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From: PIO, PID, Dhaka  
Fax: 9540553/9540026  
E-mail: [piddhaka@gmail.com](mailto:piddhaka@gmail.com)  
Web: [www.pressinform.gov.bd](http://www.pressinform.gov.bd)

### News Brief

The Cabinet in a meeting yesterday held at the Bangladesh Secretariat cleared the draft of Private Medical College and Dental College Act, 2021, aimed at bringing more discipline in this sector. Chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina virtually joining from Ganabhaban, the Cabinet also gave final nod to the draft of Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones (Amendment) Act, 2021 to make it more time befitting and appropriate to cope with the new era. Besides, the Cabinet in principle approved the Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Resources Act, 2021 for scrapping two ordinances in this regard that were promulgated in the military regimes in 1976 and 1986.

The Cabinet also decided to extend the ongoing lockdown till May 16 while movement of public transport inside district will be allowed to ply on the roads from May 6 following the health guidelines. But, movement of inter-district bus as well as launch and train services will remain suspended. Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam while briefing reporters after the meeting said, the local administration will conduct massive drives in the markets and shopping malls in their respective areas to ensure following of health guidelines. "If there is any deviation of following the protocol, the respective market will be closed if necessary," he said. He further said, there will be no extra holiday except the three-day for the Holy Eid-ul-Fitr.

At the Cabinet meeting a quarterly (Jan-March) statement of 2021 on the implementation of the decisions earlier taken by the Cabinet was presented. The rate of the implementation of the cabinet decisions is 48.78 per cent for the first three months of the calendar year 2021 where it was 64.79 per cent in the stipulated time in the last year, the Cabinet Secretary said. "Basically due to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic the implementation rate is a little bit slow, but it is encouraging," the quarterly written statement said.

The country's foreign exchange reserves hit a new record with US\$ 45.11 billion yesterday, Bangladesh Bank sources said. On October 8, last year, the reserves reached US\$40-billion mark and subsequently on February 24 this year the reserves exceeded US\$44 billion.

BNP is the bearer and carrier of institutional corruption in this country, though the party raises its voice against graft. In contrast, the Sheikh Hasina's government has taken a zero tolerance policy against graft, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader made the remarks while virtually exchanging views with the officials of Mymensingh Road Zone of BRTA and BRTC yesterday. To hide their corruption and failures, the BNP leaders are now raising imaginary allegations against the government, he further said. Turning to coronavirus issue, the Minister said, as per Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's proposal, cash assistance will be distributed among 36 lac families of the country ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud said, the people of Bangladesh have enough faith in media. He said that if there was no such confidence, so many televisions and newspapers would not have come out. And the number of readers did not increase so much. He came up with the comments while talking to newsmen on World Free Media Day and contemporary issues at his ministry yesterday. "I think the responsibility of media is not just to spread negative news. The responsibility of the media is to promote the image of society. That is what our media is trying to do," he said.

A shipment of five lac doses of Chinese Sinopharm's coronavirus vaccine will arrive in Bangladesh by May 10, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said to reporters at a briefing at his ministry yesterday. He said, efforts are underway to import the AstraZeneca vaccine from India to meet the shortage of the second dose. The second dose can be given after three to four months, he added. Meanwhile, local pharmaceutical company Renata Limited has applied to Directorate General of Health Services-DGHS seeking approval from the government to import Moderna vaccines from the USA. Director General of the DGHS Dr. Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam informed this to the reporters yesterday.

Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam said, they would not charge patients for Intensive Care Unit-ICU service at Covid-19 dedicated Mohakhali hospital in the capital. The Mayor made the announcement yesterday while speaking to reporters after handing over two ambulances and one mortuary van to the hospital. The Mayor also announced that DNCC would waive the monthly rent worth Taka 70 lac of the market building for the hospital.

To ensure people's demand for animal protein and nutrition for increasing their immunity amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock has continued the production, transportation, supply and marketing of the fisheries and livestock sector, despite lockdown. Mobile sales activities at fair prices all over the country including the capital Dhaka are being carried out, a press release said. On May 2, 720 mobile sales outlets in 64 districts of the country sold a total of 1,19,568 liters of milk, 8,48,801 eggs, 5,934 kgs of beef, 1,140 kgs of mutton, 75,726 kgs of chicken, 161 metric tons of fish and other dairy, sources said.

