Announcement

Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP SSWA Office moves on to a new position

After 12 years of dedicated service at the UNESCAP, Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director and Head of UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office, based in New Delhi has decided to take an early retirement from United Nations to head the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID), a New Delhi based public-funded think-tank. Since 2009, Dr. Kumar has served UNESCAP in different senior management roles including as Chief Economist; Director, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development, and Social Development Divisions, based at the UNESCAP headquarters in Bangkok. Before joining UNESCAP in 2009, Dr. Kumar was the Director-General of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a New Delhi based policy think-tank of the Government of India. He has also served on the faculty of UNU-MERIT in Maastricht, the Netherlands (1993-1998). A PhD from the Delhi School of Economics, Dr. Kumar is recipient of the Exim Bank’s first International Trade Research Award and GDN’s Research Medal. He has researched extensively on different aspects of economic development, resulting in the publication of 18 books, over 30 flagship reports of United Nations and RIS, and over 120 peer-reviewed papers, attracting nearly 7000 academic citations.

With his solid understanding of the development challenges and his vast network in South Asia and beyond, he has helped to establish the UNESCAP Office as a leading regional development partner in the subregion, enhancing visibility and outreach of UNESCO’s work. The UNESCAP-SSWA team wishes Dr. Kumar all the best in his future endeavors!

With the retirement of Mr. Nagesh Kumar on 30 April 2021, Mr. Adnan Aliani, Director, Strategy and Programme Management Division, UNESCAP, Bangkok has been designated with additional responsibility as the Officer-in-Charge of UNESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia Office, New Delhi with effect from 1 May 2021.
I. Key Activities during January-March 2021

1. Policy Dialogue on Galvanizing South and South-East Asia Transport Connectivity highlights important opportunities

New Delhi, India, 22 January 2021. UNESCAP South and South West Asia office (UNESCAP SSWA) jointly organized a Policy Dialogue with the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) on “Galvanizing South and South-East Asia Transport Connectivity post-COVID19,” which attracted more than 100 participants and highlighted the urgency to enhance inter-subregional trade and investment flows between South and South-east Asia and to accelerate reform measures for seamless transport and digital connectivity between the two subregions. The session was moderated by Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP SSWA Office and Dr. Nisha Taneja, Professor, ICRIER delivered the opening remarks. It was followed by a presentation by Mr. Anil Kumar Gupta, Senior consultant UNESCAP and former CMD, Container Corporation of India. The distinguished speakers in the high-level panel included Mr Pawan Aggarwal, Special Secretary (Logistics), Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Government of India, Prof. Mustafizur Rahman, Distinguished Fellow CPD Bangladesh; Amb. Rajiv Bhatia, Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House, Mumbai; Dr Fukunari Kimura, Chief Economist, Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Jakarta; Mr Md. Mosharaf Hossain, Director, Connectivity and Security Division, BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka; Mr. Rabi Shanker Sainju, former Joint Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Nepal; Mr Constantino Xavier, Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies, CSEP (Brookings India); Mr Duncan Overfield, Deputy Development Director, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, British High Commission, New Delhi and Mr Sandeep Jain, Economic Affairs Officer, Transport Division, UNESCAP. The experts engaged on a wide array of issues relevant for strengthening and enhancing connectivity to enhance trade, economic growth, and shared regional prosperity. They deliberated on avenues for trade opportunities between the two subregions in closing the infrastructure gaps, resolving procedural challenges, removing regulatory barriers, and creating an enabling policy environment. The dialogue also found the need for turning transport corridors into economic zones and for enhancing coordination of transport logistics within and between governments and their agencies.

Read more here

2. UNESCAP- EIF project on ‘E-Commerce Capacity Building for Women-led MSMEs’ launched in Afghanistan
New Delhi, India, 28 January 2021. UNESCAP-South and South-West Asia Office (UNESCAP SSWA) in partnership with Biruni Institute, Afghanistan and Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Geneva, held a ‘National Inception Workshop on E-Commerce for women led MSME’s in Afghanistan’ in hybrid mode which was attended by policy makers, women entrepreneurs and other stakeholders of Afghanistan. The objective of the meeting was to understand the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in performing business via ecommerce in Afghanistan. Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP SSWA Office gave the opening remarks along with Mr. Nazir Kabiri, Executive Director, Biruni Institute, Afghanistan and special remarks were given by H.E. Mr Nisar Ahmad Ghoryani, Minister of Industry & Commerce, Afghanistan and H.E. Ms Karima Hamid Faryabi, Minister of Economy, Afghanistan. The event featured a panel discussion on the theme - ‘Ecommerce in Afghanistan’ moderated by Ms Manizha Wafeq, Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The panelists included Mr Sulaiman Bin Shah, Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Industry & Commerce (MoIC) Afghanistan; Ms Masi Stanikzai, Founder and CEO at Click.af; Mr Mostafa Kakar, CEO, Parsa Technologies & Former Managing Director Afghanistan; Payments System (APS), Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB); Mr Ahmad Waheed Wais, President at Afghan Post, GoIRA; Ms Mohsena Saqeb, President of Jama Design, Entrepreneur. The speakers discussed the usage of e-commerce to promote businesses and challenges thereof. The event was attended by more than 80 participants.

Read more [here](#).

3. Sustainable Development Goals can guide South Asia to build back better, says UN report

Bangkok, Thailand, 16 March 2021. The 2021 edition of the Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report was launched by Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP. “Recovery measures are an excellent opportunity for us to rethink our options for development pathways that are inclusive, more resilient, and respect planetary boundaries,” said Ms. Alisjahbana. “As we enter the Decade of Action to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we need to reinforce our collective commitment to the SDGs and let it provide our compass for building back together, better and greener.” Following the plenary event for presentation of the report to the stakeholders, subregional breakout session was held for South Asia led by Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP-SSWA Office. Sharing the key highlights from the SDG progress in the subregion, he said that ‘South Asia needs to accelerate progress on SDG achievement. An important opportunity was to exploit the potential of the stimulus programmes being rolled out in the sub-region to revive the economies in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, to close the SDG gaps.’

Read more [here](#).

4. Building Analytical Capacity in Afghanistan and Bhutan for accelerating SDG achievement

New Delhi, India, 24 March 2021. UNESCAP-South and South-West Asia Office (UNESCAP SSWA) in collaboration with South Asian Network on SDGs (SANS) organized a tailor-made capacity building event on enhancing analytical capacity of think-tanks of Afghanistan and Bhutan for accelerating SDG achievement. The all-day event was held in hybrid mode and aimed at enhancing technical skills of researchers so that their research outputs can be used in evidence-based policy making. Dr Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP SSWA office UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office, New Delhi in his opening remarks highlighted the critical importance of evidence-based research inputs in guiding policy makers to pursue
focused at augmenting the knowledge and capacity of researchers through sharing experiences from across the region on making evidence-based policies to accelerate progress for achieving SDGs.

Read more [here](#)

5. South Asian countries participate in 8th Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development

Bangkok, Thailand, 23-26 March 2021. The 8th Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD) was held in a hybrid mode from 23-26 March 2021 on the theme “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific”. A regional preparatory of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the Forum reviewed SDG1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good health and wellbeing), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities), SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate action), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals). The Forum was opened by H.E. Ms. Rosemarie Edillon, Under Secretary for Policy and Planning National Economic and Development Authority, The Philippines in her capacity as the Chair of the 7th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. The opening session was also addressed by Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations and Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, among other dignitaries. “The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] show the way to inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies and societies that respect people and planet,” said United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Amina J. Mohammed in her opening remarks. “The road ahead will not be easy, but we have the tools, energy and capacity to recover from the pandemic and make strides towards achieving the SDGs,” she added. “This will be a decade of action and transformation, with ambition, urgency and scale.” United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana urged countries to “formulate a set of policy packages that could create harmony between health and economy, and between economy and the environment.” “As we prepare for sustainable and resilient recovery, let us remember that the SDGs are our compass and can continue to play a force for good in transforming our societies in the post-COVID-19 era,” said Ms. Alisjahbana. “ESCAP is committed to strengthening, in close collaboration with the UN development system, multi-stakeholder partnerships at the regional, subregional and national levels to recover better together.”

Senior dignitaries from the South Asian countries H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thailand; H.E. Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); Ms. Wanun Permpibul, Climate Watch, Thailand CSO Representative provided interventions in the opening forum. The highlights of the country statements made at the APFSD by South Asian countries are reported later.

