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## Newsbrief

The World Water Day is being observed in the country today as elsewhere in the globe. This year's World Water Day theme is 'Water For Peace'. President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the eve of the day. In his message, the President said to ensure balanced availability of water, equitable distribution and sustainable use of water from source to consumer, must be ensured through proper management of water resources. The President called upon individuals and all public and private institutions to take effective initiatives to ensure planned and moderate use of the precious natural resource 'Water'. In her message, the Prime Minister said, the Awami League government has already taken different development programmes for water management. The Premier hoped that the planned management of water will play a leading role in protecting the balance of climate and nature as well as biodiversity.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday conveyed her heartfelt congratulation to Vladimir Putin on his reelection as the President of Russia. President Vladimir Putin won a record post-Soviet landslide victory in Russia's election for the fifth term on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sought India's cooperation to import electricity from Bhutan using its land. The Premier sought the cooperation as the Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Pranay Verma called on her at Ganabhaban in Dhaka yesterday. The PM also urged the Indian government to remove the anti-dumping measures for importing jute and jute goods from Bangladesh. Besides, the PM told the High Commissioner that India could modernise the Syedpur Railway Worksop.

Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury left Dhaka for Geneva, Switzerland yesterday to join the 148th assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) scheduled to be held on 23-27 March. A parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker departed from Dhaka. The Speaker will return home on March 29, an official release said yesterday.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader directed the authorities concerned to increase vigilance on the movement of three-wheelers and motorcycles on road and highways to avoid road accidents during the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr. The Minister came up with the directives at a stakeholders' meeting on safe and smooth journey of passengers on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr at Sarak Bhabhan in Dhaka yesterday. The Minister called upon the transport owners to bring fitness of their vehicles on the occasion of holy Eid-ul-Fitre. The Minister warned that action would be taken against those, who will take extra fares from home goers during the Eid-ul-Fitr saying that the authorities will monitor the situation round the clock.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anisul Huq said, a new law regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be drafted by next September. The Minister said this to the journalists after a meeting on AI Law at the Secretariat in Dhaka yesterday. Asked about the outcome of this law, the Minister said, this is also a question for us as we are yet to know how much control we have. But it will be for human rights protection and the benefit of people.

Foreign Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud urged the World Food Programme (WFP) to conduct programme on raising public awareness about healthier food habits and consumption of locally produced agricultural products and on efficient and sustainable use of arable lands. The Minister made the request when Country Director of UN World Food Programme (WFP) Domenico Scalpelli met him at his office in Dhaka yesterday. The Country Director appreciated the remarkable improvement of food production capacity of Bangladesh and role of agricultural science and technology in this regard.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud highlighted the firm commitment of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the achievements of her governments in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment. The Minister also highlighted the notable progress made by Bangladesh in women empowerment in the political and administrative fields. The Minister discussed the issues when UN Women Representative to Bangladesh Gitanjali Singh met him at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka yesterday. The UN Women representative thanked the Minister and assured him to enhance UN Women's cooperation with Bangladesh and felicitate the government in translating its firm commitment into action.

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury said, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which governs carbon markets, is expected to be finalised within two months. The Minister said this to the reporters after holding a meeting with South Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Park Young-sik at Bangladesh Secretariat in Dhaka yesterday. At the meeting, they explored collaborative efforts to address environmental issues and climate change mitigation.

Meanwhile, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury said, no infrastructure can be constructed in the forests. The Minister said this while addressing a discussion organised by the Department of Forest marking the International Day of Forests 2024 yesterday. The Minister also said, laws are being formulated for forest conservation. Forest research will be increased. Mobile apps are being prepared to get tickets and other services online for tourists in the Sundarbans and other protected areas. All should work together in conserving forests, wildlife and biodiversity in a bid to present a beautiful Bangladesh for the present and future generations, added the Minister.

A total of 152 upazilas around the country will go to the polls in the first phase on May 8, announced the Election Commission (EC). The EC decided the poll date and schedule in a meeting held at the Commission Bhaban with Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal in the chair. EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath said this to the reporters yesterday. According to the schedule, the last date for nomination paper submission is April 15. The nomination papers will be scrutinised on April 17, and the last date for withdrawal of candidature is April 22.

The government has decided that the students of class I to class III will not have to appear in the first and second terminal examinations from this year, said Primary and Mass Education Secretary Farid Ahmad. The performance of the students in the classes will be evaluated continuously through apps. The Secretary said this to the reporters while addressing a press conference at the secretariat in Dhaka yesterday.

The government has asked the private sector to import 83,000 tonnes of rice immediately (within a month) aiming to further arrest the rice price hike in the retail market across the country, said an official order issued by the Ministry of Food in Dhaka yesterday. The private importers have to market this amount of rice by April 25, according to the official order. The importing companies have to sell the rice in sacks directly in the market instead of re-packaging of these goods.

The minimum Fitra, a charitable donation by well-off Muslims at the end of Ramadan, has been set at Tk 115 per person this year, while the maximum amount is Tk 2,970. The National Committee on Fitra fixation yesterday set the rate at a meeting at the Islamic Foundation in Dhaka with its Chairman and the National Baitul Mukarram Mosque Khatib Mawlana Mohammad Ruhul Amin.

The National Memorial at Savar will remain inaccessible to the public from March 23 to 25 for cleanliness purposes before observing Independence Day on March 26. The memorial will remain inaccessible to the public until the President and Prime Minister pay homage to the Liberation War heroes in the early hours of Independence Day, according to a handout yesterday. People are urged not to damage the beauty of the memorial area while placing wreaths on the national monument on Independence Day.

No fresh death due to dengue was reported in Bangladesh in the last 24 hours till Thursday morning, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). However, 11 more patients were hospitalised with viral fever during this period.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), twenty-nine more COVID-19 cases were reported across the country during the last 24 hours till Thursday morning. The country's total fatalities remained unchanged at 29,493 as no death was reported during the period.

Stocks extended its winning streak for the second consecutive day on Thursday. The prime index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) finally went up by 69 points or 1.17 per cent to settle at 5,941. The DSEX recovered 127 points in the past two days after suffering losses of 352 points in the previous eight days.



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