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News Brief

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called for the Covid-19 vaccines to be declared as 'public goods' worldwide and urged those countries producing vaccines to lend greater support to those that do not. Bangladesh believes in primacy of the UN and other international institutions to meet everyone's demand for vaccines and medical requirements on the basis of equity and justice, the Premier said while placing three points in a recorded speech yesterday aired in the plenary of the four-day annual Boao Forum for Asia-BFA conference, which started in Boao, a coastal resort in South China's Hainan Province on Sunday. Firstly, she said, "We need strong partnership among us to address the challenges posed by the pandemic, and to make vaccines available to everyone by declaring it as global public goods." Secondly, she added "We need to work together for harnessing the power of technology. As we all realize the future will be driven by the 4IR, which come with opportunities and challenges." And third or finally, the Premier said that seamless physical and digital connectivity will be the key to reap the benefits of the Asian Century. The Premier, spelling out the government's various steps taken to mitigate the adverse impacts of the pandemic, further mentioned the various adaptation and mitigation programs taken by her government to offset the adverse impacts of climate change. Stressing on the global cooperation, she concluded, "Let's think together, work together and grow together."

The ongoing lockdown has been extended to till April 28, considering the massive surge in COVID-19 infections and deaths. The Cabinet division issued a gazette notification yesterday in this regard. All the previous restrictions including international special flight operation and banking schedule have been extended till the midnight of April 28 from the midnight of April 21, the gazette said.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said, it is now known to all that BNP was directly and indirectly involved with the mayhem carried out by Hefazat during the celebration of golden jubilee of independence and Bangabandhu's birth centenary. While virtually addressing a view-exchange meeting with BRTC and BRTA Rajshahi Zone officials, the Minister responding to BNP leaders' remarks that the government has become isolated from people said, BNP is making such ridiculous comments to hide the sorrow of their continuous failures in the last 13 years. Actually not the government, rather BNP has been boycotted by the people and has become isolated from them, he said. He said, BNP which has been walking on the undemocratic path since its inception has now turned into the 'peddler' of democracy. BNP's democracy means voter-less election of February 15, by-election of Magura and Dhaka-10 and making a list of 1.23 crore fake voters, he said.

The law enforcement agencies are arresting only miscreants, not any Alem or religious leader, Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud made the remarks yesterday while replying to a query of newsmen over a comment of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir. About BNP's politics, he said, the party always does politics with religion and evil forces. Dr. Hasan said the Hefazat leaders could bring out processions if any one mocked the Prophet like what Mamunul Haque did. And Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir also could echo their (Hefazat's) voice in that case, he added.

Earlier, Dr. Hasan virtually inaugurating an online workshop titled 'The Role of Local Journalists in Implementing Digital Bangladesh' said, Bangladesh was ranked third globally in maintaining the positive GDP growth rate amid Covid-19 situation, credit mainly goes to implementation of 'Digital Bangladesh' concept, the brainchild of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy. "When Barak Obama visited his father's country Kenya as the US President, he gave the example of Bangladesh, saying developing countries and African countries could learn many things from the South Asian nation how it is advancing fast using the ICT and mobile banking," he added. Noting that the government has already gave approval to 200 online portals, the Minister urged the journalists to maintain extra cautions in publishing news so no false or wrong information is published.

Russia has proposed to manufacture its 'Sputnik' COVID-19 vaccine in Bangladesh in collaboration with the local pharmaceuticals under a co-production arrangement while Bangladesh is searching other sources apart from India to get the much demanded inoculation. Bangladesh agreed with them in co-production of vaccine, though it is not finalized yet, Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen said in an recent interview with the national news agency. The Minister said, Bangladesh did not show much interest about Chinese vaccine earlier as their vaccine is not approved by the World Health Organization. "But, now we are keeping open all options to get vaccine," he said. Besides, he said, the World Bank recently informed Bangladesh to provide 80 lac doses of vaccine under COVAX by next month. The

government is also considering to engage the private sector in importing and marketing commercially expensive vaccine like the Pfizer-BioNTech one in the Bangladesh market to meet the demand, he further said.

