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News Brief

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed the Tk 5,68,000 crore national budget for the fiscal year 2020-21 with a target to attain 8.2 percent GDP growth through continuing the momentum of the economy with all required activities after tackling the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. Finance Minister A H M Mustafa Kamal moved the Appropriations Bill, 2020 to the House seeking a budgetary allocation of Taka 7,59,642.44 crore which was passed by voice vote. The allocation of the social infrastructure sector in the proposed budget is Taka 1,55,536 crore, which is 27.38 percent of total allocation including Taka 1,40,222 crore for human resource sectors like education, health and other related areas. Besides, Allocation proposed for the physical infrastructure sector is Taka 1,67,011 crore or 29.40 percent, in which Taka 69,553 crore will go to overall agricultural and rural development, Taka 61,435 crore to overall communications, and Taka 26,758 crore to power and energy. A total of Taka 1,40,265 crore has been proposed for general services, which is 24.69 percent of the total allocation. In order to fulfill the emergency requirements, Taka 10,000 crore lump sum amount has been allocated to fight against COVID-19. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was present in the session.

President Md. Abdul Hamid yesterday gave his assent to three bills --Appropriations (supplementary) Bill, 2020, Finance Bill, 2020 and Appropriations Bill, 2020 adopted in the eight (budget) session of the 11th Jatiya Sangsad.

Bangladesh yesterday recorded 64 more fatalities from the novel coronavirus in a daily count, raising the death toll from the pandemic to 1,847. At the same time recovery count rose to 59,624 after another 1,844 patients were discharged from the hospitals during the period. The country also saw further rise in coronavirus cases with the detection of 3,682 new cases taking the total number of cases to 1,45,483. A total of 18,426 samples were tested at the authorized labs across the country during that time.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque while responding to allegations brought by opposition MPs in the House yesterday informed, some 14,000 beds have been designated for Covid patients in the country's hospitals and 40 percent of those are still vacant. The government has taken an initiative for arranging 1,000 high-flow oxygen systems and 10,000 new oxygen cylinders as high-flow oxygen lines are essential for Covid-19 patients, he added. Zahid Maleque said, the government also arranged some 400 ventilators, but 50 of those are not used. He said, the government has recruited some 2,000 doctors and 6,000 nurses within a quick time to deliver medical services to corona patients.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud while handing over cheques of financial assistance to the distressed journalists who lost job due to coronavirus at the Press Institute of Bangladesh in Dhaka yesterday said, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been executing the largest-ever relief scheme since the very beginning of the pandemic outbreak. Over 7 crore people have so far been benefited by the relief scheme. The journalists were given Tk 10,000 each and around 1,500 journalists would get the assistance in the initial stage as per directive of the Prime Minister, he added. Dr. Hasan Mahmud said the list was prepared regardless of political views. Besides, he said, a total of 199 journalists and their family members would get regular financial assistance from the Journalists Welfare Trust worth about Taka 1,69,25,000 under 2019-2020 fiscal year.

The government issued an order extending its restrictions on public activities and movements across the country until August 3 to contain spread of coronavirus pandemic. The Cabinet Division issued a notification last night mentioning the restriction will continue from July 1 to August 3. Meanwhile, Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor

Taposh at a briefing in Dhaka yesterday announced that lockdown will be implemented at Wari area in the capital marked as 'Red Zone' for 21 days to contain the transmission of coronavirus. The restriction will be effective from 8 am on July 4 which will be in force till July 25.

Flood situation in six northern and northeastern districts of Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bagura, Sirajganj, Jamalpur and Tangail in Brahmaputra basin is likely to remain steady while it may improve in two northeastern districts of Sylhet and Sunamganj in Meghna basin in the next 24 hours. The government has instructed the district administrations to take proper steps to address the ongoing flood situation in different parts of the country. Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr. Ahmad Kaikaus came up with the instruction through a virtual meeting yesterday. The Ministry of Water Resources yesterday opened a control room to monitor and collect information about flood across the country.

The life expectancy rate at birth has increased to 72.6 years in the country in 2019 from 72.3 years one year ago with women enjoying three years more longevity than men. Men's life expectancy rose from 70.8 years in 2018 to 71.1 years in 2019, while that of women soared from 73.8 years to 74.2 years, the latest official statistics said. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics on a virtual platform attended by Planning Minister M A Mannan yesterday unveiled Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics report 2019.

A joint venture agreement was virtually signed yesterday with Indian Oil Corporation and R R Holding Ltd which will help to export LPG, Lubricants, Petrochemicals and LNG in the northern states of India through constructing pipelines. State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid while attending a function through video conference from his residence laid emphasis on regional cooperation to ensure sustainable development of the global energy sector.

Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Rabab Fatima, who is also currently serving as President of the Executive Board of UNICEF while opening a virtual Annual Session of the UNICEF Executive Board on Monday in New York called for universal access to online and distance learning for children across the world during COVID-19 pandemic.

The Asian Development Bank and the government of Bangladesh yesterday signed an agreement for \$100 million in concessional loan to expand the coverage of the ongoing rural road network improvement project in Bangladesh. Economic Relations Division Secretary Fatima Yasmin and ADB Country Director Manmohan Parkash signed the loan agreement.

Chinese Ambassador in Dhaka Li Jiming yesterday said, with annual GDP growth of more than 6 percent for many years, Bangladesh will remain one of the most dynamic economies in South Asia and the world. Bangladesh can benefit hugely from the vast Chinese market as China's imports will exceed US\$30 trillion in next 15 years, he added.

The World Health Organization has said, protection of the most vulnerable population is central to their efforts and they have scaled up measures to protect the Rohingyas and their host communities from COVID-19. WHO and health partners in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, have been working round the clock to scale up measures to that end, WHO said yesterday.

Bangladesh Public Service Commission yesterday published final results of the 38th Bangladesh Civil Service examinations recommending 2,204 candidates for different cadres. A total of 9862 candidates passed the written examinations while 16,286 candidates were qualified in the preliminary test held on December 29 in 2017.

The government has decided to appoint Mahbub Hassan Saleh, currently serving as Minister and Deputy Chief of mission in the Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington DC, USA, as the next Ambassador of Bangladesh to Belgium, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday stayed for 16 weeks the High Court order that imposed injunction on Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority's decision to increase price of water by 25 percent.


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