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**News Brief**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said, her government wants to spread Bangladesh's art, culture and literature across the globe by developing their quality further. The Premier said this while speaking at the opening ceremony of Amar Ekushey Book Fair-2020 on Bangla Academy premises in Dhaka yesterday. The Prime Minister said, Ekushey Book Fair is now not only a centre of selling and purchasing of books, it is also a fair of the hearts of the Bangalees. The Premier handed over Bangla Academy Literary Award 2019 among ten poets and writers. Sheikh Hasina unveiled the cover of Bangabandhu's third book titled "Amar Dekha Naya Chin". Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also unveiled the cover of the 7th edition of Mujib Graphic Novel at the Center for Research and Information stall. After inaugurating the fair, the Prime Minister visited different stalls of the fair. Bangla Academy sources said, with 873 units allocated to 560 organisations, this year the land earmarked for the fair has been expanded to 8,00,000 square feet.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said, her government has been tirelessly working to transform the country's population into efficient workforce to cope-up with new technologies and innovations at the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The Premier said this while inaugurating the 23rd national convention of the IDEB at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday. The Prime Minister said, her government has taken initiative to set up a technical school and college in every upazila of the country. Such technical schools and colleges have already been built in 100 upazilas, creating 6400 posts for teachers and employees, she added.

President Md. Abdul Hamid along with his spouse Rashida Khanam, visited Road Transport and Bridges Minister and Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University hospital in Dhaka yesterday. The Head of the State talked to the attending doctors and wished early recovery of the senior politician. Obaidul Quader was admitted to the BSMMU after he fell sick due to cold and respiratory problems during a meeting at Awami League President's Dhanmondi Political Office on Friday last.

Three bilateral instruments between Bangladesh and Italy are likely to be signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to Rome starting on February 4. During the visit, the Prime Minister will hold a bilateral meeting with her Italian Counterpart Giuseppe Conte on February 5. On the same day, top officials of some Italian business giant companies will call on Prime Minister. Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen at a press conference at his ministry in Dhaka yesterday noted, it is the median bilateral visit of the Bangladesh Premier after taking over the state power for the third consecutive term. He hoped, the tour will be beneficiary for Bangladesh economy and its ongoing development.

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen replying to a question at Jatiya Sangsad yesterday said, the government is working to increase the number of Bangladesh diplomatic missions abroad to 100 by next year. He said, now Bangladesh has 77 diplomatic missions in 58 countries across the world. He also said, opening of more six foreign missions has already been approved by the Ministry of Public Administration. The approved new missions would be set up at Wellington in New Zealand, Dublin in Ireland, Buenos Aires in Argentina, Guangzhou city in China, Sao Paulo in Brazil and Frankfurt in Germany, he added.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday informed media, all the Bangladeshi citizens, brought back from China's Wuhan on Saturday, are doing well. He said, seven of the returnees, now at Kurmitola General Hospital, and another at the Combined Military Hospital

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are fine and those kept at the quarantine unit at Ashkona Hajj Camp are also fine. No one is found affected by Coronavirus, he added. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen speaking at a press briefing yesterday informed, Bangladesh suspended the visa on arrival for Chinese nationals as part of the government's temporary policy following the outbreak of coronavirus. At the same time, he said, the government has advised Chinese nationals living in Bangladesh and working in various development projects to avoid visiting China in the next one month. The Shipping Ministry at a meeting yesterday said, the Chinese nationals working at the country's seaports, including Chattogram, Mongla and Payra, not to go back to their country and those who are on leave not to come back over the next one month.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud at a press conference at his ministry in Dhaka yesterday said, the people have rejected the BNP in the Dhaka city corporations elections. And the people have rejected the BNP's allegations through boycotting their hartal, he added. He also said, the elections were held in a hassle-free festive mood and more peaceful than ever.

Newly-elected Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation Atiqul Islam while speaking at a press briefing at his Banani office in Dhaka yesterday said, he is going to solve city problems with the help of all. Within next three days, all posters used in the city polls will be removed, he said, adding that all laminating posters will be re-cycled properly. Meanwhile, newly-elected Mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh while speaking at a press conference at his Green Road office in Dhaka yesterday said, he would sincerely discharge his duties as a servant of the Dhaka residents with coordination of all concerned for making the capital a smart and environment-friendly city.


International Affairs Subcommittee of Awami League yesterday briefed diplomats stationed in Dhaka on the just-held elections to the two Dhaka city corporations, saying the development works of the current government were reflected in the results. Prime Minister's Political Affairs Adviser HT Imam was present at the briefing.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal talking to journalists at his ministry yesterday said, a total of seven state-owned enterprises, all of them in the energy and power sector, will be selling stake soon in the country's capital market. The companies are -- Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd, Power Grid Company of Bangladesh, Northwest Power Generation Company Limited, Electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh Ltd, Ashuganj Power Station Company Ltd, BR Power Generation Company Limited and Gas Transmission Company Limited.

The government has decided to appoint Muhammad Abdul Muhith, currently serving as the Bangladesh Ambassador to Denmark as the next Ambassador of Bangladesh to Austria. The government has also decided to appoint Md. Abu Zafar, currently serving as the Ambassador of Bangladesh to Austria as the next Ambassador of Bangladesh to the United Arab Emirates.

The 23rd span of the much-awaited Padma Multipurpose Bridge was installed yesterday at the Zazira point in Shariatpur district, making 3,450 meters out of 6.15kms long main structure of the bridge visible.

The Secondary School Certificate and its equivalent examinations under 11 education boards begin across the country this morning. A total of 20,47,779 students-- 10,24,363 boys and 10,23,416 girls from 28,884 educational institutions are expected to take part in the examinations at 3,512 centres.

  
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