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News brief

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday disclosed that the government has decided to redesign its Ganges barrage construction project. "If we will implement the project with the existing plan this would be suicidal for us, so we scrapped it," Sheikh Hasina said while replying to a question during a press conference at her official residence Ganabhaban. The press conference was arranged to brief the media on the outcome of her four-day state visit to India. She also said, "I've talked to the Chief Minister of West Bengal. If we can make a reservoir, both countries can use it during dry seasons." She affirmed that 11 agreements and 24 MoUs were signed during her 4 day visit to Delhi and the contents of those agreement would be made public. The prime minister made it clear that she would not do anything which would go against the interest of the country. She said that both countries agreed to expand mutual cooperation on combating terrorism and militancy in South Asia particularly in their own countries.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said there is nothing obligatory to purchase arms from any particular country as per the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed on defense cooperation between Bangladesh and India. "It's not binding in the MoU to purchase arms. It totally depends on us. We're getting US\$ 500 million from India at 1 percent interest for 20 years. That's it," she said. The Prime Minister was responding to queries from senior journalists during the press conference at Ganabhaban .

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) has approved eight development projects involving Tk 3,289.43 crore, including three projects for developing and widening important regional highways in Khulna, Comilla and Rangpur zones. The approval came from the weekly ECNEC meeting held yesterday in the conference room of NEC in the city with ECNEC Chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair. Briefing reporters after the meeting, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said a total of eight projects were approved at the meeting with an estimated cost of Tk 3,289.43 crore.

Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Sarawak Government, Malaysia YB Encik Malcolm Mussen said that there is a huge demand of Bangladeshi jute and jute goods in Malaysia. Bangladesh can export agro-products, spice, furniture, dairy products to Malaysia. He made the remarks when a 40-member trade delegation from Kuching Chinese General Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCGCCI) of Malaysia visited Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) yesterday.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Asaduzzaman Miah yesterday said a foolproof security plan has been taken for Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year, to be celebrated on April 14, reports UNB. "Every inch of Dhaka University, Ramna and Suhrawardy Udyan will be brought under CCTV surveillance," said the DMP commissioner while briefing reporters at DMP media centre. Asaduzzaman said around 11,000 uniformed policemen along with plainclothes ones will be deployed for ensuring security during the celebrations though there is no specific security alert for this year's Pahela Baishakh.

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroz Chumki said, government has taken a project for making two crore women economically self-reliant. "The government has launched Income Generating Activity (IGA) for empowering women economically with Taka 250 crore across the country," she said this as the Chief Guest at Cox's Bazar yesterday. The State Minister said under the project marginal women would get training on 18 trades free of cost.

Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) will sign a power purchase agreement today (PPA) with Summit Power Limited to buy 149 megawatts electricity. Under the deal, Summit Power Limited will commission a power plant at Kodda in Gazipur to supply the electricity in next 15 months.

From now on, the government will recognise Dawra degree of Qawmi madrasa as equivalent to master's degree. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made the announcement last night at a meeting with some 350 representatives of Qawmi madrasas at the Ganabhaban. Hefajat-e Islam Chief Shah Ahmed Shafi, also Chairman of Qawmi Madrasa Education Board, led the group.

Indian energy giant Adani Group has proposed to set up two Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) terminals in Mongla and Chittagong ports having a combined capacity to handle one million tonnes of LPG. The proposal came at a time when the government is planning to discontinue supplying piped gas to households. The Indian conglomerate is expecting to supply bottled gas to households and to supply LPG to eastern India after meeting the demand here. Sarthak Behuria, Chairman of Adani Petroleum Terminal Private Ltd, made the proposal to the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources recently. Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has moved to make the waste dumping station at Matuail an environment-friendly one by setting up a waste-based power plant to generate electricity from effluents. The proposed power plant will be set up under the 'Matuail Sanitary Landfill Expansion project' involving Tk 724.49 crore. The Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved the project on March 28.

DSEX, The prime index of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) settled yesterday at 5,683.46 points.

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