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News Brief

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday while talking over phone with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who called her for extending Bangla Nabo Barsho and Ramadan greetings to her and the people of Bangladesh said all the countries of the SAARC region will have to work in unison to deal with the ongoing coronavirus crisis. PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told that both the countries pledged to work together to boost food production to offset the possible food crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic. Both the Premiers also agreed to advance the initiatives that the SAARC countries took to fight the COVID-19 in a videoconference held last month. The Indian Prime Minister paid tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the occasion of his birth centenary. The Premier thanked Prime Minister Modi for supplying aid to Bangladesh, both in terms of medical supplies and capacity building. Meanwhile, minutes after his talks, Premier Modi in a tweet message said our relationship with Bangladesh will continue to be one of our highest priorities. In an official statement issued in New Delhi said the Indian Premier thanked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her contribution of USD 1.5 million to the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund. The Premier ensured India's readiness to help Bangladesh in containing the spread of COVID-19 and in mitigating the health and economic impact of the pandemic.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday while talking with her Swedish counterpart Stefan Lofven over phone expressed firm optimism that Bangladesh could fulfill the orders of the readymade garment products of global buyers despite the coronavirus outbreak. PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told during the 15-minute conversation, the two leaders discussed trade and business issues, particularly the RMG sector. In this connection, the Swedish premier assured that his country won't cancel any order of Bangladesh regarding the RMG products.

The country's Covid-19 death toll hit 155 after eight more patients died and total number of detected cases soared to 7,103 after 641 people tested positive for corona virus in 24 hours till 2:30 pm 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 59,701 samples have so far been tested adding 4,968 tests in 26 labs across the country in the past 24 hours. Meanwhile, 11 more patients recovered in past 24 hours raising the total number of cases of recovery to 150. She said among the eight fatalities, four are in their 60s, two in their 50s, and two in their 30s. Of them, six are in Dhaka and two others in outside Dhaka. Nasima said 76,382 people are now at quarantine and nearly 1340 people have now been kept in isolation. She said a total number of 3,58,334 PPE are now in stock.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday after visiting a 2,000-bed isolation center at the Bashundhahra Convention Centre in Kuril in the city said there are 20,000 isolation beds in the country and 4,500 more isolation beds have been prepared for expanding healthcare facilities for COVID-19 patients, an official release said. The health minister said isolation centers with 4500 beds in the city have nearly been prepared and these centers will be handed over to the government within one week. He said there is a total of 10,394 oxygen cylinders at all dedicated COVID-19 hospitals and isolation units. There are 13,745 oxygen cylinders in hospitals at eight divisions, while specialized and many medical college hospitals also have sufficient stock of the cylinders. A process is underway for procuring of 3,050 oxygen cylinders. Health and Family Welfare Minister joining through online with Textiles and Jute Minister and Gazi Group Chairman Golam Dastagir Gazi yesterday inaugurated a first ever private polymerase chain reaction laboratory or PCR lab set up by Gazi Group at Rupganj upazila in Narayanganj district to facilitate diagnosis of COVID-19 virus free of cost for all.

Agriculture Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque yesterday while visiting paddy harvesting in haor areas in Sunamganj said 75 percent Boro paddy in the country's vulnerable areas have been harvested. Razzaque said the government has made arrangement to allow workers from other districts to travel to haor areas for paddy harvesting. Besides, the government has given tools to haor farmers for harvesting and will provide medical assistance to anyone diagnosed with coronavirus. He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has announced a grant of Tk 1 lakh if someone dies in a lightning strike while doing agricultural work. The Minister distributed two harvesters among the farmers. Planning Minister M A Mannan who was also present in the occasion said the government is giving great importance to health and agriculture sectors.

Information Minister and Awami League Joint General Secretary Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday expressed profound shock and sorrow at the death of senior journalist Khandaker Mohitul Islam Ranju who died of stroke while undergoing treatment at a city hospital yesterday at the age of 68. In a condolence message, he prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

Foreign minister Dr A K Abdul Momen yesterday while inaugurating a call centre, named "Probash Bondhu," for providing health advice to expatriate Bangladeshis living in Saudi Arabia urged the expatriate Bangladeshi workers not to return home unless they are forced to do so amid COVID-19 pandemic, an official release said. The Foreign Minister said Bangladesh government instructed its foreign missions to extend all possible cooperation to the expatriates.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anisul Huq joining in a web seminar Organized by the United Nations Global Compact held in Washington DC has said public-private joint efforts are needed to tackle the ongoing coronavirus crisis, an official release said. Anisul further said the government is working relentlessly to ease the sufferings of commoners amid the ongoing crisis and managed to reach emergency aid to 70,67,930 families till now.

Local Government Division Minister Md Tazul Islam yesterday while presiding over an inter-ministerial review meeting on the dengue prevention initiatives at Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority Bhaban said if an environment conducive to mosquito breeding is found in the buildings or premises of the government and non-government offices, the responsible people will be fined by conducting mobile courts which will begin after May 10.

State Minister for Industries Kamal Ahmed Mojumder yesterday while distributing daily necessities to the people at Mirpur area said the government will keep continuing its humanitarian food support for all jobless people amid the crisis, according to a press release.


The Islamic Foundation (IF) yesterday urged all television channels not to broadcast the Tarabi prayers live in the holy month of Ramadan, a press release said.

The Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Ministry yesterday issuing separate notifications has suspended one more Union Parishad (UP) chairman and three UP members for irregularities in distributing relief goods. A total of 39 public representatives have so far been suspended over the relief scam, said a press release.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has extended its ongoing flight suspension on all international and domestic routes till May 15 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Biman said in a notice.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the support from the Australian government, will provide technological support to Bangladesh, a press release said. In addition, 20,000 poor people will receive cash or in-kind support delivered through UNDP's existing projects and four city corporations will receive 5,000 PPE kits for urban waste cleaning workers.

Around 25 lakh Mobile Financial Service accounts have been opened in the readymade garment sector since April 4 to provide salaries and allowances to its workers and employees through mobile banking, said BGMEA to media.


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