Read more [here](#)
II. Select Outreach Activities

1. Dialogue highlights the need for regional economic integration to address post COVID-19 challenges in the Bay of Bengal subregion

New Delhi, India, 8-11 February 2021 To discuss the need for regional economic integration in wake of COVID-19 challenges, a Bay of Bengal Economic dialogue was organized from 8-11 February 2021 by SANEM, in collaboration with some leading organizations from the region. r. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP SSWA Office, chaired the session on 11th February on the theme 'Tackling post COVID-19 challenges in the Bay of Bengal region'. In his remarks, Dr. Nagesh Kumar, stated that "the disruptive effects of the crisis have contracted economies and led to rising inequalities. Government have created fiscal space, expanded public health expenditure, and channeled funds to SMEs, yet recovery has been fragile and uneven". Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Economic Affairs Officer, UNESCAP SSWA Office was a panelist on day 2 of the session (9th February) on the theme 'Trade and regional value chain'. The dialogue highlighted the necessity for greater regional cooperation in the backdrop of COVID-19 challenges being faced in the Bay of Bengal region and it was felt that such engagements would help to define the scopes for collaboration as well assess and address the COVID-19 challenges in the region.

Read more here

2. UNESCAP contributes to the discussion of India’s Draft Science and Technology Policy 2020

New Delhi, India, 18 February 2021. Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP SSWA Office, chaired the Indialics Public Lecture on assessment of India’s the Draft Science and Technology Policy 2020. Prof. Dinesh Abrol, Centre for Studies in Science Policy, JNU, New Delhi was the speaker and Dr. Papia Sen Gupta, Centre for Political Studies, JNU, New Delhi was the discussant at the session. The speakers made a critical assessment of the newly released draft of the of the National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy by the Government of India and provided their inputs. The new policy aims to bring about changes in the ecosystem that would promote research and innovation for both individuals and organizations. The objective of the policy is to identify and address strengths and weaknesses of the Indian Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) ecosystem to catalyze socio-economic development of the country and make the
3. Webinar highlights the Asian perspective at the International Economic Forum on Asia - Digitalization and Development

New Delhi, India, 5 March 2021. Research and Information System for Developing Countries, New Delhi (RIS) along with Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) organized an International Economic Forum on Asia – Digitalization and Development- Reflections from Asia. Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP SSWA Office, chaired the first technical session, titled Digitalization and Sectoral Focus. The session covered the wide scope of digital transformation and the sectors that need specific attention. The session aimed to identify the trends in digital applications and the possible ways different sectors can benefit from the emerging technological possibilities. Eminent speakers brainstormed on sectoral opportunities and challenges of digital economy. The panelists in the session included Prof. Rajat Kathuria, Director and Chief Executive, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi; Dr. Miguel Exposito Verdejo, European Commission and Prof. Keshab Das, Professor, Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Ahmedabad, India; Ms. Anita Gurumurthy, Executive Director, IT for Change, Bengaluru, India; and Prof. Saikat Sinha Roy, Professor of Economics, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India.

4. Regional Conference on Bay of Bengal as Connectivity Hub in Indo-Pacific Region

New Delhi, India, 14-15 March 2021. Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP-SSWA Office participated as a speaker in the Regional Conference on Bay of Bengal as Connectivity Hub in Indo-Pacific Region organized by Centre of Bay of Bengal Studies, Dhaka on 14-15 March 2021. Dr. Kumar addressed the closing session focused on The Bay of Bengal as Gateway to the East – Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Thailand as bridge between South Asia and Southeast & East Asia. Chief Guest for the session was H.E. Prof Gowher Rizvi, International Affairs Advisor to the Hon’ble Prime Minister and the Moderator was Ambassador (Retd) Tariq A Karim, Director, Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies. The other panelists included Ambassador Mashfee Shams, Secretary (East), Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Dr. C. Raja Mohan, Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore; Mr. Nishida Ippeita, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Tokyo; Dr Selim Raihan, Executive Director, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). Dr. Kumar’s remarks stressed on the importance of connectivity between South, Southeast and East Asia for exploiting potential of trade between the subregions for job creation and resultant development benefits. Greater connectivity between the subregions can guide internal regional transport connectivity reforms within South Asia enhance the commercial viability of the subregional corridors due to expected increase in traffic volumes. It will open will new vistas of overland cargo flow between Asia and Europe, helping the subregional countries to utilize their manufacturing capacities to the full extent. To realize the vision of inter-regional transport connectivity,
The subregional countries have to work together for (a) joining together the overlapping international transport projects and programs, (b) formulation of conducive legal and regulatory regimes through comprehensive transport agreements, (c) technical support from multilateral/intergovernmental organizations, and (d) resource mobilization strategies involving public/private, national/international investment partners.

5. Knowledge-sharing on COVID-19 pandemic

New Delhi, India, 28 January 2021. Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP SSWA Office addressed the joint meeting organized by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and Philippines Social Science Council (PSSC) as the keynote speaker. The meeting discussed the approaches to managing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by India and the Philippines.

III. Knowledge products issued by UNESCAP-SSWA in the year 2021 and 2020

- UNESCAP SSWA Policy Briefs 7 – Marine Plastic Pollution in South Asia (November 2020)
- Policy Brief – Scenario-Based Risk Analytics for Managing Cascading Disasters (November 2020)
- SSWA Development Paper 2003 – Asia’s Paths to Industrialization and Prosperity (October 2020)
- Policy Study Series – Pathways to Manage Cascading Risks and Protect People in South Asia: Key Takeaways for Stakeholders (September 2020)
- Policy Study Series – Investing in Innovative Solutions to manage Cascading Disaster Risks in South Asia: Key Takeaways for Stakeholders (August 2020)
- South Asia Development Update – April and July 2020 (July 2020)
- Policy Study Series – Asia-Pacific Disaster Resilience Network: Protecting the Most Vulnerable to Cascading Risks from Climate Extremes and the COVID-19 in South Asia (June 2020)
- UNESCAP SSWA Policy Briefs 6– Strengthening Freight Transport Corridors of South Asia in the Aftermath of COVID-19 (May 2020)
- South Asia Development Update – January 2020 (January 2020)
IV. Highlights of South Asian Countries on SDGs Related Issues at the 8th Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development

Bangladesh

The pandemic poses enormous challenges but has shown the importance of collective efforts and cooperation to recover as well as achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030. The government of Bangladesh has recently approved the 8th Five Year Plan which is in line with the SDG target. The government has given the responsibility to seventeen ministries for the achievement of the seventeen SDGs. It has also designed an SDG Tracker which will monitor the progress of SDG implementation. Bangladesh has taken initiative to localize the SDG with forty priority indicators according to the circumstances of the local areas. Bangladesh, even in times of pandemic, participated in various global and regional forums of SDGs and exchanged experiences regarding their implementation. The Bangladesh's government has adopted a series of stimulus packages estimated at USD 14.6 billion, which accounts to 4.4% of their GDP, for recovering the economy and for the successful implementation of SDGs.

Regional cooperation and integration amongst the South Asian countries could supplement Bangladesh’s national strategies for several SDGs namely climate change mitigation, promoting trade and economic activities, disaster management, human development, reducing inequalities, and building peace and justice. Bangladesh believes that in addition to regional cooperation, international development cooperation also has a role to play in helping the countries meet their development financing needs. The nation believes in pooling resources to develop sustainable solutions like collaborative regional approach to agricultural and food-related R&D. In Bangladesh's view, a regional approach may be initiated for the development of common standards and perspectives for methodological processing of data and the reporting of progress at the broader regional and global levels. The nation believes that together nations would be able to overcome the challenges and will be able to build a sustainable world.

India

In the wake of the global pandemic affecting the global economy along with the domains of health, education, labour and employment and climate initiatives for the Asia and Pacific regions, a four-pillar strategy of “containment, fiscal, financial and long-term structural reform” was adopted by India. While the early intense lockdown provided a strategy to save lives, it also constrained economical activities of the nation. Sectors such as hospitality, travel and tourism were brought to a standstill and this caused unemployment and severe loss of livelihood. To tackle this situation, a systematic pandemic management plan was initiated which included system-wide measures and initiatives focused on specific groups. The nation’s core system wide initiative was to constitute a six High Level Empowered Groups (EG) headed by top policy makers and experts to deal with critical aspects. The citizens of the country were provided with emergency financial and food security and special initiatives were implemented for migrant and frontline health workers. The Government of India also initiated measures under Atmanirbhar Abhyaan to empower the working class and migrant workers and to also strengthen India’s competitiveness at the global scale. Probably the only nation to use structural reforms

Republic of Maldives

With the global poverty and unemployment already on the rise, the inequality gaps and existing vulnerabilities of marginalized groups are being accentuated. Maldives believes that this is an opportunity to re-evaluate past actions and to work together
payments and various such support measures were provided to those who lost their source of income. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the importance of collaboration between government and the private sector. Maldives believes that regional cooperation is the key to post COVID-19 sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery.

