddhaka@gmail.com
Web: www.pressinform.gov.bd

News Brief

President Md. Abdul Hamid has urged the Philippines to make investment in Special Economic Zones-SEZs as the newly appointed Philippines Ambassador to Bangladesh Alan L. Deniega presented the credential to him at Bangabhaban yesterday. The President also called upon the Philippines to import products from Bangladesh as the country produces world-class readymade garment, medicines, handicrafts and medium-sized ships. During the meeting, the Envoy highly praised the socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said, a plan is underway to gradually bring students of 12 years and above under COVID-19 vaccination coverage. She also mentioned government's steps to administer vaccines to 50 per cent of the population by December next following the guidelines of the WHO. The Premier made these remarks while taking part in the question-answer session of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday. The Prime Minister said, so far, arrangements were made to collect a total of 24,65,13,660 doses of jabs while steps have been taken to get more than one crore doses of vaccine every month. She also added, according to the schedule given by Sinopharm, a total of six crore vaccines-two crore doses each month-will be available in the country till December from October. Among the 24,65,13,660 doses of vaccine which is supposed to get, a total of 4,44,31,880 doses have been received as a bilateral purchase agreement and gift till September 12, 2021. She said, in order to bring the ongoing vaccination program to the doorsteps of the people in all the divisional headquarters, district headquarters and upazila headquarters, the people are already being given the jabs through 673 vaccination centers. She continued that till September 12, 2021, there is 96,54,119 doses of jabs in store. The Prime Minister told the Sangsad that so far, a total of 3,47,77,761 doses of jabs have been given, of which, 2,09,22,715 people have received the first dose while 1,38,55,046 people have been given the second dose.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to leave for New York tomorrow to attend the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly-UNGA. She will address the UNGA session on September 24. This will be her first overseas visit since the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, terming BNP an anti-election party said, the party always speaks about establishing democracy in the country but it does not practice democracy within the party. While talking to journalists yesterday, the Minister further said, Awami League as a party is ahead of any other political parties across the country in terms of practicing internal democracy. The Minister added, "Democracy is a process, not a matter of one day or one year, it is a long process. The democratic journey continues through the sincere cooperation and practice of the government as well as the opposition." Overcoming many obstacles on the way of development of democracy, Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, has continued her untiring efforts, he added. Earlier, the Minister opened 12 bridges built under the Barisal Road Zone. At the same time, he said, work on several important bridges under the Barisal zone is underway and some work are at the final stages. He also said that the work of the Lebukhali bridge is at the final stage and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the bridge any time next month.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal on Monday inaugurated the e-passport service, launched at Bangladesh Embassy in Athens to ensure a hassle-free passport service for the Bangladeshi expatriates living in Greece. The Minister, noting that the e-passport service is a big progress towards building a digital Bangladesh said, the introduction of the e-passport will on the one hand make the process of passport and immigration easier and safer for the Bangladeshi people during traveling and on the other hand improve the

international standard of Bangladeshi passport and the country's reputation. Bangladesh Ambassador to Greece Ashud Ahmed, among others, spoke at the function.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud while talking to newsmen at his ministry yesterday said, registration of online news portals is a continues process and the order of the High Court is very much crucial in this regard. He said that his ministry will close some online news portals within the stipulated time after getting written copy of the court. "At the same time, we will present the issue to the court that it is an ongoing process and registration is going on through a process. We will also produce before the court that closing all the news portals without scrutiny in together is how much logical," Dr. Hasan said. Earlier, the Minister joined a function of unveiling the cover of the book 'Sheikh Hasina'ke Nibedito Ekguccha Kabita' translated in Turkish language through online organized by Peace a-Harmony. In his speech, he said Bangabandhu's daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is playing a unique role for establishing peace and harmony not only in Bangladesh, but across the globe. Turkey Ambassador to Dhaka Mustafa Osman, among others, addressed the function. Replying to another query over a comment of BNP leader Rizvi Ahmed, the Minister said, "They rush to embassies when anything happens in the country and when anyone suffers from fever they want to send him or her abroad. Why they incline to foreign countries?"

The per capita foreign debt of Bangladesh citizens is now Taka 24,890, Finance Minister A H M Mustafa Kamal revealed this information in the Parliament while replying to a tabled question yesterday. Replying to another query, he said the amount of loan agreements with various development partner countries and institutions as of June 30 is \$ 95,908.34 million. Of the total amount, \$59,458 million have been disbursed while \$46,450.34 million are under the process of disbursement, he said.

The Detailed Area Plan-DAP will be finalized and published in the form of a gazette by December or January next, Local Government Minister Md. Tajul Islam came up with the announcement at a meeting of the technical committee set up for DAP related matters at the Local Government Division yesterday. If DAP is implemented after finalization, many changes will come in Dhaka city, he hoped.

