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From: PIO, PID, Dhaka  
Fax: 9540553/9540026  
E-mail: [piddhaka@gmail.com](mailto:piddhaka@gmail.com)  
Web: [www.pressinform.gov.bd](http://www.pressinform.gov.bd)

**News Brief**

The Ekushey Padak-2021 is going to be awarded to 21 personalities at a function at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka this morning. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to attend the programme virtually. The government announced the names of 21 eminent personalities for the 'Ekushey Padak-2021' for their outstanding contributions to respective fields, on February 4 last. On this occasion, President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in separate messages wished success of the event. In his message, the President said, the great language movement is an unforgettable event in the national history. The Head of the State recalled that Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who led the All Party Council for Struggle on State Language formed in 1948 to demand mother tongue. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in her message, paid her deep respect to the memory of all the martyrs who sacrificed their lives to protect the dignity of the mother language 'Bangla' on February 21, 1952.

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen while addressing the opening ceremony of "WE COLORFUL FEST 2021" organized by the Women and e-Commerce Forum at Purbachal Club in Dhaka yesterday said, the prudent leadership of Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib helped Bangabandhu make crucial decisions quickly. Replying to a question of the journalists he informed, the government has recently received a copy of the 61-page verdict of Bangladesh MP Mohammad Shahid Islam Papul's conviction in Kuwait in a case related to human trafficking, residency visa trading and money laundering. State Minister for ICT Junaid Ahmed Palak presided over the programme while Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram Kumar Doraiswami addressed the event.

Planning Minister M A Mannan while speaking at a function at Kodalichara in Moulvibazar yesterday said, the infiltrators in Awami League don't want to see a prosperous Bangladesh. We had to sacrifice huge blood in the Liberation War in 1971 because of those perpetrators, he added. Meanwhile, the Planning Minister while talking to reporters after inspecting a development project in Sunamganj yesterday said, the country's economy has turned around again in the face of the global epidemic.

The present government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wants to ensure equal rights for everyone regardless of religion, caste, creed or ethnicity. Railways Minister Advocate Md. Nurul Islam Sujan addressing at a bicycle giving ceremony to 110 meritorious students belonging to small ethnic groups living on the plain lands at Boda Upazilla in Panchagarh yesterday also said, the then BNP-Jamaat government stopped the programme in 2002 but Awami League started the programme after coming back to power in 2008 and that continues successfully yet.

State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury said, after the declaration of independence by Bangabandhu on the night of March 25, 1971, the freedom fighters saved the country from aggression by risking their lives. Even then, despite many propaganda, the freedom fighters could not confuse. He said, propaganda is being run against Bangladesh these days. However, the economy of Bangladesh cannot be suppressed by lies, he added.

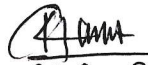
A two-day programme marking the 47th founding anniversary of the country's leading cultural institution Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy began on the academy premises yesterday. State Minister for Cultural Affairs K M Khalid addressing the function said, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman established Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on 19 February 1974 with the dream of developing our traditional culture. Now, it has expanded from 64 districts to 493 upazilas, he added.

The government is working to change the course of river through dredging to prevent the erosion of river Padma in Shariatpur ahead of the next monsoon. Deputy Minister for Water Resources A K M Enamul Haque Shameem said this while visiting the river dredging works at Mulfatganj area in Shariatpur yesterday. He said 50 percent dredging works have already been completed while overall progress of riverbank protection works at right side of river Padma is 60 percent. He hoped that the people residing on the bank of river Padma in Shariatpur will remain safe during the next monsoon.

The Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific is going to enter into force from today. At the United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2016, member States adopted the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific to accelerate trade digitalization, said a press release in Dhaka yesterday. More than 25 countries worked together to develop the treaty, which is now open for accession to all 53 members of ESCAP. The five countries that have ratified or acceded to the treaty — Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Philippines -all are committed to regional cooperation in this critical area.

With the death of 8 more people yesterday, the number of deaths from Covid-19 in Bangladesh rose to 8,337. At the same time recovery count rose to 4,90,468. With the detection of 406 new cases, the total number of Covid-19 cases rose to 5,42,674, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. Meanwhile, A total of 29,62,000 people have so far been registered to receive COVID-19 vaccines till yesterday.

To celebrate the Language Martyrs Day (Shaheed Day) and the International Mother Language Day in an orderly manner, from 6 pm on February 20 to 2 pm on February 21 the Dhaka Metropolitan Police has issued instructions to control public movement and all types of vehicles, said a PID handout yesterday.

  
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✓ Principal Information Officer  
Phone- 9546091