Dr. Momen rejected Al Jazeera's latest report on Bhasan Char, which said that aid agencies warned, with the cyclone season fast approaching, a group of Rohingya refugees on Bhasan Char could be stranded and face food shortages when severe storms strike. The Minister said, the report is based on false information and part of its (Al Jazeera's) "vindictive approach" towards Muslim majority countries. "They're doing it from day one. Their aim is to confuse people with false information," he said to media.

Bangladesh signed a MoU with Thailand to import up to 10 lac metric tons of rice each year till 2026 under government-to-government (G2G) level. Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder on behalf of Bangladesh and Thai Commerce Minister Urin Laksana Wist on behalf of Thailand signed the MoU through virtual platform yesterday.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock has deployed a fleet of mobile stalls to distribute fish, meat, eggs, and dairy products during lockdown to avoid the loss of farmers. Livestock and dairy products worth around Taka 1.33 billion have been sold since April 5, Minister S M Rezaul Karim said.

Nagad, the digital financial arm of Bangladesh Post Office, has recently surpassed the 4 crore users' landmark. Nagad has also gone past Taka 400 crore mark of the daily transaction in just two years of its launching, a press release said. Posts and Telecommunications Minister Mustafa Jabbar described the rapid advancement of Nagad as a successful combination of technological innovation and the introduction of customer-friendly services.

India approved the MoU signed with Bangladesh on March 27 aiming to promote cooperation between the two countries in the area of trade remedies, covering the broad activities related to exchange of information, undertaking capacity building activities and activities in accordance with various provisions of WTO in the area of anti-dumping, countervailing and safeguard measures in bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh, an official handout said.

Banks will remain open from 10am to 2.30 pm every working day from April 21 to 28 while the transaction will be made between 10am to 1pm, as per a Bangladesh Bank circular issued yesterday following the extension of the ongoing lockdown for another week amid the rise in Covid-19 infections and deaths.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh-CAAB has decided to resume flights on domestic routes under limited scale from today while allowing four airlines to operate flight from and to Bangladesh to China. As per the earlier decision, special flights to Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, UAE, and Singapore will continue amid the flight suspension, so that stranded Bangladeshi expatriate workers here can go back their workplaces, CAAB official source said.

Bangladesh Railway launched special train service with air-conditioned luggage vans on Panchagarh-Dhaka route for transporting essentials like vegetables, foodgrains and other agro-commodity produced by local farmers, from Bir Muktijoddha Sirajul Islam Railway Station in Panchagarh on Monday amid lockdown as per the directives of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Bangladesh has been elected member of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs-CND, the UN's central drug policy-making body, also a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council-ECOSOC, for a three-year term beginning from January 2022. The election was highly competitive but Bangladesh managed to secure second highest (43) votes. This demonstrates the trust that the international community reposes on Bangladesh, Ambassador Rabab Fatima, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN said this after the election, held yesterday at the ECOSOC Management meeting. Bangladesh has also been re-elected member of the Executive Board of UNICEF and the Executive Board of UN Women for another term starting from January 2022 in the elections held at the ECOSOC Management meeting.

Nine Bangladeshi young entrepreneurs made their place in the prestigious 'Forbes 30 under 30' Asia list, released on Monday. The nine youths got listed for their work in three sectors-enterprise technology, social impact, and retail and e-commerce. From 2016 to 2020, a total of nine Bangladeshis made the list. But this year alone, nine Bangladeshi youths named in the list.

A week-long virtual B2B meeting between ICT companies of both Bangladesh and Malaysia under the Tri-party MoU, Bangladesh-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation and Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services-BASIS, began on Monday. With the hope of increasing the existing and creating new investment opportunities in the ICT sector, the virtual matchmaking meetings will continue till 29 April 2021, a press release said.

The country recorded 91 fatalities from COVID-19 yesterday, taking the death toll to 10,588. With 4,559 fresh cases, the tally of infections surged to 7,27,780. At the same time recovery count rose to 6,28,111, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. Meanwhile, the DGHS has set up a 200-bed Covid-19 unit at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases-NICVD in the capital to provide treatment for coronavirus-infected patients, a newspaper report said. There are six intensive care unit beds at the unit dedicated for Covid-19 patients, hospital authorities said.


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