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News Brief

The Cabinet in a meeting yesterday with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair approved a proposal on extension of the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provision) Act-2010 for five more years till 2026. The Premier joined the meeting virtually from Ganabhaban while her Cabinet colleagues got connected from the Cabinet Division of the Bangladesh Secretariat. The Cabinet gave final consent to the draft of Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provision) (Amendment) Bill, 2021. No change except time extension has been made to the proposed law.

PCR testing booths will be set up in country's three international airports to provide passengers the COVID-19 results within four hours ahead of their journey abroad, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam informed at the briefing after the Cabinet meeting. He also said that measures would be in place in three international airports -Dhaka, Chattogram and Sylhet, to this end. The Premier Sheikh Hasina in the meeting also asked all concerned to remain prepared to tackle the flood as the water level is increasing in the Padma and Jamuna river basins, he said. The Prime Minister asked the Agriculture Minister to ensure stock of T-Aman paddy as people in flood affected areas can plant the paddy if they face difficulties due to prolong water logging.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader has said, BNP is getting angered as Bangladesh is advancing in every socioeconomic index. While addressing a press conference yesterday, about the BNP leaders' claim that a stable macro-economy was successfully implemented during the BNP's regime, the Minister said, it is as untrue and baseless as their other statements. There was extreme instability in the country's economic development during the BNP's reign, while the national budget was not self-dependent and there was no capacity to implement it, he said. The BNP destroyed the country's power system, the main driving force of production. On average, 10 to 12 hours of power shortfall daily was the so-called development of the BNP, he said, adding that the BNP leaders may not forget that farmers had to give their lives for fertilizer during their era. "Was this an example of stability?" he questioned. A sustainable and stable economic development is moving forward at an indomitable pace today while Bangladesh now becomes a wonder of the world economy, under the skilled and visionary leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Minister said. Highlighting the success stories of the country, he said, Bangladesh has achieved a record of over US\$ 48 billion foreign exchange reserve due to the development-friendly policies and strategies of the government, while its per capita income stands at US\$ 2,227.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud inaugurated the much-desired "Bangabandhu Media Centre" at the Press Club of India-PCI yesterday, established with the support of Bangladesh New Delhi mission in honor of Father of the Bengali Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. While inaugurating, the Minister hoped that "Bangabandhu Media Centre" would play a vital role for strengthening relations between the two countries and help know Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and about his struggle for the betterment of oppressed humanity. Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Muhammad Imran, Joint Secretary (BD-Myanmar) to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Smita Pant, PCI President Umakant Lakhera, among others, spoke on the occasion. The Minister in his speech said, the bilateral relations between the two countries reached a newer height during the tenure of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian Counterpart Narendra Modi. Paying glowing tribute to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Muibur Rahman, he said, Bangabandhu had sacrificed his life for the betterment of the people of Bangladesh. So, knowing Bangabandhu, one could know the struggle of the people of Bangladesh, he added.

The British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab reiterated the UK's support for the action Bangladesh has taken on climate change in the run up to COP26. Raab made the assurance while holding a bilateral talk with Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, who is now in Europe. The two leaders discussed the strong relationship between the UK and Bangladesh at virtual the meeting. During the meeting, Raab also assured Britain's support in Bangladesh's transition away from coal to clean and renewable energy. Raab conveyed the UK's appreciation to Bangladesh government for hosting the Rohingyas. He reaffirmed his country's continued support to ensure dignified lives for Rohingyas in Bangladesh as well as to enable their return home to Rakhine state and to maintain pressure on Myanmar.

