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News Brief

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will hold a videoconference with the officials and public representatives of Rangpur division today at 10am at the Prime Minister's official Ganabhaban residence on the present coronavirus situation of the country. PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told media that Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and private TV channels and radio stations will broadcast the videoconference live. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will preside over a meeting at her official residence Ganobhaban at 11am tomorrow to prepare a fiscal policy on the proposed budget for 2020-21 fiscal year for the country.

The country's Covid-19 death toll hit 177 after 2 more patients died and total number of detected cases soared to 9,455 after 665 people tested positive for coronavirus in 24 hours till yesterday, said Additional Director General (Administration) of Directorate General of Health Services Prof Nasima Sultana in a virtual media briefing at her office. She said a total of 81,066 samples have so far been tested adding 5,368 tests in 31 labs across the country in the past 24 hours. Meanwhile, the total number of cases of recovery reached to 1,063. She said among the two fatalities, one in Narayanganj and one in Rangpur. Of the total 177 deaths, 135 took place in Dhaka division and rests are in other seven divisions. Nasima said 67,739 people are now at quarantine and a total number of 3,98,009 PPE are now in stock.

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday while delivering a brief virtual speech from his secretariat office here on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day said the role of free, independent and responsible media is very important in taking a state forward and reconstructing a pluralistic society. Greeting journalists and media workers marking the day, Information Minister said the country's journalists and others involved in media have been working amid the coronavirus pandemic putting them at risk. The Information Minister said, there are about 1,294 dailies, 1,208 weeklies and four state-run television channels in the country. He said Govt. has so far approved 45 private TV channels, 24 FM radios and 32 community radios most of those are now in operation. He said the statistics proved that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government believe in the freedom of media. About the recent comments of BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, the AL Joint General Secretary said I think it was merely a delirium of a perplexed person. In fact, BNP leaders are involved in the politics of falsehood and never cherish the culture of appreciation, which is a matter of regret.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday after a meeting held in the conference room of the Health and Family Welfare Ministry on "Reopening business in the perspective of COVID-19 situation" here said the government will allow re-opening of businesses with strictly maintaining public health measures in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. The health ministry issued a set of directives including formation of a committee comprising officials of the health ministry and leaders of the garment factories to oversee public health safety at workplaces. Respective factories with coordination of the health ministry have to ensure other necessary facilities for their workers including quarantine, transportation and food.

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid yesterday at a video conference from his residence said the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes has announced that Niko would have to pay \$1billion as compensation to Bangladesh. The state minister said the settlement is scheduled for next September, but it will be delayed due to the ongoing Novel coronavirus situation. Apart from this, the court has also directed to submit assessment report on health affect and environmental loss, which would further increase the losses, he said.

Over four crore people across the country have received relief assistance as the government continues its efforts to mitigate their sufferings in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. A total of 1,24,000 metric tons of rice has so far been allocated for 64 districts while 96,000 metric tons of rice has been distributed among more than 4.07 crore people of 98.18 lakh families as humanitarian assistance till Saturday, an official handout said here yesterday. Besides, the government has so far allocated cash Taka 68 crore to the 64 districts across the country while about Taka 43.18 crore has already been distributed in cash among 2.53 crore people of 53.68 lakh families. A total of Taka 12.45 crore was allocated as baby food aid while about Taka 8.93 crore has so far been distributed among 5.58 lakh people of 2.75 lakh families.

A total of 221 more stranded Bangladeshi nationals arrived here from Mumbai and Kolkata by separate chartered flights yesterday. Among the returnees, 162 Bangladeshi nations arrived here from Mumbai and 59 from Kolkata by two separate special chartered flights of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Biman's Deputy General Manager Tahera Khondoker told BSS. Meanwhile, the government has decided to arrange a chartered flight on May 10 to take home Bangladeshi citizens stranded in the United Kingdom, said a press release of Bangladesh High Commission in London received here yesterday.


The government has provided Taka 23.8 lakh assistance to 169 Qawmi Madrasahs in Feni and Natore districts to distribute the money among the poor and orphan madrasa students to help them cope with coronavirus plight, a BSS report says. Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina provided financial assistance of over Tk. 8.31 crore to 6,959 Qawmi madrasahs across the country on the occasion of holy Ramadan.

Bangladesh Bank (BB) has instructed all banks to transfer the interest or profit for the month of April and May against the existing loans or investments to transfer an interest free blocked account and not to show it in its income account, as per a BB circular issued yesterday. Until further notice, bank cannot impose this two months' interest from the borrowers, the circular added. BB has relaxed regulations for foreign owned or controlled companies operating in Bangladesh to get short-term working capital loans from their parent companies or shareholders abroad, said another BB circular issued yesterday.

The 29th span of the 6.15-kilometre long Padma Bridge would be installed at Mawa point today amid the nationwide shutdown, a BSS report said.

With the personal fund of Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim, a total of 17,000 packets of food items were distributed among the jobless people in Pirojpur Sadar Upazila yesterday amid the coronavirus crisis, said a BSS report.

The government has decided to appoint Md Monirul Islam, currently serving as the Bangladesh Ambassador to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to African Union, as the next Ambassador of Bangladesh to Egypt. Ambassador Islam is a career foreign service officer who belongs to the 10th batch of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) Foreign Affairs cadre, a foreign ministry press release said here yesterday.


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