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### News Brief

The Cabinet yesterday gave nod to a draft of an air services agreement to be inked between Bangladesh and Austria aimed at paving the way for establishing air connectivity among Bangladesh and other European countries. Chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina virtually, the Cabinet was apprised of a report on the progress regarding implementation of the decisions of the Cabinet, which stated that around 83 per cent decisions of the Cabinet were implemented till January last. The Prime Minister during the Cabinet meeting urged all to wear masks to avoid the possible second wave of deadly coronavirus as the Cabinet took a serious note of massive resurfacing of Covid-19 in many European countries and the USA as well. Deputy Commissioners have been instructed to take pragmatic measures including conducting mobile courts and awareness campaign to ensure use of masks by the masses.

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram Doraiswami called on Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury yesterday and discussed issues of mutual interest.

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain yesterday through a virtual meeting inaugurated the 'Cause list- Supreme Court of Bangladesh' app to ease the process of checking the cause-list and information about court activities.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader has said, the failure of BNP lies in their inability and inaptness to understand the language of people who are now involved in any decision-making process as there is strong democracy prevailing in the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The Minister at a virtual press briefing yesterday also said, BNP could not come out from their traditions of falsifying any fact and raising allegations after any polls. The Minister said, the Election Commission-EC is a constitutional institution and it is acting independently. If BNP places their constructive criticism, EC may take measures. The Minister also declared the names of the new leaders of Awami Swechchhasebak League making it a full-fledged committee.

Foreign Minister of the Netherlands Stef Blok in a letter to his Bangladesh counterpart Dr. A K Abdul Momen reiterated his country's commitment to help ensure justice and accountability for the atrocities committed against Rohingyas by the Myanmar authorities through the International Court of Justice. Dutch Ambassador to Bangladesh Harry Verweij met Dr. Momen and handed over the letter.

Bangladesh is likely to sign a Preferential Trade Agreement-PTA with Bhutan soon as the two countries are eager to boost trade. State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam yesterday discussed the PTA with Bhutanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Rinchen Kuentsyl as the latter called on him at the ministry yesterday. Bangladesh has sought enhanced cooperation with Sweden, Spain and Norway on trade and investment front as the new Ambassadors of the three countries to Bangladesh met the State Minister for Foreign Affairs. Meanwhile, Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Imran Ahmed Siddiqui met FBCCI President Sheikh Fazle Fahim yesterday.

Bangladesh has already surpassed Pakistan in GDP. Now it is set to overtake neighboring India in 2020-21, said IMF in a recent report. Former World Bank Chief Economist Kaushik Basu in his tweet said, if India wants to beat China, they must first overcome Bangladesh. According to the IMF report, Bangladesh's potential per capita GDP could increase by four per cent to 1,888 by 2020. On the other, India's potential per capita GDP could fall by 10.5 per cent to 1877.

Saima Wazed Hossain, President of Bangladesh National Advisory Committee for Autism and Neurodevelopment Disorders has called upon the health professionals of the country to ensure the highest level of holistic health care for the physically and mentally challenged people as there is no alternative to ensuring mental health care to achieve the SDGs. She made the call while addressing a webinar organized by CRP marking the 28th World Mental Day.

State Minister for Information Dr. Md. Murad Hasan while addressing a discussion marking the 57th birth anniversary of Sheikh Russel at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday demanded formation of a judicial probe commission to unmask the perpetrators who had patronized the killers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Mohammad Zahid Ahsan Russell yesterday formally unveiled the logo of “Sheikh Hasina Youth Volunteer Award 2020” under the “Virtual Global Voluntary Forum” programme, one of the mega events of the Dhaka OIC Youth Capital 2020.

A virtual meeting on rehabilitating ‘ka’ category homeless and landless families within the ‘Mujib Year’ under the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s Asrayan-2 Project was held yesterday with Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr. Ahmad Kaikaus in the chair. All Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners across the country joined the meeting.

The World Statistics Day 2020 is being observed in the country today with the theme “Connecting the world with data we can trust”. On the eve of the day, President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages.

Elections and by-elections to more than 200 local bodies such as Zila Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Union Parishad are being held today. The balloting will start at 9am and continue till 5pm without any break.

The country yesterday recorded 21 more fatalities from the COVID-19, raising the death toll from the pandemic to 5,681. At the same time recovery count rose to 305,599. The country also saw further rise in coronavirus cases with the detection of 1,637 new cases taking the total number of cases to 390,206.

The 33rd span of the Padma Bridge was installed at Mawa point yesterday bringing a total of over 4.9 kilometers of the structure visible.

In the quickest trial of the country, a Bagerhat court yesterday sentenced a man to life imprisonment in a child rape case within seven working days after framing of charges. The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain why photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol should not be granted bail in a case filed by the Awami League's Magura-1 MP Saifuzzaman Shikhor under the Digital Security Act.

The Government and the World Bank yesterday virtually signed a financing agreement under which the lending agency will provide US\$202 million additional financing for the “Modern Food Storage Facilities” project.

Bangladesh Bank has re-fixed the prices of commemorative gold coins marking ‘International Mother Language Day-2000’ and ‘Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 1920-2020’, considering the rise of gold prices in the current market. From now, a 22-carat gold commemorative coin, each weighing 10-gram, will cost Taka 66,000, BB press release said yesterday.

Additional Secretary Alamgir Mohammad Mansurul Alam has been made DG of the Directorate of Primary Education.



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