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### News Brief

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked the authorities concerned not to build high-rise establishments along the sea in Cox's Bazar and tourism parks should be developed keeping intact the natural beauties of the region. The Premier made the call at a presentation at her office yesterday on master plans of three special tourism parks to be developed at Cox's Bazar. The aim of the master plans is to develop tourism-friendly zones protecting ecological balance and biodiversity, country's heritage, culture and tradition. The Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority has been entrusted with setting up the Sonadia Eco-Tourism Park in Moheshkhali upazila, NAF and Sabrang Tourism Parks at Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar.

High Commissioner of Pakistan to Bangladesh Imran Ahmed Siddiqui presented his credential to President Md. Abdul Hamid at Bangabhaban in Dhaka yesterday. During the call on, the Head of the State said, Bangladesh is working to develop bilateral relation with all neighbouring countries in all aspects and it also believes in enhancing mutual cooperation regionally as well. The new High Commissioner sought all-out cooperation in discharging his duties in Bangladesh and the President assured him of providing all necessary support.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has offered Bangladesh's airport and seaport facilities to Nepal as part of Dhaka's insistence for regional connectivity for common prosperity. The Premier made the offer while visiting Foreign Minister of Nepal Pradip Kumar Gyawali called on her at her office in Dhaka yesterday. They also discussed cooperation in power sector and bilateral trade and commerce. Gyawali said, Kathmandu expected its ties with Bangladesh to a new trajectory against the backdrop of Bangladesh's fast socio-economic development under Sheikh Hasina's dynamic leadership.

A meeting of the AL Local Government Public Representatives Nomination Board with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair at Ganabhaban yesterday finalised the candidates in the councilor posts in the upcoming Chattogram City Corporation elections slated for March 29. The meeting unanimously picked candidates in the councillor posts in 41 general wards and 14 reserved (women) wards of the Chattogram City Corporation elections.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handed over the "Ekushey Padak-2020 among 20 eminent persons and an organization at a function at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital this morning.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be visiting Bangladesh next month to attend the birth centenary celebrations of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and expected to have bilateral talks with his Bangladesh Counterpart Sheikh Hasina. Prime Minister Modi will arrive here either on March 16 or 17 and talks at official-level are going on to finalise the date. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working on the agenda to be discussed at the meeting.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader speaking at a special joint meeting of Awami League in the capital yesterday said, the bail issue of graft-convicted BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is totally a matter of court. Noting that the Dhaka south and north city corporation polls were held without any vote rigging Quader said, there is no scope of rigging or forgery through the electronic voting machine.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud has urged all to take a fresh vow to resist ill-politics, communal forces in Mujib Year. He made the appeal while addressing a meeting of Dhaka Journalists Association at Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday. Dr. Hasan Mahmud said, Bangladesh could progress more if negative politics was not pursued by political parties, especially BNP. Criticizing the comment of Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on

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BNP Chief Khaleda Zia's parole and health issues the Minister said, they don't know what they want and they have different opinions on Begum Zia's health issue.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque talking to media in Dhaka yesterday urged the country's people not to pay heed to any rumour over the coronavirus as a vested quarter is trying to mislead people with false information. Meanwhile, one of the Bangladesh citizens, infected with coronavirus (Covid-19) in Singapore, is now in a "very critical state" and medicine given to him is not responding, Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan conveyed the updates during a telephone conversation with his Bangladesh Counterpart Dr. A K Abdul Momen yesterday.

A two-day long brainstorming session on comprehensive reform to the OIC co-chaired by Bangladesh, Turkey and Saudi Arabia has started in Dhaka yesterday. The session is for re-engineering legal, political and administrative architecture of the OIC is expected to come up with stronger policy recommendations. Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen inaugurating the event at Hotel Intercontinental in Dhaka hoped that the delegates would come up with mechanism for making the organization more relevant to the Muslim Ummah.

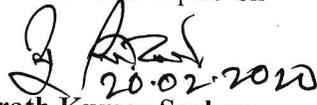
The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase has approved a total of six proposals including three proposals for procuring indispensable machineries and equipment for Mongla Port. The meeting with Finance Minister A H M Mustafa Kamal in the chair at the Secretariat yesterday also took a decision to locally procure some 25,000 tonnes of sugar and some 30,000 tonnes of soybean oil to keep the price of these essentials stable during the month of Ramadan.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi at a meeting with Japanese Ambassador Naoki Ito at his ministry in Dhaka yesterday said, a Japan-Bangladesh Joint Working Group would be formed to boost trade and investment. Tipu Munshi also said, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to visit Japan soon and during her visit a MoU is expected to be signed between Bangladesh Competition Commission and Japan Fair Trade Commission.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md. Mahbub Ali at a views-exchange programme in Sylhet yesterday said, his ministry is planning to launch direct air connectivity between Sylhet and Chattogram, extending to tourism hotspot Cox's Bazar by June. He also revealed that steps are being taken to upgrade the Saidpur Airport to an international one. Besides, five more aircraft would be inducted into the fleet of national flag carrier Biman by June, he added.

State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Dr. Md. Enamur Rahman at a meeting with a team of JICA led by Chief Representative Hitoshi Hirata at his ministry in Dhaka yesterday said, the government wants to make the country earthquake resilient like Japan.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has rejected an offer made by private mobile operator Grameenphone to deposit Tk 100 crore dues. Grameenphone officials said, they will carry on their dialogue on the issue with the telecom regulator. On November 24, the Appellate Division asked GP to pay Tk 2,000 crore of the Tk 12,579.95 crore dues claimed by BTRC within three months. The deadline will expire on February 23.

  
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