Due to the global pandemic, some SDGs have become stagnant, and some have shown a reverse trend. Maldives believes that it is of utmost importance to tackle the issue of high NEET (Not in education, employment or training) rate in the region, which is impacting the potential productivity of the region. Further, trade facilitation is in dire need of attention since the domestic and regional economies are at a standstill. The nation is looking to kick start the local and national projects which had been stopped in the wake of Covid pandemic. Initiatives such as “Accelerating Private Investments in Renewable Energy (ASPIRE) are under-way and Maldives has also successfully implemented a phased elimination plan for single use plastic with a target of the year 2023. According to the government, it is crucial for Maldives to align the recovery initiatives with the nation’s climate actions and sustainable development agenda in post pandemic recovery efforts. The government is focused on emphasizing greener and resilient developmental initiatives as the country builds back better.

The Maldives government has also been working on a comprehensive “climate emergency” bill to address climate change challenges in designing and implementing developmental programs of the nation, and another bill- the statistical bill, has been submitted to the parliament with the aim that the bill shall strengthen collection, provision and reporting of data, allowing better data availability and hence, better planning and decision making. The nation firmly believes that implementation of climate action can only be achieved by the provision of adequate, predictable, and sustainable financing from developed countries to developing countries, especially for SIDS.

Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Pakistan has adopted the Agenda 2030 in its development paradigm and identified data at the core of the paradigm shift. The SDGs framework has been translated into a practical application framework for national planning. SDGs are ingrained across state plans and programs and are being localized and institutionalized. In response to the pandemic, Pakistan's government rolled out an $8 million stimulus package, made emergency cash transfers to marginalized household, and developed a multidimensional vulnerability index. Regional collaborations were developed for rapid employment of diagnostics testing kits, treatments, vaccines and their timely delivery.

Pakistan emphasized on exploring and exploiting regional learning on SDGs. Regional platforms must be viewed as fast platforms for informed collaboration and cooperation to complement the effectiveness of the national mechanisms and address trans-boundary challenges. It condemned 'The country first politics' as the world’s most vulnerable are falling through the cracks and the achievement of the SDGs are getting as distant as 2073. It offered its support and looks forward to benefiting from the power of synergies as the members strengthen their collaboration and partnerships.
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's paramount consideration had been to minimize the economic and social disparities created by the pandemic to ensure that the important gains on SDG issues by Sri Lanka are not reversed. A multi-pronged approach focused particularly on ensuring good health and well-being, food security, and building resilient livelihoods promoted in an inclusive and equitable manner to address the multiple form vulnerabilities created by the pandemic to ensure that no one is left behind in the recovery efforts.

In response to the pandemic, the Sri Lankan government enforced strict quarantine regulations, social distancing measures, and clinical practice guidelines. Furthermore, several concessionary schemes to support the affected businesses particularly on leasing facilities were placed. The government of Sri Lanka recently signed a $165 million loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank to provide an immediate financing support for SMEs which have been severely affected by the pandemic including businesses led by women and tea stall holders. A range of financial and material benefits were granted for over six million affected families and vulnerable groups, and low-interest working capital loans were given to ensure MSMEs resilience. Immediate steps were taken to make the COVID-19 vaccination available on an equitable basis to the population.

Sri Lanka is enforcing the commitment to SDGs at the highest levels and into a ministerial steering committee headed by the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka to build strong national ownership of SDGs and mobilizing all stakeholders.

V. SDGs IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

a. SGDs: priorities, actions and means of implementation

Revolving funds under Poverty Alleviation Fund to be transformed into cooperatives 4 January 2021 The government is preparing to transform revolving funds created by the Poverty Alleviation Fund into cooperatives. Read more here

India’s Kashmir region seeks $4 billion in investments, to provide security 2 January 2020 India’s federal territory of Jammu and Kashmir plans to attract investments worth up to $4 billion in the next two to three years and would provide security to businesses setting up shop in the insurgency-hit region, its chief said. Read more here

Economic indicators showing positive trajectory as exports increasing swiftly: Shibli 4 January 2021 Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Senator Shibli Faraz has said the economic indicators are showing positive trajectory as export of the country are increasing swiftly due to prudent policies of the government. Read more here

Food security: “Money won’t be enough if Bangladesh’s not self-sufficient” 3 January 2020 Bangladesh needs to be self-reliant in food production as there will not be enough food that money can buy if a crisis or famine breaks out as a fallout of COVID-19, said Agriculture Minister Dr. Abdur Razzaque. Read more here

Government plans to build 6,147 km long road

Chabahar port development raises capacity to handle 8.5m tons goods a year: Official 14 February 2021 Hossien Shahdadi, an official with Sistan-Baluchestan Province Department of Ports and Maritime Organization, said that with more than $1.3 billion of investment, Chabahar Port is one of the most strategically important ports of the country. Read more here

India’s economy could recover and grow 10% in fiscal 2022, ratings agency S&P predicts 16 February 2021 Ratings agency S&P Global Ratings said that India is on track to recover from a pandemic-led economic contraction by next year. South Asia’s largest economy could grow 10% in fiscal year of 2022. Read more here

Pakistan, IMF reach agreement on reforms to release around $500 million 16 February 2021 The package strikes an appropriate balance between supporting the economy, ensuring debt sustainability and advancing structural reform, the fund said in a statement. Read more here

Afghanistan: New grant to improve food security, lessen drought and COVID-19 impacts for rural residents 17 February 2021 The World Bank Board of Executive Directors on February 16 approved a grant from the International Development Association (IDA) of $97.50 million to provide regular and predictable cash support to Afghans affected by
Past Issues

Bangladesh a lucrative investment destination in between India, China: FM 6 January 2021 Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen on Tuesday said Bangladesh, with its 165 million hard-working people in between two large economies like China and India, is a lucrative destination for investment. Read more here.

World Bank expects Pakistan economic growth to average 1.3pc over next to fiscal 2021WB stated that Pakistan's growth is projected to be held back by continued fiscal consolidation pressures and services sector weakness. Read more here.

Current downtrend in export likely to continue till April: Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Export Association (United News of Bangladesh) 7 January 2020 President of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Dr Rubana Huq has said the current downtrend in RMG export will probably continue till April of this year. Read more here.

Covid slump may cause 7.7% GDP contraction in FY21: First Advance Estimate 7 January 2020 India's economy is set for its biggest annual contraction in records going back to 1952 as the rapid spread of coronavirus cases and measures to contain them hurt businesses and households. Read more here.

Prime Minister Khan lauds Pakistani exporters, as India, Bangladesh struggle continue 7 January 2020 Prime Minister Imran Khan lauded Pakistan exporters after the country managed to record significant growth as compared to neighboring India and Bangladesh, which posted a decline during Nov-Dec 2020. Read more here.

Tax collection surpasses Rs 2,205 billion in first half of current fiscal year, says Prime Minister 10 January 2021 Imran Khan lauded the authorities for bringing about much-needed reforms in the taxation system. He called for measures to enhance the number of taxpayers in the country. Read more here.

Government taking steps to provide traders business-friendly environment: President 11 January 2021 President Dr Arif Alvi has urged the business community to take steps for the financial inclusion of differently abled people by providing them jobs according to their skills and talents. Read more here.

Prime Minister launces Pakistan's first instant Digital Payment System 'Raast' 11 January 2021 In a major stride towards achieving greater efficiency in sending and receiving payments and digitization of the economy, Prime Minister Imran Khan launched the country's first instant Digital Payment System called 'Raast'. Read more here.

Bangladesh closer to Least Development Countries (LDC) graduation 12 January 2021 Bangladesh is set to meet the LDC graduation criteria for the second consecutive time to be recommended for graduation during the upcoming triennial review of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) of the United Nations (UN) next month. Read more here.

Social safety net allowances being sent to beneficiaries' mobile wallets: Prime Minister 14 January 2021 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the government is sending allowances under social safety net (SSN) programme directly to the beneficiaries' mobile wallets to get rid of middlemen. Read more here.

Pakistan leads in adopting Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda: UN report 14 January 2021 Pakistan has taken lead in adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), becoming one of the first countries in the world to take up their pledge to transform lives and protect the

tourists 17 February 2021 Sri Lanka is to launch a global campaign to draw tourists to the country after the coronavirus took a serious hit on the industry. The ‘High-Powered Steering Committee for Strategic Management of Global Promotional Campaign’ includes stakeholders from the tourism industry. Read more here.

Curb food adulteration with an iron hand: Prime Minister 18 February 2021 The Prime Minister said this in an address on the National Food Safety Day-2021, with the theme of “Tekslo Unnyan-Somridhho Desh, Nirapod Khadyer Bangladesh” (Bangladesh: A country of sustainable prosperity and safe food). Read more here.

