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News Brief

The Cabinet has approved the draft of 'The Power Bill, 2017' keeping a provision of tougher punishment of maximum 10 years jail or up to Tk 10 crore fine or both for carrying out acts of sabotage in any power infrastructure. The approval was given at the weekly meeting of the Cabinet held at Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair. The draft law also has a provision for introducing Independent System Operator to operate the country's power system in a coordinated manner as well as to ensure better load management. The Cabinet meeting also gave final approval to the draft of 'The Defence-Forces Chiefs (Appointment, Retirement and Remuneration and Allowances) Bill, 2017' incorporating a provision of increasing maximum four-year tenure of the relevant forces' chiefs from the date of their appointment. The meeting also approved a proposal for ratifying the visa exemption agreement signed between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. During the informal discussion after the Cabinet meeting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the Ministers and officers concern to take immediate and necessary measures for removing the stagnant water after shower and dredge the rivers properly to ensure its navigability in every season.

Finance Minister A M A Muhith has underscored the need for taking fast action by all concerned to ease congestion at the Chittagong Port and, thus, help lower the cost of doing business. "We are in a very unsatisfactory position globally, in terms of the cost of doing business. If we take fast action, the port charges won't increase and time won't be wasted," the Minister said at a meeting at Secretariat in Dhaka yesterday. The Ministry of Shipping organised the meeting with stakeholders of Chittagong Port as part of its efforts to ease congestion in the port.

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda has expressed the hope that the government and the opposition political parties, including those now out of parliament, would be able to reach a consensus over the next general election. Talking to reporters after a dialogue with civil society members at Nirbachon Bhaban in Dhaka yesterday, he said the talks will have an impact on the government and the political parties to reach an understanding over the next polls.

Bangladesh and China are going to sign final deals on the Padma Bridge Rail Link and four other projects involving \$6.8 billion by this year. The deals have been finalised after negotiations following the Chinese President's Dhaka visit last October. China would provide both soft and commercial loans to finance the projects.

In line with its plan to set up the country's first nuclear power plant at Rooppur, the government is going to create a new post of "nuclear attaché" in the Bangladeshi embassy in Vienna and a "counsellor (nuclear power)" in its Moscow mission. Secretary of Science and Technology Ministry Md Anwar Hossain has drafted a proposal for creating the new posts. The Finance Division and the Public Administration Ministry have already approved the creation of the new posts.

Construction of the Dhaka metro begins tomorrow. Italian-Thai Development PLC which won the work of developing the first half of the elevated metro rail has already started gathering equipment in Agargaon.

The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) has taken initiatives to widen and simplify online checking of outgoing migrant workers' visas. BMET officials told media that the move aimed at protecting workers from being cheated with fake visas.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) will hold an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee at the level of Foreign Ministers of the OIC Member States in Istanbul of Turkey today on deeply worrying escalation in Al Quds Al Sharif. State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam left Dhaka for Istanbul to attend the meeting.

Bangladesh has witnessed Tk 1.53 trillion transactions through Mobile Financial Services during the first six months (Jan-June) of 2017, which is 38 percent higher than the transactions that took place during the same period last year. The amount is also about 25 percent higher than the amount of mobile money transactions that took place in the country during the preceding six months (July-December 2016).

The prime index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange settled yesterday at 5,860 points.

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