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News Brief

President Md. Abdul Hamid has urged all to work unitedly irrespective of opinions and party affiliations to build a 'Sonar Bangla' dreamt by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by combating corruption, drug abuse, terrorism and militancy from the country as he was addressing the 11th session of the Jatiya Sangsad, the maiden session of 2021 yesterday. Leader of the House and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and parliamentarians of both treasury and opposition benches were present as Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury chaired the sitting. Highlighting the government's various success stories, the Head of the State also called upon the ruling party and the opposition to play their due role in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The Parliament opened the session yesterday by unanimously adopting a condolence motion expressing deep shock at the demise of an ex-Minister, a former Deputy Speaker, two former State Ministers, nine ex-MPs as well as noted personalities. Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury moved the condolence motion in the House.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid a courtesy call on President Md. Abdul Hamid at his Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban office yesterday. During the meeting, the Premier apprised the President of different state-level issues, especially government's steps undertaken to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. The President lauded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's courageous steps in tackling the lethal disease.

Later, Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury also paid a courtesy call on the President. The Speaker thanking the President for delivering speech in the first session of the 11th Jatiya Sangsad, also briefed the President about the various activities of the Parliament.

Marking the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and golden jubilee of the independence, the government will construct 14,000 houses for the insolvent freedom fighters, Liberation War Affairs Minister A K M Mozammel Haque said this while addressing a rally on the occasion of 'Service Week-2021' in front of the ministry yesterday.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said, Awami League candidates clinched sweeping victories in the second phase municipality polls too as the people want the country's development and progress. He was virtually addressing the inaugural ceremony of a four-day workshop on fire safety yesterday. He said, BNP candidates also gained victory at the municipalities where they remained active and popular. Even two rebel candidates of BNP also clinched victory, he said, adding that now BNP is finding no flaws and claiming that the vote margin was bigger.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud while briefing newsmen at his ministry yesterday said, Al-Qaeda has no presence in Bangladesh, adding that the USA should focus more on tackling homegrown extremism. He also said, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's remark on Al-Qaeda's presence in Bangladesh was "thoughtless". The Minister referred to the January 6, US Capitol insurrection in which five people were killed and said, no such attack took place in Bangladesh or neighboring countries. The Minister coming down heavily on BNP leaders' comments over pourashava polls said, after the polls, the BNP Secretary General is giving statements to cover up BNP's weakness after being rejected by the people of the country.

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen said, climate justice must be ensured for all countries as number of climate refugees is increasing in socially climate change vulnerable countries like Bangladesh. "We have very practical experience of such a scenario having 1.1 million Rohingyas in Bangladesh creating environmental and social havoc," he said. The Minister was addressing virtually the Inaugural Session of Global Gobeshona Conference organized by International Center for Climate Change and

Development-ICCCAD, in association with Global Centre on Adaptation-GCA yesterday. Former UN Secretary General Ban-ki-Moon, among others, spoke at the session.

Bangladesh, Myanmar and China are scheduled to hold a virtual tripartite meeting at 2:00pm (local time) today to discuss ways to expedite the Rohingya repatriation process. Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen will lead the Bangladesh delegation in the meeting, while Vice Minister of China Luo Zhaohui will join from Beijing.

The Bahrain government has regularized visas of 30,000 Bangladeshis amid the COVID-19 pandemic under the nine-month general amnesty-from April to December last year with 25,000 more irregular Bangladeshis there. The government of Bangladesh has requested the Bahrain government for regularization of the remaining Bangladeshis or renewal of their visas that expired, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

India will soon supply some shots of Covid-19 vaccine, in addition to those from Serum Institute, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said at a 'Meet the Reporters' event organized by Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday. He also reassured that the first consignment of three crore doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, manufactured by Serum Institute of India, will reach the country on January 25 or 26. Besides, the government has submitted necessary documents to the WHO to receive eight lac shots of Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine, he said. Meanwhile, sources in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs said, the Indian government will gift Bangladesh 20 lac doses of Oxford-Astrazenca Covid-19 vaccines. Dr. Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, Director General of DGHS, confirmed that the doses will reach Bangladesh tomorrow. Meanwhile, the number of deaths from Covid-19 in Bangladesh rose to 7,922 with the death of 16 more people yesterday. At the same time recovery count rose to 4,73,173, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. With the detection of 697 new cases, the total number of Covid-19 cases rose to 5,28,329.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister S M Rezaul Karim said, the government is sincerely working to spread out the indigenous species of fish all over the country. He made the remarks while addressing the 40th meeting of the Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute-BFRI Board of Governors at his ministry yesterday.

The 3.32-kilometre long tunnel under the Karnaphuli River is expected to be ready for vehicular movements by 2022, Project Director Engineer Harunur Rashid Chowdhury said to media yesterday. The overall progress of Karnaphuli Tunnel reaches 62 per cent and the financial progress rose to 56.80 per cent. Once completed, the tunnel will be a part of Asian Highway, he said.

The government of Bangladesh yesterday signed a US\$6.5 million financing agreement with the World Bank to enable around 39,000 slum children complete primary education as well as provide pre-vocational training to 8,500 school-dropped out youths in Cox's Bazar.

Bangladesh's New Ambassador to the United States M Shahidul Islam has joined the workplace after a six-day quarantine.

The High Court yesterday ordered the Information Secretary and Chairman of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission-BTRC to prepare a draft of the policy within three months to monitor and extract VAT from broadcasting and distributing contents on over-the-top-OTT platforms like YouTube and Netflix.

US-Bangla Airlines has planned to operate flights on Dhaka-Dubai-Dhaka route from February 1. Initially 14 flights will be operated in a week on this route, the airlines said in a release.



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