Vaccination programme: Government to give priority to tourism sector employees 18 February 2021 The Government has paid attention to give priority to the personnel engaged in the tourism sector such as hotel employees, tour guides and drivers under the ongoing COVID vaccination programme. Read more here.

Rise in Remittance in 2020: Bangladesh one of three large recipients 20 February 2021 Bangladesh became one of the three large remittance-recipient countries that registered a rise in inward remittance last year, according to a new report of the Economist Intelligence Unit. Read more here.

Nutrition deficiency still prevalent despite country spending billions to address the issue 21 February 2021 The Nepal Demographic Health Survey-2016 found that 41 percent of women between the age of 15 and 49 and 53 percent of children between 6 and 59 months were anemic. Read more here.

India's recession exit gains momentum on services, manufacturing 25 February 2021 India's economy looked ready to leave a sharp downturn behind in the new year, as business and consumer activity showed more signs of gathering momentum in January. Read more here.

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das says need coordinated action between centre, states on tax reduction in fuel prices 25 February 2021 There is a need for coordinated action between the centre and states because there are inherent taxes levied by both” the Governor said adding that calibrated reduction of taxes was important. Read more here.

Moody's term Pakistani banks strong growth despite pandemic 'a credit positive' 25 February 2021 Moody Investor Services in its latest credit outlook, has called the strong profit growth posted by leading Pakistani banks as a credit positive and reflect containment of the pandemic’s adverse effects. Read more here.

Value-addition of horticulture produce crucial to boost exports: President 28 February 2021 Addressing at a seminar on ‘Trade Potential of Pakistan Citrus – From Roots to Trade Routes’, the President said it was important for the country to improve quality standards of local fresh fruit with improved packaging and preservation to attract high-end markets. Read more here.

Prime Minister launches Al-Beruni heritage trail at Nandana Fort in Jehlum 28 February 2021 Prime Minister Imran Khan has launched Al-Beruni heritage trail at Nandana Fort in Jehlum. The project was undertaken as part of the Prime Minister’s vision to promote tourism in line with the National Tourism Strategy 2020-30. Read more here.

Government targets $150 billion remittance in 5th Five-Year Plan 1 March 2021 The government has set an ambitious target of earning $150 billion through remittance between July 2020 and June 2025, according to a document on the 8th Five-Year Plan. Read more here.
How a multilingual education model can help Pakistan increase literacy

A new report by The Citizens Foundation (TCF) and the Thar Foundation has pointed out how countries like Pakistan - where people speak a host of regional and local languages - can adopt a ‘mother tongue-based multilingual education’ model to help increase their literacy rates. Read more here.

Government approves 2 new stimulus packages of Tk 2,700 crore

17 January 2021 To reduce the impact of coronavirus fallout, the government today approved two new stimulus packages of Tk 2,700 crore to boost the cottage, small and medium enterprises, and to develop the living standards of people at the grassroots level. Read more here.

Understanding food poverty and food vulnerability situation

17 January 2021 There is no denying the fact that over time, Bangladesh has performed quite impressively in terms of alleviating poverty. Based on the upper poverty line, from as high as 56.7 per cent during the early 90s, headcount poverty gradually declined to 34.9 per cent in 2010 and then 24.3 per cent in 2016. Read more here.

Modi government creates record! Completes construction of 334 kilometers National Highway in one week

18 January 2021 In the current financial year 2020-21, the Road Transport and Highways Ministry has constructed 8,169 kilometers of National Highways from April 2020 to 15 January 2021, i.e. with a speed of around 28.16 kilometers per day. Read more here.

Tourism recovering

19 January 2021 Hotels and resorts have seen a surge in tourist numbers in the last couple of months as young people are leading the recovery of an industry that had hit rock bottom at the height of the coronavirus pandemic. Read more here.

Prime Minister terms establishment of border markets, vital for prosperity

19 January 2021 Prime Minister Imran Khan has said establishment of border markets is vital for the prosperity of the population living in border areas of Balochistan and merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Read more here.

Labour Market: Government now looking for alternatives

21 January 2021 Mentioning that the employment situation in different countries, especially in the oil-dependent Middle Eastern states, might not remain the same as before due to the pandemic, Read more here.

Economic indicators showing significant improvement

21 January 2021 Planning Minister Asad Umar said economic indicators are showing significant improvement, especially the large-scale manufacturing witnessed an overall surge of 15 percent in November 2020. Read more here.

Sri Lanka reopens to tourists after 10 months

21 January 2021 Sri Lanka reopened to foreign tourists after a nearly 10-month pandemic closure that cut deeply into the Indian Ocean island nation’s lucrative travel industry. Read more here.

Gifting homes to homeless is the biggest festival:

Prime Minister

23 January 2021 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the distribution of 66,189 houses among landless and homeless families across the country under Ashrayan-2 Project as part of the government's pledge to provide houses to all the landless and homeless families. Read more here.

Agricultural products lead export growth in first half

26 January 2021 Export revenues from listed agricultural products lead export growth in first half 2021. He added from this amount of foreign trade, about $34 billion is in imports and about $31 billion is in exports. Read more here.

Prime Minister says $82 billion being invested in ports

2 March 2021 India will invest USD 82 billion in port projects by 2035, raise share of clean renewable energy source in maritime sector, develop waterways and boost tourism around lighthouses as part of port-led development. Read more here.

Pakistan improves position on World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index: Report

2 March 2021 As per World Bank's latest rankings on ease of doing business for 2020, Pakistan has improved its position by 28 points from 136 to 108 which is an unprecedented improvement, report said. Read more here.

India's services sector expands at fastest rate in a year in February; employment falls further: Survey

3 March 2021 The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index rose from 52.8 in January to 55.3 in February, pointing to the sharpest rate of expansion in output in a year amid improved demand and more favorable market conditions. Read more here.

Conduct research to diversify exports: Prime Minister

4 March 2021 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today urged researchers to conduct studies to diversify Bangladesh's export basket alongside modernizing and mechanizing the agriculture sector. Read more here.

India's unemployment rate recovers to pre-Covid level of 6.9% in February: Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)

4 March 2021 India's unemployment rate in February stood at 6.9 per cent, much lower than 7.8 per cent clocked in February 2020, suggesting the unemployment rate has recovered to pre-Covid levels. Read more here.

Pakistan desires to strengthen trade ties with European Union: Foreign Minister

4 March 2021 The Foreign Minister said there are great opportunities of investment in Pakistan. He said despite Covid-19, there has been a significant increase in investment portfolio from European companies to Pakistan. He expressed satisfaction that bilateral trade has also improved. Read more here.

Budget 2021 ‘booster rocket’ for economy, will make this decade ‘Roaring 20s’ for India: Jayant Sinha

5 March 2021 This Budget has focused on supply-side investment and this is going to ensure that the country has a non-inflationary growth for very long period of time. Read more here.

4 female judges of Bangladesh to join UN peacekeeping mission

7 March 2021 Four female judges of Bangladesh are going to join UN peacekeeping mission with special assignment to contribute to reconstruction of judicial system and rule of law in the troubled countries. Read more here.

World Bank approves $120 million to help Bangladesh improve irrigation-based agricultural productivity

10 March 2021 In a press release the World Bank said, “The Climate-Smart Agriculture and Water Management Project will rehabilitate and modernize public Flood Control, Drainage, and Irrigation (FCDI) infrastructures”. Read more here.

First metro rail to open in December

10 March 2021 The long wait of Dhaka city dwellers for a smooth public transport system is set to end in a few months as the first Dhaka metro rail is expected to hit the track by December 2021. Read more here.