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, Rabab Fatima said, it is important to ensure adequate and sustainable peacekeeping budget to carry out the multifaceted responsibilities entrusted to the UN peacekeeping missions. She made the remarks while addressing a budget-session of peacekeeping missions at the the UN headquarters in New York yesterday. She also urged the member states to take into account the impact of COVID-19 on peacekeeping operations and ensure sufficient allocation in order to allow the peacekeepers to cope with the challenges, while considering peacekeeping budget.

Another 53,500 homeless and landless people are going to get new houses by June this year and 1.25 lac more others by next year under the Mujib Borsho Ashrayan Project. The decision came at a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office-PMO yesterday, chaired by Principal Secretary of PMO Dr. Ahmad Kaikaus. Dr. Kaikaus instructed the officials concerned to be vigilant so that the quality is maintained in the construction work of the houses. Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced that her government would ensure shelters for all marking the Mujib Borsho.

Information and Broadcasting Secretary Khaja Miah underscored the need for developing all programs and systems related to 'Digital Bangladesh' in Bangla in order to provide digital services to the general people in a simpler way. The Information Secretary made the remarks while addressing the inaugural session of a virtual workshop titled "Role of Local Journalists in Implementing Digital Bangladesh" yesterday. Lauding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's pragmatic measures for transforming the country into "Digital Bangladesh", Khaja Miah recalled that when the present government took the initiative of materializing the vision "Digital Bangladesh", many people and opposition parties joked with it. "But their mockery has been defeated by the Premier's strong measures and her ICT Adviser and able son Sajeeb Wazed Joy's indomitable willingness", he said.

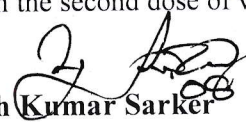
The Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refiners and Vanaspati Manufacturers Association reduced the price of per liter edible oil by Taka 3, considering the purchasing capacity of the consumers during the holy month of Ramadan and the Covid-19 pandemic. The purchasers from now on be able to buy a liter of edible oil at Taka 141 which was Taka 144 before.

A total of 221 freedom fighters under the Chattogram City Unit Command of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad were given Eid gifts of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday. State Minister for Housing and Public Works also distributed foodstuffs as gift of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina among 600 low-income and distressed people at Baishakhi Manch in Joynul Abedin park area in Mymensingh district yesterday. Meanwhile, Rangpur district administration yesterday distributed cash money among 200 COVID-19 pandemic affected newspaper hawkers as a gift from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to assist them in tackling the situation. Moreover, a total of 700 unemployed, poor and distressed people were given humanitarian assistance from the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund to mitigate their sufferings in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic in Sadar upazila of Sherpur district yesterday.

A Dhaka court yesterday placed three former leaders of Hefazat-e-Islam, Azizul Haque Islamabadi, Jalal Uddin and Zubayer Ahmed on remand on different terms in three cases lodged over the mayhem in the capital on May, 2013 and massive violence on March, 2021. Earlier, the detainees were also placed on remand on different terms in separate cases. Meanwhile, a Chattogram court also put Hefazat-e-Islam leader Harun Izhar on nine-day remand in three cases filed with Hathazari police station.

A total of 26 bodies have so far been recovered from the river as a speedboat clashed with a sand-laden bulkhead cargo on the BanglaBazar-Shimulia route in the Padma river near Kathalbari Ghat under Shibchar upazila of Madaripur district last morning.

The country recorded 65 fatalities from COVID-19 yesterday, taking the death toll to 11,644. With 1,739 fresh cases, the tally of infections surged to 7,63,682. At the same time recovery count rose to 6,91,162, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. A total of 86,928 people were administered the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine yesterday, taking the total number of vaccine receivers given the second dose of vaccine to 30,23,169.

  
**Surath Kumar Sarker**  
Principal Information Officer  
Phone- 9546091