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**News Brief**

High Commissioner (HC) of the Maldives to Bangladesh Shiruzimath Sameer presented her credentials to President M Abdul Hamid at Bangabhaban yesterday. Welcoming the High Commissioner, the President said, Bangladesh as one of the friendly countries, has been maintaining an excellent bilateral relations with the Republic of Maldives since its very beginning. The President also said, the bilateral ties have expanded over they years in various fields, including trade and investment. The newly appointed High Commissioner of the Maldives expressed her gratitude to the government and people of Bangladesh for providing various assistance including sending medical teams to the Maldives.

The National Economic Council (NEC) yesterday approved the 8th Five Year Plan (July, 2020-June, 2025), setting a target to attain 8.51 percent GDP growth in the fiscal 2024-25 along with aiming to achieve various economic and social targets as envisioned under the country's 2nd Perspective Plan (2021-2041). NEC Chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting virtually from her official Ganabhaban residence. After the approval, Planning Minister MA Mannan briefed the journalists, the 8th Five Year Plan will play an important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the targets of the Delta Plan-2100. Through the implementation of the 8th Five Year Plan, the country will go one step further in building a hunger-poverty free and prosperous Bangladesh, he added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina while joining the meeting of the National Economic Council (NEC) from her official residence Ganabhaban yesterday said, Awami League has empowered people bringing back continuation of democracy by ending the conspiracy and military dictatorship that has reached country's development into momentum. The Premier said, no consistency of democracy was in the country rather politics of conspiracy, killing, coup etc was initiated and military dictators came to power one after another that halted the development activities.

Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury underscored the need for becoming more aware of the adverse impact of child marriage as well as violence against the women as violence against women has increased all over the world amid the coronavirus pandemic. The Speaker said, to prevent child marriage, it is important to conduct continuous project activities to raise awareness among parents in high schools and colleges. She was attending the virtual joint meeting of three sub-committees of Bangladesh Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (BAPD), held at Purbachal Club of the city yesterday.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque urged historians and researchers to be more active in presenting the complete history of the Liberation War to the nation. The Minister said, many incidents and facts of the great Liberation War including the history of the first resistance in Gazipur on March 19, 1971 are still unknown to many. He made the call while meeting the leaders of the National Committee to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the First Armed Resistance Day at the Minister's Office yesterday.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said, the massive voter turnout in the first-phase municipality polls carried the message that democracy is marching forward in the country and extended thanks to voters for their massive participation in the elections. Quader also extended greetings to the winners of the first-phase municipality elections held on Monday and thanked the Election Commission (EC) for holding the polls in a peaceful and proper manner. He said this at a press conference on contemporary issues at his official residence on parliament premises yesterday.

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud said, criticism is the beauty of democracy and everyone should have the mentality of appreciating criticism and added that democracy is ruined without criticism. The Minister also said, BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir is criticising the government in the morning while Rizvi Ahmed is criticising in the afternoon everyday. BNP leaders are spreading hatred against the government throughout the day, and after that they are telling they have no rights of talking, he added. He made this comment while addressing the biennial conference of Chattogram Press Club (CPC) at its auditorium in the port city yesterday.

Speakers at a webinar organised by the Bangladesh Embassy in Amman, Jordan lauded Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's leadership quality and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's politics of development. Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen gave a historical overview of the struggle of Bangalees for their independence led by Bangabandhu while Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Maliki appreciated the support Bangabandhu always afforded to the Palestinians and their aspirations for statehood.

Bangladesh plans to go all out with a big carnival attended by various heads of state and government from March 17-26 to mark the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 50 years of Bangladesh's Independence next year. Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen told UNB at his residence yesterday, we expect some heads of government on March 17-26. He informed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan along with other leaders are almost confirmed to visit Bangladesh in the 10 days from March 17-26.

Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni said, the next Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent examinations will be held in June 2021 and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and its equivalent exams in July-August. The government has decided to reopen the educational institutions for preparations of the SSC and HSC examinees, the Education Minister said. The Minister disclosed the government's plan of holding SSC and HSC exams at a virtual press briefing on the next year's textbook festival and other education related issues yesterday.

Bangladesh recorded 27 novel coronavirus deaths and 932 fresh cases in the last 24 hours. The recovery count rose to 4,53,318 after another 1,357 patients were discharged from the hospitals during the period. With this, the total death toll rose to 7,479 from the pandemic in the country.



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