Each upazila to get community vision centre:

Prime Minister

11 March Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that the government will set up community eye centres in all upazilas across the
Indian economy estimated to contract by 9.6% in 2020, grow at 7.3% in 2021: United Nations
26 January 2021 The Indian economy, which grew at 4.7 per cent in 2019, will contract by 9.6 per cent in calendar year 2020, as lockdowns and other containment efforts slashed domestic consumption without halting the spread of the disease. Read more here

Trade deficit narrows on falling imports 28 January The trade deficit shrank heavily in the first half of the ongoing fiscal year because of dwindling imports amid the economic slowdown, in a sign of depressed demand and consumption. Read more here

Uplift work: Prime Minister approves PKR500 million grant for each lawmaker 28 January Prime Minister Imran Khan has approved a Rs500 million development grant for each member of National and provincial assemblies under sustainable development goals so they can carry out development schemes in their constituencies. Read more here

India’s ‘get well soon’ budget boosts healthcare spending 135%, opens up insurance 1 February 2021 India boosted healthcare spending by 135% and lifted foreign investment in its vast insurance market on Monday to help revive an economy that suffered its deepest recorded slump as a result of the pandemic. Read more here

Fitch revises Pakistan’s real growth at 1.1pc amid strong external demand 1 February 2021 The Fitch Solutions is its latest Pakistan Country Risk Report-Q2 2021 states that a very likely rebound in the global economy along with a global vaccine rollout will also bode well for exports. Read more here

National Food Safety Day 1 February 2021 National Food Safety Day-2021 with the theme “Sustainable development-rich country, safe food for Bangladesh”, will be observed on 2nd February across the country with a vow to ensure safe food for all in a befitting manner. Read more here

Exports, cheap foreign loans to take a hit for LDC graduation 2 February 2021 The projected loss of exports and grants and higher debt service costs would lead to higher current account deficit, said the study. “Impact assessment and coping up strategies of graduation from LDC status for Bangladesh” prepared by the General Economics Division (GED). Read more here

Prime Minister instructs officials to prepare proposals for bringing down prices of commodities 4 February 2021 Taking note of increase in prices of essential commodities, Prime Minister Imran Khan has directed the officials concerned to take effective measures to provide relief to the people. Read more here

World Bank approved $40m to help Bangladesh increase coverage of electronic government procurement (e-GP) 7 February 2021 To respond to the challenges of COVID 19 pandemic and any other future emergencies, the financing will help add important features to the e-GP system. Read more here

World Bank, Bangladesh sign $200m deal for improved sanitation, water access 9 February 2021 The World Bank and Bangladesh signed a $200 million financing agreement to help 3.6 million people access hygienic sanitation facilities and about 600,000 people access clean water in rural areas. Read more here

United Nations mulling establishment of regional innovation hub in Dhaka 9 February 2021 Encouraged by a vibrant startup ecosystem in Bangladesh, the United Nations Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries along with the UNDP and security allowance to left out groups 11 March 2021 The Department of National ID and Civil Registration, released an additional fund of NPR 3.97 billion to 152 local governments to distribute the allowances to previously left out groups, including single women below 60, partially disabled people, and senior citizens receiving pension from foreign governments. Read more here

Poor internet services may hinder ‘Digital Bangladesh’ vision 14 March 2021 Raising eyebrows over the sudden slow pace of internet, experts opined that it may be sabotage by a vested quarter to hinder the country’s ongoing development pace and create obstacles for building a digital Bangladesh by 2021. Read more here

Women financial inclusion vital for economic growth, stresses Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) 15 March 2021 “50 percent of the country’s asset base as far as human resources are concerned are women, so we would not be doing justice as a country for our economic aspirations” said Governor SBP. Read more here

World Bank approves $200 million to help Bangladesh support urban poor, migrants 17 March 2021 The World Bank today approved $200 million to help Bangladesh provide support and services to low-income urban youth impacted by Covid-19 and returnee migrant workers in order to improve their earning opportunities. Read more here

President calls for removing disparity among different streams of education 17 March 2021 President Dr. Arif Alvi has called for removing disparity among different streams of education in the country by ensuring implementation of Single National Curriculum in Pakistan. Read more here

Prime Minister says his vision is peace in region for sustained economic prosperity in South Asia 17 March 2021 Prime Minister Imran Khan says Pakistan is poised to become the trade and transit hub for the extended region. Read more here

Working for a better future of children: Prime Minister 17 March 2021 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the government is doing everything for providing the children a better tomorrow as they are the future of the country. Read more here

New master plan of major cities to check haphazard expansion: Prime Minister 18 March 2021 Prime Minister Imran Khan said progress was being made on the early completion of the master plan of ten major cities to contain their spread and to allocate separate areas for farming, accommodation and business activities. Read more here

Digital Financial Transactions show double-digit growth in Pakistan: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) As per the SBP Quarterly Payment System Review (QPSR) during Q2FY21, 296.7 million e-Banking transactions valuing PKR 21.4 trillion were carried out, registering a growth of 24 percent by volume and 22 percent by value, over the same quarter last year. Read more here

India expected to register largest increase in child and maternal deaths in South Asia in 2020 amid Covid-19, says United Nations 18 March 2021 India is projected to register the greatest increase in the number of deaths among children under 5 in South Asia in 2020 as well as the highest number of maternal deaths as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupts the country’s health services. Read more here

International Monetary Fund approves $500 million tranche, as Pakistan makes satisfactory progress 25 March 2021 The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a $500 million disbursement to Pakistan for budgetary support after its Executive Board completed delayed reviews of Pakistan’s $6 billion loan program. Read more here
Promotion of trade, tourism imperative for sustainable economic development: President 9 February 2021 President Dr. Arif Alvi on Tuesday said promotion of trade, business and tourism was imperative for sustainable economic development besides bolstering of industrialization and generation of employment opportunities for people. Read more here.

At United Nations, Pakistan calls for debt relief to help poor countries rebuild Covid-19 hit economies 9 February 2021 Pakistan has called for finding a “long-term and comprehensive” solution of the debt problem for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as part of the efforts to build back better from the wreckage left behind by the devastating coronavirus pandemic. Read more here.

Socio-welfare uplift of poor, government’s key responsibility: Prime Minister 10 February 2021 Prime Minister Imran Khan terming uplift of poor and underprivileged a key responsibility of the government said the network of socio-welfare projects would be expanded to benefit the deserving populace amass. Read more here.

Tk 1,000 crore released to construct 50,000 more homes for the homeless: Prime Minister 11 February 2021 Prime Minister Sheik Hasina today said she has released Tk 1,000 crore to construct 50,000 more houses for the homeless and landless people. Read more here.

Pakistan’s blue economy strategy to ensure responsible use of ocean resources: President 13 February 2021 Addressing the inaugural session of 9th International Maritime Conference, the President said Pakistan was transforming into a geo-economic hub and taking effective steps on blue economy for improved livelihoods while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem. Read more here.

b. Regional cooperation and other means of implementation

Iran and Russia preparing meeting on coronavirus vaccines, envoy says 4 January 2021 Iran and Russia are preparing a personal meeting on cooperation in producing the vaccine against the novel coronavirus, Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali said in an interview with Izvestia newspaper published on Sunday. Read more here.

China’s foreign aid agency is all set to make foray into Nepal’s northern region 6 January 2021 For the first time, China’s external aid and development agency, China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) is making a foray into Nepal, pledging to finance 15 pilot development projects in 13 northern districts of the country. Read more here.

DTI aims for 2021 RCEP ratification 4 January 2021 The Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its five trade partners- Australia, China, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand- signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in November. Read more here.

Sri Lanka to ink another deal with the Chinese (Source: Colombo Gazette) 12 January 2021 Sri Lanka is to sign another agreement with China, this time to market tea online. Cabinet has granted approval to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Fujian Star China International Trade Company Ltd to market Pure Ceylon Tea across online and offline platforms within China. Read more here.

EU offers Sri Lanka Rs. 8.26 billion grant 13 January 2021 The European Union (EU) has offered

5,800 billion tomans investment in trade and economic zones of three provinces. Read more here.

50 years of independence: Int’l community lauds Bangladesh’s remarkable progress 27 March 2021 Representatives of the UN and its member states have lauded the remarkable progress of Bangladesh saying it has made tremendous strides over the past five decades and become a development miracle. Read more here.

Southern metro rail to carry nearly 1 million passengers each day 29 March 2021 The government plans to build Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) line 5, commonly known as southern metro rail, in Dhaka targeting to carry 924,000 passengers each day. Read more here.

Turkey prepares bill for those with special needs 28 March 2021 Kemal Çelik, a ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Antalya deputy and the head of Turkey’s Parliamentary Down Syndrome, Autism and Other Developmental Disorders Research Commission, said in a statement that commission deputies are preparing a bill designed to help those with special needs. Read more here.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) approves $300 million for hydropower plant to boost clean energy in Pakistan 30 March 2021 The plant will add 1,143 gigawatt-hours of clean energy annually to the country’s energy mix, enhancing the energy sector’s reliability and sustainability. Read more here.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) bringing regional stability, connectivity, development & prosperity 7 February 2021 CPEC will not only push Pakistan’s economy onto the track of fast development, but also lead the whole region to stability, connectivity, development and prosperity with the active participation of Afghanistan, Central Asian countries and other regional countries. Read more here.

India facilitates transit traffic from Bangladesh to Nepal 8 February 2021 In a big boost to sub-regional connectivity and sub-regional cooperation, India facilitated the transit of fertilizer export to Nepal from Bangladesh via Rohanpur-Singhabad rail route. Read more here.

Bangladesh to help Maldives combat climate change: Prime Minister 10 February 2021 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured visiting Foreign Minister of the Maldives Abdulla Shahid that Bangladesh would extend its all-out support to his country in fighting climate change. Read more here.

Collaboration shown in fighting COVID-19 valuable takeaway, Prime Minister Modi at workshop with 10 nations 18 February 2021 Citing the region’s collaborative effort to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for greater integration among South Asia and the Indian Ocean island countries to deal with their challenges. Read more here.