Bangladesh will decide its policy towards Afghanistan independently, Dr. Momen said this in an interview with BBC Bangla, noting that what India or Pakistan is doing is not that much important to Bangladesh. "Bangladesh always decides its foreign policy in the interest of its own very independently," he said. He further said, Bangladesh always believes in a people's government that comes through a political and democratic process, and it always extends support to such a government where people's desire is reflected. Dr. Momen said things will depend on how the new Afghan government acts and what policy it adopts after the formulation of the government. Responding to a question on

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the Rohingya crisis, the Minister said, four years have passed away but not a single Rohingya was repatriated. "Myanmar didn't keep its commitment." He said, Bangladesh will continue to urge the international community to push Myanmar, simultaneously reminding all that there will be pockets of extremism and radicalism if the Rohingyas' stay in Bangladesh is prolonged which will hurt the investment of major countries in the region amid the possibility of instability. The Minister also expressed displeasure over the UK government's decision to keep Bangladesh on the red list for entering England.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque said, those who are aged above 12 will be brought under the coverage of COVID-19 vaccination once it is approved by the WHO. While talking to newsmen yesterday after the Cabinet meeting, the Minister further said, the approval of the National Technical Advisory Committee is also needed. The Minister also said, a total of 2.5 crore doses of vaccine-2 crore of Sinopharm and 50,000 of Pfizer, will reach the country this month. Meanwhile, regarding the coronavirus situation, he said, there are 17,000 beds at Covid-dedicated hospitals. Of these hospital beds, 12,000-14,000 are currently vacant. Now, these beds will be used for the treatment of other patients, including cancer.

State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Dr. Md. Murad Hasan while exchanging views with the journalists at Chattogram Press Club yesterday said, the museum named after Ziaur Rahman at the old circuit house in Chattogram would be removed and the building would be converted back into a circuit house. Terming Ziaur Rahman as a Pakistani agent, the State Minister said, the museum, which is run by public money and was named after Ziaur Rahman must be removed as he was involved in the assassination of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Chattogram circuit house bears the history of the Liberation War, Dr. Murad said and added, so, for the interest of protecting the Liberation War history and tradition, no museum could be named after the killer of Father of the Nation. M A Hannan had read out proclamation of independence first on behalf of Bangabandhu, the State Minister said, adding that "So, why the microphone of that proclamation would be kept at Zia museum. It will be kept preserved at Kalurghat Transmission Centre", he noted.

The Primary Education Completion-PEC examination on short syllabus will be held either in November or December if the Covid situation improves, State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Ministry Md. Zakir Hossain said this at a press briefing at the Secretariat yesterday. Besides, the government is thinking about taking the annual exams, the State Minister said.

The government has successfully completed study, survey and basic design for construction of 31.241-km first ever underground and elevated Mass Rapid Transit-MRT Line-1 between Airport-Kamalapur and Purbachal-Natun Bazar-Pitalganj of Rupganj route. About 77 per cent work of the detailed design of the project has been completed, Managing Director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited, M A N Siddique told the National News Agency yesterday. He said, the joint survey work has been completed for acquisition of 92.9725 acres of land at Rupganj in Narayanganj district.

The nationwide mass inoculation campaign of the second dose for coronavirus starts today. The decision was announced in a video conference chaired by Ahmad Kaikaus, Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister, yesterday. As per the decision of the meeting, the second doses will be given on September 7-9 in the city areas and only on September 7 outside the city areas.

The country yesterday recorded 65 fatalities from COVID-19, taking the total death toll to 26,628. With 2,710 fresh cases, the number of infections surged to 15,17,166. The positivity rate stood at 9.82 per cent as 27,595 samples were tested during the time. At the same time, the recovery count rose to 14,55,187, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. So far, 2,80,74,156 doses of the COVID vaccine have rolled out in the country. Among these, 1,93,40,408 people received the 1st jab and 87,33,748 people received the 2nd jab.

Besides, a total of 275 dengue patients got admitted in different hospitals across the country in the 24 hours till 8am last morning, DGHS informed.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department in a bulletin yesterday asked maritime ports to hoist the local cautionary signal No 3 as a low-pressure area over the North Bay of Bengal threatens to bring stormy weather. Fishing boats and trawlers in the North Bay and adjacent areas have been advised to remain near the coast and stay cautious until further notice.

No vessel is waiting for berth at outer anchorage at the Chittagong port area and the exports and imports are ongoing smoothly through the port, Chittagong Port Authority-CPA Chairman Rear Admiral Mohammad Shahjahan informed this to the National News Agency.

DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange-DSE, hit a record high yesterday, adding 22.67 points or 0.32 per cent to settle at 7075.49, the highest since its inception in 2013.

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