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### News Brief

Dhaka seeks United Nation's initiatives to ensure that the COVID-19 vaccine becomes accessible to all. Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, who is now visiting the US, made the call while holding a bilateral meeting with the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres at the UN Headquarters in New York on Thursday. The Secretary General mentioned his efforts during the recent G-7 summit where he particularly stated about Bangladesh's capacity to produce vaccines. Referring to the humanitarian gesture of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in providing shelter to the Rohingya, the Secretary General thanked Bangladesh for hosting the displaced Rohingya minorities from Myanmar. Antonio Guterres also praised Bangladesh's strong leadership role in all areas of the UN's activities, especially in peacekeeping, climate change and women empowerment. Dr. Momen also stated that it is frustrating that many influential countries have enhanced their economic and business relations with Myanmar while publicly decrying the human rights violations there. He said, although Bangladesh is on track towards SDG implementation, there are concerns about the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, especially in securing financing for the SDGs. The Minister congratulated Secretary General on his re-appointment for second term. Later, Dr. Momen held a meeting with UN Under Secretary General for Department for Peace building and Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo. During the meeting they discussed the current political situation in Myanmar and its impacts on the repatriation of the Rohingyas from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Minister has called for an incentives-based and long-term package for the countries graduating and graduated from LDCs for making their advancement sustainable. Dr. Momen underscored the importance of the package as the graduating countries are at a high risk of sliding back— both due to the COVID-19 impacts and the loss of LDC specific support measures. He was speaking as a keynote speaker at a high-level virtual event on 'Building Resilience for Sustainable and Irreversible Graduation of the LDCs' in New York on Thursday.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader at a regular press conference on contemporary issues yesterday said, BNP is the mastermind of destroying the country's democratic, natural and political atmospheres. Terming BNP as patron of communalism and violence, the Minister said the country and its people are not safe in the hands of BNP as their politics is deadlier than virus. BNP's politics of killing and terrorism had taken the country backward. Now Bangladesh is heading towards peace and prosperity under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he added. Obaidul Quader announced the AL's programme for its 72nd founding anniversary to be observed on June 23. He urged the party's all organizational units and associate bodies to celebrate the day across the country in line with the central programme maintaining health guidelines.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque at a discussion at Garpara in Manikganj yesterday said, rampant movement of people is largely responsible for faster rise of COVID-19 in the country. Referring to the devastating situation of COVID-19 in India, he said huge number of people in India is dying every day infecting new variant of the lethal virus. The Minister said, infection rate of coronavirus has been increasing sharply in different border districts and it may spread in other parts of the country including Dhaka city. He urged the people of the country to follow health rules to protect themselves from the deadly disease. Maleque said Bangladesh has signed an agreement with China to buy Covid-19 vaccines. We expecting that China will take all necessary initiative to provide coronavirus vaccine very soon, he added.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs K M Khalid said, film is an important medium of art and culture especially in today's world that is largely regulated by social media platform. He made the remarks while virtually addressing the inauguration ceremony of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bangladesh Short Film and Documentary Festival 2021 yesterday.

Bangladesh has been elected as a member of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation Council from the Asia Region for the term 2022-2024. The election was held during the 42nd Session of the UN Agency on Thursday with the participation of 183 member states, said a press release yesterday. Bangladesh with other Council Members will now lead the organization at both policy and executive level for three years. The on-going 42nd Session of the FAO Conference, held virtually from the Headquarters of FAO in Rome, is being attended by an eight-member Bangladesh delegation led by Agricultural Minister Dr. Muhammad Abdur Razzaque.

International Labour Conference, led by Bangladesh, has made a global call for ensuring access to vaccines and personal protection equipment for workers worldwide. The urge was made in a resolution, adopted at the 109th ILC in Geneva, concerning a global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. The global call to action was adopted after an intense negotiation in the COVID Response Committee of the ILC, chaired by Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh in Geneva Md. Mustafizur Rahman, on Thursday, said a press release. Bangladesh also led the Asia and Pacific Group in the negotiation as the coordinator and stressed the need for addressing the specific challenges of the region. The resolution strongly appeals for timely, affordable and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for all people in all countries for the revitalization of the global economy and the world of work. The resolution also called for reducing the health risk of the health workers as well as salaries and allowances of all workers during the pandemic while urging for an inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Asian Development Bank yesterday approved a US\$250 million policy-based loan to the government of Bangladesh to help finance reforms aimed at improving the inclusiveness and responsiveness of the country's social development and resilience program. Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in reducing poverty over the past two decades, said an ADB press release yesterday. The poverty incidence declined from 48.9 percent in 2000 to 20.5 percent in 2019, it added. However, while many people were lifted from extreme poverty, a considerable number continue to live at a subsistence level, ADB said.

The nationwide Covid-19 vaccination campaign, which stalled due to a lack of vaccine supply in April, is going to resume today (19 June). For now, those who have already registered will be inoculated with the Sinopharm doses gifted by China. The vaccine will be given at all government medical college hospitals, government general hospitals, district headquarters hospitals and 250-bed hospitals in the country. Covid Vaccine Management Committee of Health Department sources said. Meanwhile, the country recorded 54 fatalities from COVID-19 yesterday, taking the death toll to 13,399. With 3,883 fresh cases, the tally of infections surged to 8,44,970. At the same time recovery count rose to 7,78,421, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday.

  
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