Asian Development Bank praises Hasina’s leadership in Covid fight 23 February 2021 The
India gives Nepal 'iron clad' commitment on Covid-19 vaccine, supply schedule coming week 17 January 2021 The Narendra Modi government has given iron clad assurances to Nepal that it will be among the first countries to receive India developed twin Covid-19 vaccines, supply schedule of which will be announced in the coming week. Read more here

Bangladesh to get some Covid-19 vaccines from India as gift: Health minister 18 January 2021 Health Minister Zahid Maleque on Monday said that Bangladesh is going to get some Covid-19 vaccines from India as gift. Read more here

Pakistan wants to enhance bilateral ties with friendly countries: President 19 January 2021 President Dr Arif Alvi says Pakistan wants to further enhance bilateral trade, investment, defense and cultural ties with all friendly countries. Read more here

Sign language to be made a recognized language in Sri Lanka 19 January 2021 Sign language will be identified as a recognized language in Sri Lanka for the benefit of the large community in the country suffering from a loss of hearing. Read more here

Bangladesh eyes big opportunities abroad through ‘contract farming’: Foreign Minister 20 January 2021 Bangladesh wants to move fast in a country-wide program to explore friendly countries in "contract farming", especially taking advantage of farming in the Middle East and greater African landscape, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen said. Read more here

India, 'pharmacy of the world', starts COVID vaccine shipments to neighbors 20 January 2021 India started delivering coronavirus vaccines to its neighbors on 20th January, 2021, the foreign ministry said. Tagging off a drive to garner goodwill in an often-fractious region with the first shipment sent to the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. Read more here

One million doses of Covid-19 vaccine to arrive in Nepal from India 20 January 2021 India is providing one million doses of Covid-19 vaccine to Nepal under grant assistance, said Minister for Health Hardayesh Tripathi. The ministry said the country will receive 19 vaccines to Bhutan, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Seychelles from January 20 2021. Read more here

Turkey receives 6.5 million doses of Sinovac vaccine from China 25 January 2021 Turkey received an additional 6.5 million doses of a vaccine developed by China’s Sinovac. Ankara began its nationwide inoculation campaign using Sinovac on January 14, with healthcare workers among the first to receive the shots. Read more here

India to increase cooperation with Sri Lanka in infrastructure projects 26 January 2021 India says it remains committed to assisting Sri Lanka with increased foreign investment and cooperation in infrastructure projects like ports, airports, energy including renewable such as solar and wind. Read more here

Pakistan pledges $25k contribution for United Nations Secretary General’s Peacebuilding Fund 27 January 2021 Pakistan has announced a contribution of $25,000 to the United Nations Secretary General’s Peacebuilding Fund, expressing commitment to multilateral cooperation for peace and conflict prevention. Read more here

Pakistan to get help from China in improving agriculture sector: Imran Khan 30 January The Pakistani government is colloborating with China in learning agricultural techniques under CPEC to enhance yield of crops, modernization of irrigation system and value addition. Read more here

Dhaka for taking US-Bangla relations to strategic level 24 February 2021 US Secretary of State J. Antony Blinken and Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on Tuesday discussed ways to further deepen Dhaka-Washington relations by advancing common goals and mutual interests. Read more here

Prime Minister emphasizes on improving trade links in sub-continent 24 February 2021 Prime Minister Imran Khan emphasized the need to improve trade links among the countries of the sub-continent to bring people out of poverty. Read more here

Prime Minister Imran Khan, Sri Lanka President affirm cooperation at multilateral fora 24 February 2021 Prime Minister Imran Khan and President of Sri Lanka Gotabaya Rajapaksa held a one-on-one meeting at Presidential Secretariat in Colombo. Read more here

India to fund for reconstruction of 25 health posts in Dhading and Sindhupalchowk districts 26 February 2021 A Memorandum of Understanding was penned between India and Nepal. Four MoUs have been penned between the neighboring nations for the reconstruction of as many as 25 health posts in Nepal 12 in Dhading and 13 in Sindhupalchowk district. Read more here

China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) set to become High-Quality Demonstration Project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Foreign Minister 2 March 2021 Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, formally commenced activities to celebrate 70 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. Read more here

Cabinet approves proposal to develop West Terminal of Colombo Port with India 2 March 2021 The West Container Terminal (WCT) at the Colombo South Port will be developed by India’s Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited (APSEZ Consortium). Read more here

Smooth transport connectivity with India may raise Bangladesh's income by 17%: World Bank 9 March 2021 The report titled "Connecting to Thrive: Challenges and Opportunities of Transport Integration in Eastern South Asia" analyses the Bangladesh- Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA), compares it with international best practices, and identifies its strengths as well as gaps for seamless regional connectivity. Read more here

Country received foreign aid worth NPR 5.30 billion in eight months 14 March 2021 According to the Financial Comptroller General Office (FCGO), the collected amount is only 8.77 per cent of the total original target of the government, and 15.14 per cent of the revised target. Read more here

Bangladesh biggest receiver of India-made Covid-19 vaccines 16 March 2021 Bangladesh is the highest recipient of India-made Covid-19 vaccines among a group of 70 countries. Read more here

India to give Bangladesh 109 ambulances 17 March 2021 On the occasion of 50th anniversary of Bangladesh’s independence and Mujib Borsho, India will give 109 ambulances to Bangladesh during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit on March 26-27. Read more here

Prime Minister Hasina: Bangladesh-Pakistan ties have immense potential 19 March 2021 In a letter of felicitation to her Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan on the occasion of Pakistan Day, she stated the commitment of Dhaka towards peaceful and cooperative relations with Islamabad and other neighbors. Read more here

Proposed Kathmandu-Raxaul rail project moves a step ahead 24 March 2021 Nepal and India have
c. Gender equality and empowerment

Pakistan court outlaws 'virginity tests' 6 January 2021 Human rights campaigners have welcomed a decision by a Pakistani court outlawing so-called "virginity tests" in rape examinations. Read more here

Global meet on gender equality gets underway in Kerala 11 February 2021 The International Conference on Gender Equality (ICGE) got underway with Kerala Social Justice and Women and Child Development Minister K K Shailaja emphasizing the need to promote social entrepreneurship in a big way for the uplift of marginalized sections. Read more here

Pakistan stresses gender equality to accomplish global development goals 10 March 2021 Pakistan has called for achieving gender equality, parity, non-discrimination between men and women for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are aimed at fighting poverty, reducing inequality, and addressing climate change. Read more here

At United Nations, Pakistan proposes Global Compact for Women's Empowerment 16 March 2021 At the United Nations, Pakistan has proposed a Global Compact for Women's Empowerment, based on an action plan for mainstreaming their participation in decision-making in public life. Read more here

Pakistan firmly believes in women empowerment, gender equality: Dr. Shireen Mazari 24 March 2021 Minister for Human Rights Dr. Shireen Mazari has said Pakistan firmly believes that economic growth, sustainable development, peace and prosperity can only be achieved through women empowerment and gender equality. Read more here

d. Environmental sustainability and disaster resilience

Government mute as Kathmandu air deteriorates to 'hazardous' levels 5 January 2020 Air quality in Kathmandu Valley deteriorated to "hazardous levels", crossing the 600 mark, fuelling concerns about respiratory complications especially among the elderly, children and Covid-19 patients. Read more here

Sri Lanka among most vulnerable countries to climate change 7 January 2021 Sri Lanka is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change ranking 6th on the Climate Risk Index, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Sri Lanka said today. Read more here

Dhaka's air quality 'hazardous' 10 January 2021 Dhaka, one of the most polluted cities in the world, ranked worst in the Air Quality Index (AQI) on 10th morning. It had a score of 439 at 10:20 am. The air was classified as 'hazardous'. Read more here

India generated around 33,000 tonnes COVID-19 waste in 8 months 10 January 2021 India generated around 33,000 tonnes of COVID-19 biomedical waste in the last seven months, with Maharashtra contributing the maximum (3,587 tonnes) to it, according to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data. Read more here

Fire destroys homes of thousands in Rohingyan camp 3 February 2021 Australia is providing emergency humanitarian aid as a response to the fire incident at Cox's Bazar. Read more here

Uzbekistan, Pakistan discuss railway link project through Afghanistan 3 February 2021 Uzbekistan and Pakistan held the first meeting of the joint working group on trade and economic issues, as well as on a railway project to link the two countries. Read more here

Vaccine diplomacy: India seeks to rival China with broad shipments 7 February 2021 India has approved the shipment of COVID-19 vaccine to Cambodia and plans to supply Mongolia and Pacific Island states, officials said, as supplies arrived in Afghanistan - all part of the country's widening vaccine diplomacy. Read more here