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen has stressed on the need for a strategic shift towards incorporating elements of sustainability, renewability, inclusivity, economic and social justice, and the eradication of systemic bias as desired outcomes of both public and private sector enterprises. He made the remark while inaugurating the 5th International Conference on Inclusive Business, organized by Dutch-Bangla Chamber of Commerce & Industry at a city hotel yesterday. Dr. Momen mentioned that, much like the Netherlands, Bangladesh is also a pioneer of the ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) model of conducting business. He sought greater Dutch cooperation in the field of social and inclusive business enterprises. Dr. Momen after attending the conference, said to newsmen that Dhaka is expecting to get 24 crore doses of different COVID vaccine from various sources by March-April next. The arrangement was made following his meeting with the WHO Director General in Geneva last month, he informed. Replying a query, Dr. Momen said, there is no update on vaccine cooperation with Russia due to the COVID-19 situation there.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque told the House yesterday that Bangladesh is on the way of manufacturing corona virus vaccine soon with its own effort with the instruction of the PM Sheikh Hasina. Ruling out opposition lawmakers' allegations over treatment problem due to oxygen shortage in different public hospitals during the corona pandemic, the Minister said, "We have set up central oxygen supply system in the hospitals and huge quantities of oxygen also have been imported from neighbouring India." Apart from this, order has been placed to import some 50 oxygen generators, he said adding, so there was no such situation of oxygen crisis in the country during the pandemic.

Bangladesh inked a Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement-TIFA with Australia to provide a platform for institutionalized economic interactions and to open newer opportunities for trade and investment between the two countries. Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi and his counterpart Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Dan Tehan signed the framework at a virtual function yesterday. While speaking at the signing ceremony, Minister Tipu Munshi expressed the optimism that the TIFA would address all relevant questions including retention of the DFQF treatment for Bangladesh in the post LDC graduation and trade liberalization and creating conducive atmosphere for greater trade in services and flow of investment. Minister Tehan assured Bangladesh of the continuation of DFQF treatment pending next review

which is not scheduled in the foreseeable future. Bangladesh High Commissioner to Australia Sufiur Rahman and Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Jeremy Bruer also spoke at the event.

A survey is underway to assess the feasibility of building a tunnel alongside Bangabandhu Bridge as an alternative passage under the Jamuna River, State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury said this yesterday while talking to reporters. During an event organized by Bangladesh Secretariat Reporters Forum, he added, an alternative passage along the Bangabandhu Bridge is needed.

The Medical Colleges (Governing Bodies) Repeal Act, 2021 was passed in the Parliament yesterday to ensure health care services and to make administration and management of the medical colleges more efficient. The extension of the 'Speedy Supply of Power and Energy (Special Provision) (Amendment) Act, 2010' bill was also placed in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, aiming to boost power supply to the consumers.

Bangladesh has received 2.7 lac doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine from the Bulgarian government as donation. The consignment landed at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport by a cargo flight of Turkish Airlines yesterday.

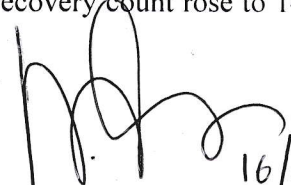
South Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Lee Jang-keun said, the future of Bangladesh is very bright for its young people who are smart, talented and eager to make a better life and better future. He made the remarks while addressing a function held at the Embassy of South Korea in Dhaka yesterday. Six winning teams of the "2021 K-pop World Festival Bangladesh" audition were awarded at the function.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association-BGMEA have urged Marcia Bernicat, Senior Official for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment and Acting Assistant Secretary for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs of the USA, to promote Bangladesh in the USA. BGMEA President Faruque Hassan and Vice President Miran Ali met Bernicat in Washington D.C. recently. Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA M Shahidul Islam was present there. BGMEA also called upon Canadian buyers to choose Bangladesh as a safe, sustainable and ethical apparel-sourcing destination and source for taking more garments from the country. BGMEA President Faruque Hassan made the call during a meeting with Paul Draffin, Chief Supply Chain Officer at Canadian Tire Corporation, a renowned retail company, in Toronto, Canada on Tuesday. They discussed possible avenues of business opportunities for Bangladesh in Canadian market.

The Dhaka University authorities are likely to open its dormitories from October 5 only for Honors final year and Masters' students who have received at least one dose of vaccines. The library of the university will be reopened on September 26 for them, sources confirmed. However, the decision is yet to be finalized in the academic council meeting. The World Ozone Day is being observed in the country today with the theme "Montreal Protocol-Keeping us, our food and vaccines cool". President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the occasion.

The government has handed over houses to 100 homeless families at Uttar Dighalkandi in Saghata upazila of Gaibandha district under the Ashrayan project of the Prime Minister's Office. The semi pucca houses were distributed to them after a lottery on Tuesday.

The country yesterday recorded 51 fatalities from COVID-19, taking the total death toll to 27,058. With 1,901 fresh cases, the number of infections surged to 15,36,341. The positivity rate stood at 6.64 per cent as 28,615 samples were tested during the time. At the same time, the recovery count rose to 14,90,541, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday.



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Md. Shahinoor Miah
Principal Information Officer (Acting)
Phone- 9546091