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**News Brief**

The Homecoming Day of Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina was observed in a befitting manner by the Awami League (AL) yesterday. Marking the day, the ruling party organized a milad and doa mahfil at the AL president's political office in the city's Dhanmondi area after Asr prayers. Meanwhile, President M Abdul Hamid yesterday in a message felicitated Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina on her 40th "Homecoming Day" and praised her contribution to country's democracy, development and public welfare through epoch-making programmes. President Hamid said the homecoming of Sheikh Hasina was a milestone to resume the journey of democracy in Bangladesh which smoothed the path to establish spirit of Liberation War, values of Independence and democracy. President said Sheikh Hasina has taken 'Vision 2021' and 'Vision 2041' programmes to turn the country into a happy and prosperous Sonar Bangla. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the President said, Bangladesh is now being applauded worldwide for combating the global pandemic coronavirus. President Abdul Hamid wished her long life, prosperity and continuous success of her government.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday while speaking at a relief distribution programme at AL president's Dhanmondi political office through a videoconference from his official residence said as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had returned home in 1981, the nation was made free from stigma by holding the trials of war criminals and the killers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Quader, also Awami League General Secretary, said, overcoming COVID-19 crisis, the country would move towards the expected development and progress under the leadership of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday while speaking at a press briefing at his secretariat office here on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> homecoming day of AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said when Awami League President Sheikh Hasina returned home on May 17 in 1981 after a long exile, democracy and the spirit of the liberation came back to the country. Hasan said the AL president returned to the country when Ziaur Rahman introduced "Martial Democracy". The Information Minister said, Ziaur Rahman was compelled to allow AL president Sheikh Hasina to return home due to her firm stance in returning home and the international pressure on Zia. The AL joint general secretary said Sheikh Hasina remained beside the country's people in the last 39 years and she will always remain beside them.

The country's Covid-19 death toll hit 328 after 14 more patients died and total number of detected cases soared to 22,268 after 1,273 new patients tested positive, said Additional Director General (Admin) of Directorate General of Health Services Prof Nasima Sultana in a virtual media briefing. Among the total infections, 19.64 percent patients have recovered while 1.47 percent died so far. She said a total of 1,75,408 samples have so far been tested adding 8,114 tests in 42 labs across the country in the past 24 hours. Nasima said now 49,417 people are at quarantine, 3,248 people are in isolation and 19,15,772 PPE has been distributed so far while 3,35,532 PPE are in stock. Meanwhile, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday while inaugurating "second largest" dedicated temporary hospital in the world with all necessary healthcare facilities for the treatment of COVID-19 patients having 2,000 beds capacity at the Bashundhara Convention Centre in the city, urged the authorities of private hospitals and clinics to continue their healthcare services to the people and said after recruiting a total of 7,000 medical professionals, a process is underway for recruiting 5000 more medical technologists, said an official press release.



State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Dr Md Enamur Rahman yesterday said that government has taken necessary preparations to face cyclone 'Amphan'. As per the warning issued by the Meteorological Department if cyclone Amphan does not change its speed and course, it may hit coastal districts by early morning of May 19, said the state minister while speaking at a press briefing at his ministry's conference room. The State Minister said the district administration have been directed to take necessary steps to increase the number of shelters so that people could maintain social distance at the shelter centers amid COVID-19 pandemic.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Foreign Affairs Ministry yesterday at its 12th meeting held at Sangsad Bhaban here with committee chairman Muhammad Faruk Khan in the chair suggested strengthening economic diplomacy to sustain orders of ready-made garments sector and keep international supply chain intact to limit the country's financial fallout amid and post COVID-19 pandemic period. Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam were present among other members of the committee.

Approximately five crore people of over one crore families across the country have received relief as the government is continuing its humanitarian assistance to mitigate their sufferings in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. As of yesterday, a total of 1,62,817 metric tons of rice have been allocated as relief and of the volume, 1,27,698 metric tons have been distributed across the country, said an official handout here today. The government has so far allocated cash about Taka 91.5 crore for purchasing relief materials including baby food..

Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Iqbal Mahmood yesterday in an urgent message sent to the ACC officers of its district and divisional offices warned that the national anti-graft agency would intensify its surveillance to check corruption in the government's food grain procurement programme. Mahmood asked the ACC officials to take immediate measures once they get any allegation of corruption in the food grains procurement programme.

Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday relaxed foreign exchange regulations to facilitate trade transactions in the wake of coronavirus outbreak. Authorized Dealers (Ads) may allow exporters to extend the tenure of realization of export proceeds up to 60 days, as additional time from specified period of four months from the date of shipment, for bonafide grounds, as per a BB circular issued yesterday. Meanwhile, BB has increased the loan limit of its Export Development Fund (EDF) to US\$30 million from \$25 million, as per another BB circular issued yesterday.

Valiant freedom fighter and Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha Chairperson Mamtaz Begum breathed her last at her Dhanmondi residence in the city in the early hours of yesterday at the age of 74. Meanwhile, President M Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed profound shock and sorrow at the death of former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Professor Advocate Mamtaz Begum. In separate condolence messages, they recalled with profound respect the outstanding contributions of Mamtaz Begum, ex-general secretary of Bangladesh Mohila Awami League, to the country's great Liberation War. They prayed for eternal peace of her departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

The government has appointed Professor Shibli Rubayat Ul Islam, who teaches banking and insurance at Dhaka University, as chairman of Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) for the next four years. Prof Shibli, who had been heading Sadharan Bima Corporation as its chairman for about three and a half years, got the new assignment.

  
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