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### News Brief

The ECNEC has approved a Taka 1,209.60 crore project in a bid to complete necessary land acquisition and rehabilitation works for upgrading the Hatirjheel-Rampura Bridge-Banasri-Shekherjaiga-Amulia-Demra Highway in the capital into four lane. The ECNEC meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair yesterday approved a total of nine projects involving an overall estimated cost of Taka 4,324.61 crore. The other important projects approved in the meeting are; construction of Rajshahi WASA Bhaban, upgradation of Narayanganj Link Road into six-lane and agricultural development at Rajshahi Division through extension of modern technology.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a meeting with Russian Gazprom Gas Company delegation yesterday said, her government will continue to use the country's existing natural gas for its economic development and wellbeing of the people. Earlier on the day, the Gazprom company inked a MoU with Petrobangla on execution of the project related to exploration, development, production, transportation, refining, marketing of gas and by-products, including LNG as well as development of energy and power infrastructure and personnel. Under the MoU, Gazprom will conduct 2D and 3D seismic surveys in the newly-discovered Bhola North gas field area.

A two-day meeting of Bangladesh Development Forum, a platform of foreign development partners is set to start at Bangabandhu International Conference Center in the capital today. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the event. Economic Relations Division under the Finance Ministry is hosting the event. The meeting is considered vital as its main objective is to set strategies for giving financial commitment on Bangladesh's much-needed infrastructure development.

Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishtan Bill, 2020 with a view to making a time befitting act through abolishing the existing BKSP Ordinance 1983. Railway Minister Nurul Islam Sujon while responding to a question at Jatiya Sangsad said, the government has taken initiative for construction of railway in Barishal in order to bring the district under railway network. Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader informed the House that the government is taking action to stop unregistered easy bikes and battery-powered rickshaws plying on the street across the country.

Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury addressing a function marking the 4th founding anniversary of Daily Sakaler Somoy at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city yesterday said, the role of media is important in building public opinion on various issues related to the interest of the country. Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud speaking at the function urged the mass media to maintain objectivity and truthfulness in news.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud while speaking at a seminar at Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka yesterday said, Bangladesh has already graduated to a middle-income country from the least developing one. He also said, the country has gained remarkable progress in many socioeconomic indexes, including human development index, and achieved GDP growth higher than other countries in the last 11 years.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque at a press conference at his ministry in Dhaka yesterday said, there is nothing to be panic about coronavirus as no such patient has so far been detected in Bangladesh. The government is fully ready to face the situation, he said, adding that scanner machines have already been set up at different entry points across the

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border and all DCs, civil surgeons have already been given necessary instructions in this regard. Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen talking to media in Dhaka yesterday said, the government has taken all preparations and made an aircraft ready to bring back Bangladeshi citizens who are willing to return from China in view of the outbreak of deadly coronavirus there.

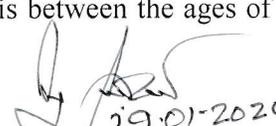
Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda while visiting the public demonstration of EVMs at Siddheswari Girls College in Dhaka yesterday said, there is no possibility of snatching ballot with EVM system during the Dhaka city corporations' polls to be held on February 1. EC sources said, Envoys of different countries have expressed satisfaction with the use of EVM system in the upcoming Dhaka City Corporations' polls. EC has decided to use CCTV cameras at the polling booths during the polls. Meanwhile, the government has issued an 18-hour ban on plying of all kinds of vehicular movement from January 31 midnight to 6 pm on February 1 marking the election. Besides, motorcycles will not be allowed to run from January 30 midnight till 6am on February 2. Dhaka International Trade Fair which has been extended for four more days will remain close on January 31 and February 1 for the elections.

The EU Ambassador and EU Member States' Ambassadors and Heads of Mission resident in Myanmar in a statement on Monday said, they expect the government of Myanmar to fully comply with the International Court of Justice order issued on January 23 for protecting the oppressed Rohingyas in the Rakhine State.

Information Secretary Kamrun Nahar while speaking at a meeting at the Press Information Department in Dhaka yesterday directed the public relations officers attached to ministries and divisions to remain active for publishing 'Mujib Borsha' programmes in all print, electronic and social media with utmost importance. Later, she visited the 'Bangabandhu Corner' set up at the PID premises.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl Miller, accompanied by USAID Mission Director Derrick Brown visited the Sundarbans on January 26-28 on the occasion of the World Wetlands Day that falls on February 2. The US Embassy in Dhaka in a press release yesterday said, the visit of the envoys to the world's largest mangrove forest highlighted the importance of conserving the Sundarbans and its wildlife.

World Bank Vice President for South Asia Hartwig Schafer at a presentation on 'the World Bank-United Nations Road Safety Champion Video Competition' in the capital yesterday said, the World Bank and the government of Bangladesh were discussing a \$250 million possible support for comprehensive road safety improvement. The competition sought the ideas to make Dhaka's roads safer from young Bangladeshis between the ages of 18 and 23 and received an overwhelming response.

  
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