Himalayan glacier breaks in India, around 125 missing in floods 7 February 2021 Around 125 people were missing in northern India after a Himalayan glacier broke and swept away a small hydroelectric dam on Sunday, with floods forcing the evacuation of villages downstream. Read more here

Dozens trapped in tunnel after Himalayan glacier's collapse, scores still missing 9 February 2021 Rescuers raced to free around 35 Indian construction workers trapped in a tunnel, two days after the hydroelectric dam they were helping to build was swept away by a wall of water from a collapsed glacier that barreled down a Himalayan river. Read more here

Bangladesh among top 5 disaster-prone countries in Asia-Pacific 8 March 2021 Latest United Nations report identifies hazard-prone countries with high vulnerability and low response capacity and has found Bangladesh to be among the five most hazard-prone countries in Asia and the Pacific. Read more here

Hatton National Bank's (HNB) quest for the future of renewable green energy in Sri Lanka 9 March 2021 Sri Lanka is among the top three Asian countries with the highest share of renewable energy sources according to a study carried out by REN21 (international policy network which supports sustainable energy future with renewables) in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2019. Read more here
Sri Lanka to demand further compensation from MT New Diamond 16 January 2021 The Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) has decided to seek further compensation from the crude oil tanker MT New Diamond, which caught fire in the seas off Sri Lanka in September 2020. Read more here

Pakistan 5th most vulnerable country to climate change: Report 25 January 2021 Pakistan has been ranked as the fifth-most vulnerable country to climate change, according to the Global Climate Risk Index published by Germanwatch. Read more here

Coronavirus: India approves vaccines from Bharat Biotech and Oxford/AstraZeneca 4 January 2021 India has formally approved the emergency use of two coronavirus vaccines as it prepares for one of the world’s biggest inoculation drives. Read more here

Sri Lanka intensifies lab testing to detect new variant 4 January 2021 Sri Lanka has intensified lab testing of the coronavirus in order to detect the new variant or any other variant that may enter the country. Read more here

Bangladesh to get Oxford Covid vaccine on time as per deal: Beximco 4 January 2020 Beximco Pharmaceuticals, the local partner of Serum Institute of India (SII), assured that Bangladesh will get agreed amount of vaccine doses on time as per agreement. Bangladesh is on a priority list as a result of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s diplomatic efforts, the official said. Read more here

Bangladesh to be the first to get Covid-19 vaccine: Dr Momen says quoting Indian Foreign Minister 4 January 2020 Bangladesh will be the first country to get Covid-19 vaccine from India, said Foreign Minister Dr A K Abdul Momen quoting India’s ministry of external affairs. Read more here

Fear of sub-clusters prevents lifting isolation in some areas 5 January 2021 Police spokesman, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Ajith Rohana said that the isolation status will remain in a number of areas, including in parts of Colombo. Read more here

Random Rapid Antigen Tests to be conducted in vulnerable areas in the country 5 January 2021 Random Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) will be conducted on persons who live in vulnerable areas in the country to identify COVID-19 patients and treat them, Police spokesman DIG Ajith Rohana said. Read more here

Bangladesh approves Oxford- AstraZeneca Vaccine for emergency use 6 January 2021 The government has approved the Oxford University-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine for emergency use to be imported from Serum Institute of India. Read more here

Government allows import/export of COVID-19 vaccine without any value limitation 6 January 2021 The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has amended the regulations to facilitate the import/export of COVID-19 vaccines through courier, at locations where the Express Cargo Clearance System (ECCS) is operational. Read more here

Sri Lanka to sign deal to secure vaccine through COVAX 6 January 2021 Sri Lanka is to sign an agreement to secure the coronavirus vaccine through the COVAX facility. Read more here

Iran begins Covid-19 vaccinations with Russia’s Sputnik V jab 9 February 2021 Iran began its coronavirus vaccination programme, with doctors and nurses the first groups to get jabs of Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine. Read more here

Pakistan to allow private firms to import COVID-19 vaccine, exempt from price caps 11 February 2021 The National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination division had sought out the approval from the special cabinet, to allow exemption from such imports. Read more here

Several countries offering Bangladesh Covid-19 vaccines: Prime Minister 14 February 2021 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said several countries have expressed interest to provide Covid-19 vaccines to Bangladesh, and the country will receive those to ensure vaccination up to rural level. Read more here

World Health Organisation (WHO) in talks with Sri Lanka to provide vaccines for 27% of population 15 February 2021 Sri Lanka was earlier set to receive vaccines from the WHO to cover 20% of the total population. However, the WHO is now considering increasing it to cover 27% of the population in Sri Lanka. Read more here

India to multiply vaccinations amid coverage concerns 16 February 2021 India will increase the number of its COVID-19 vaccination sites by up to five times after administering nearly 9 million shots in a month, amid concerns about the speed of coverage in the country. Read more here

Government of Nepal approves China’s Vero Cell vaccine for emergency use against Covid-19 18 February 2021 The government has approved the ‘Vero Cell’ vaccine manufactured by Beijing Institute of Biological Products Co Ltd (BIBP), China, under Sinopharm, for emergency use against Covid-19 in Nepal. Read more here

Prime Minister instructs authorities to vaccinate monks and other religious leaders 20 March 2021 Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has given instructions to vaccinate monks and leaders of other religions. Army Commander, General Shavendra Silva said that Covid hotspots will be selected to prioritize vaccination. Read more here

India’s Serum Institute says prioritizing domestic vaccine needs, asks for patience 21 February 2021 Serum Institute of India (SII), the world’s biggest vaccine maker by volume asked for patience from foreign governments awaiting their supply of COVID-19 shots, saying it had been directed to prioritise India’s requirements. Read more here

India says virus variants not behind upsurge in cases 23 February 2021 India said mutated versions of coronavirus were not responsible for an upsurge in cases in two states, a potential relief for a country earthquake that is expected to hit much of the city’s coastal areas. Read more here

2020: Bangladesh air world’s worst, again 18 March 2021 South Asia remained the most polluted region of the world with Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan sharing 42 of the 50 most polluted cities worldwide. Read more here

Nepal Government decides to shut schools for four days as air pollution reaches hazardous levels 29 March 2021 According to Sanjay Sharma, a secretary at the Ministry of Education, the government decided to close schools in view of the adverse effect the rising air pollution can have on students’ health. Read more here
WHO Congratulates India On “Largest” Coronavirus Vaccination Drive  16 January 2021

vaccine 23 February 2021 Afghanistan’s request for Russia’s Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine is currently under consideration by the Russian government, and Kabul would like to receive the vaccine as soon as possible. Read more here

All above 60 years of age, 45-plus with comorbidities can get COVID-19 vaccine from March 1 24 February 2021 Everyone above 60 years of age and those over 45 years with comorbidities will be able to get COVID-19 vaccine from March 1 for free at government facilities and for a charge at many private hospitals, the Government of India said. Read more here

6 states contributed to 86.37% of new Covid-19 cases, says government 28 February 2021 Six states continued to record a surge in new cases of the coronavirus cases (Covid-19) in the last 24 hours and contributed to 86.37 per cent of the fresh infections in the country. Read more here

Modi takes home-grown vaccine as India widens immunization drive 1 March 2021 Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was inoculated with the first dose of a home-grown coronavirus vaccine on 1st March, kicking off an expansion of the country’s immunization campaign that began in mid-January with healthcare workers. Read more here

India’s next phase of virus crisis likely to be localised outbreaks 2 March 2021 Experts say that the relatively low hospitalisation and fatality rates in India suggest the coronavirus pandemic is approaching its next phase- largely manageable local outbreaks. Read more here

Covid brought under control with united efforts: Prime Minister 3 March 2021 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the government has been able to successfully face the Covid-19 pandemic with united efforts of all sectors and the situation is now under control. Read more here

Pakistan to get 10 million free coronavirus vaccines from COVAX by June 3 March 2021 Pakistan, Nigeria and Indonesia will be among the biggest recipients of free coronavirus vaccines before June. Read more here

First consignment of vaccine under COVAX facility to arrive on 7th March 3 March 2021 The first consignment of Covid vaccine under the COVAX programme of the World Health Organization will be delivered to Sri Lanka on March 7, State Minister of Primary Health Care, Epidemics and COVID Disease Control Sudarshini Fernandopulle said. Read more here

Prime Minister Oli gets Covid-19 jab as Nepal launches drive for senior citizens 7 March 2021 Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli received the coronavirus vaccine on Sunday, officially beginning the second phase of Covid-19 vaccine drive in the country. Read more here

Nepal among the first Asian countries to receive Covid-19 vaccines from COVAX Facility 7 March 2021 Nepal received its first consignment of the Covid-19 vaccine doses under the COVAX facility- a partnership between CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO-made possible through generous donor support from governments, international organizations, foundations, and the private sector. Read more here

