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### News Brief

The Cabinet has approved the National Hajj and Umrah Policy 2019 and the Hajj Package, 2019. The approval was given in the weekly meeting of the Cabinet held at Prime Minister's Office with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair yesterday. The Cabinet approved the Bangladesh Veterinary Council Act, 2018 and the Prani Kalyan Act, 2018. The Cabinet also approved the draft of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2019 and the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University Act, 2019.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has underscored the need for working together by Bangladesh and Indian Air Forces to combat any natural disaster. The Prime Minister laid the emphasis as Chief of Air Staff of Indian Air Force Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa paid a courtesy call on her at Jatiya Sangsad Office in Dhaka yesterday. The Premier while exchanging views expressed satisfaction over the existing friendly relations between the two countries and hoped, the ties will be strengthened further in future.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the digging of Karnaphuli Tunnel on February 24. Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader told this to media after attending a deal signing ceremony at the Setu Bhaban between Bangladesh Bridge Authority and Bangladesh Navy to provide overall security in the underwater expressway tunnel construction. Obaidul Quader informed media that the 3.4 kilometer-long Karnaphuli river tunnel construction project will end by December, 2022. The progress of the project is now 32 per cent, he added.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has extended his heartfelt congratulations to Awami League President Sheikh Hasina on her assumption of office as the Prime Minister for the fourth time. The South African President in his message wished Sheikh Hasina every success during her tenure as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

Awami League Presidium Member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury has been made the Deputy Leader of the House for the third time in a row. Her nomination has been endorsed by Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and it came into effect from February 7.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud informed the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the ninth wage board will come into effect soon. The Minister responding to a question from an MP also said, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formed a Cabinet Committee at the first cabinet meeting of the newly formed government with Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader as its head. Replying to another question the Information Minister said, the government has a plan to reopen a regional office of the Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha in Bogra soon.

Planning Minister M A Mannan has sought more Japanese assistance for Bangladesh in various sectors in the coming days to further speed up the development strides of the country. The Minister came up with the request as JICA Chief Representative of Bangladesh Office Hitoshi Hirata met him at his office in Dhaka yesterday.

Prime Minister's Energy Adviser Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury has emphasised on regional collaboration to attain synergy in the power and energy sectors. Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury was addressing the ministerial session of international conference titled "Petrotech-2019" at Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India yesterday. Earlier, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the three-day biennial event dubbed as Asia's largest international oil and gas conference and exhibition.

Expatriate Bangladeshis sent US\$ 9,086.17 million remittances during the first seven months of the current fiscal 2018-19, which is apparently 9.31 per cent higher than the same period of the preceding year. According to a Bangladesh Bank data, the country received \$8,312.02 million remittances during July to January in 2017-18 financial year.

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