Pakistan urges world to stop spread of fake Covid-19 vaccines 8 March 2021 Pakistan has urged
India hails ‘life saving’ Covid-19 vaccine rollout 17 January 2021 India’s Covid-19 vaccination drive had a successful start with more than 224,000 people receiving their first jabs and just three people hospitalized for experiencing side effects, the health ministry said Sunday, as reports emerged about concerns over a homegrown vaccine. Read more

Provinces, private sector free to import Covid-19 vaccines after Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drap) approval: Asad Umar 17 January 2021 Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar said on Saturday that the federal government would not hold a monopoly on the import of coronavirus vaccines, adding that provinces and the private sector were free to import vaccines subject to approval of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan. Read more

Pakistan registers 300,000 health workers for COVID-19 vaccination, says Umar 17 January 2021 Planning Minister Asad Umar has announced that registration of 300,000 frontline health workers for coronavirus vaccination across the country has been completed. Read more

Vaccination programme to be run from 300 centres in Dhaka: Health Minister 18 January 2021 Health Minister Zahid Maleque has said coronavirus vaccination across the country has been completed. Read more

Indian companies prepare to buy vaccines for employees 18 January 2021 Several Indian companies are making plans to buy Covid-19 vaccines for their employees, just days after the country’s government began one of the world’s largest vaccination drives with healthcare and other frontline workers. Read more

UN agencies supporting mammoth India COVID-19 vaccine rollout 19 January 2021 India has begun what is the world’s biggest COVID vaccination campaign so far, deploying hundreds of thousands of health workers, with the training and support of the UN World Health Organization. Read more

Sri Lankan government plans to vaccinate 50% of population free of charge 19 January 2021 The Government is planning to vaccinate 50 per cent of the population free of charge when the Covid-19 vaccine is available in the country by the end of February or early March. Read more

Fine tuning underway to secure Covid vaccine 20 January 2021 The Health Ministry says “fine tuning” is underway to secure the Covid vaccine for Sri Lanka. Health Services Deputy Director General Dr. Hemantha Herath said all preliminary measures have been completed regarding the acquisition of the vaccine. Read more

Billions in aid needed to help Afghanistan children this year, charity says 20 January 2021 As many as 10 million Afghan children are at risk of not having enough food to eat in 2021, a humanitarian organization said, calling for billions of dollars in aid. Read more

Covid-19: Govt to gradually vaccinate all Bangladeshis over 18 for free: Finance Minister 20 January 2021 Covid-19 vaccine will be provided to all Bangladeshi citizens -aged above 18- for free, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said. Read more

Covid vaccination to start February 8: Health Minister 21 January 2021 The much-sought Covid-19 vaccination in Bangladesh will start from February 8

Afghanistan receives first COVID vaccine shipment under COVAX program 9 March 2021 Afghanistan has received its first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines under the COVAX international vaccine-sharing program. Read more

India, world’s top vaccine maker, denies shortage at home 9 March 2021 India’s government denied any shortage of coronavirus vaccine doses in a big northern state and said it was sending supplies around the country based on demand and consumption patterns. Read more

Maintain highest possible caution 10 March 2021 With the Covid infection rate on the rise, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the people to follow the health safety protocols to check the spread of the virus in the country. Read more

Surge in COVID cases: Educational institutions in various Punjab cities to remain closed for two weeks 10 March 2021 The decision has been taken in a meeting of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) to discuss the fate of educational institutions after surge in coronavirus cases in schools. Read more

Second batch of vaccines from Serum Institute due by end March 11 March 2021 The second consignment of 500,000 COVISHIELD vaccines from the Serum Institute of India is expected to arrive in Sri Lanka by 25th March, Principal Advisor to the President and the Chief of the Presidential Task Force on the Procurement of COVID Vaccine, Lalith Weeratunga said. Read more

Iran starts trial of new homegrown vaccine as campaign lags 16 March 2021 Iran's campaign to inoculate its population against the coronavirus and promote itself as an emerging vaccine manufacturer inched on as health authorities announced that the country's third homegrown vaccine has reached the phase of clinical trials. Read more

Iran unveils another COVID-19 vaccine, Fakhra 16 March 2021 Phase one of a clinical trial for another Iranian COVID-19 vaccine, Fakhra- named after the martyred nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh-kicked off, with his son receiving the first dose. Read more

Turkey ranks 5th in number of delivered vaccines: Erdoğan 16 March 2021 President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Turkey ranks fifth in the world in terms of the number of vaccines delivered. Read more

Need ‘quick, decisive’ steps to stop second Covid-19 wave: Modi tells Chief Ministers 18 March 2021 In a first such warning against an emerging second peak of Covid-19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked states to take quick and decisive steps to check the spread of the virus. Read more

Revised quarantine procedure for travelers issued 18 March 2021 The Ministry of Health has issued a revised quarantine procedure for travelers, including vaccinated travelers. The revised procedure is for Sri Lankans, including dual citizens, and foreigners. Read more

Government to inoculate 2.65 million elderly people 18 March 2021 Sri Lanka is to inoculate 2.65 million elderly people (above 60 years of age) in the country, as per the National Vaccine Deployment Plan of the Ministry of Health (MOH). Read more

All those above 45 years will be eligible for Covid-19 vaccine from April 1 23 March 2021 In a major move, the Union Cabinet decided to open the vaccination drive for everyone above the age of 45 years starting from April 1. Read more

Coronavirus: India temporarily halts Oxford-
Covid-19 vaccination drive: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina instructed the authorities concerned for reducing the age limit from 55 to 40 years- to get registered for COVID vaccine for the 30-60 age group from February 2021. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reiterated her call to the countrymen to wear facemasks alongside maintaining the health guidelines and she also asked the authorities concerned to take prompt measures to check fresh surge in the Covid-19 infection.

Nepal launches its Covid-19 vaccination drive starting with frontline and healthcare workers. Nepal received the first 50 lakh doses of Covidshield, the Covid-19 vaccine developed by Oxford-AstraZeneca and manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII). Nepal to allow unrestricted entry to vaccinated tourists.

Pakistan all set to vaccinate 300,000 health workers as campaign kicks off. Pakistan's richest state, Maharashtra, is considering imposing a 14-day institutional quarantine mandatory for the travellers from the European countries including the United Kingdom.

India's Maharashtra considers total lockdown as virus cases jump. India suffers highest daily coronavirus infections in five months. India reported its first coronavirus case. The vaccination drive has been launched with the one million doses of Covid-19 vaccine that India provided to Nepal last week under grant assistance.

Bangladesh received the first consignment of imported Covid vaccine doses. Bangladesh received the first 50 lakh doses of Covidshield, the Covid-19 vaccine developed by Oxford-AstraZeneca and manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII).

Nepal launches its Covid-19 vaccination drive starting with frontline and healthcare workers. Nepal rolled out its vaccination drive against Covid-19, a little over a year after the country reported its first coronavirus case. The vaccination drive has been launched with the one million doses of Covid-19 vaccine that India provided to Nepal last week under grant assistance.

Prime Minister details vaccine rollout plan. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina unveiled the detailed vaccine roll-out plan in parliament as the consignments of Covid-19 inoculate started reaching Bangladesh. Bangladesh received the first 50 lakh doses of Covidshield, the Covid-19 vaccine developed by Oxford-AstraZeneca and manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII).

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President launches nationwide Covid-19 vaccination campaign 7 February 2021. Health Ministry. The first jabs will use the Sputnik V vaccine provided by Russia.

Iran launches 11th Covid-19 vaccination. Iran rolled out its Covid-19 vaccination drive on 2 February 2021. Iran is set to start administering coronavirus vaccine jabs, reported its Health Ministry. The first jabs will use the Sputnik V vaccine provided by Russia.

COVID vaccine for the 30-60 age group from March- State Minister 8 February 2021. Steps are being taken to provide COVID-19 vaccine to all citizens from 30 to 60 years from March, State Minister of Primary Health Care, Epidemics, and COVID Disease Control Dr. Sudarshani Fernandopulle said. Covid-19 vaccination drive: Prime Minister instruimnet of recipients to 40 8 February 2012 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina instructed the authorities concerned for reducing the age limit from 55 to 40 years- to get registered for Covid-19 vaccination- aiming to expand and accelerate the drive. Read more

India detects 'double mutant' coronavirus variant in western state. India has detected a "double mutant variant" of the novel coronavirus in 206 samples in the worst-hit western state of Maharashtra, a senior government official said.

Health Ministry starts large-scale seroprevalence study. After more than 14 months after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country, the Ministry of Health and Population has now launched a large-scale seroprevalence study.

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