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### News Brief

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday in her speech through video message in the 76th Commission Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok reiterated her call to the international community to combat the coronavirus pandemic together, saying that it is also showing 'silver lining' in the change of global efforts to deal with the climate change. She also placed three fundamental ocean issues to bolster economic cooperation among member countries of the UN body.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked all concerned to take prompt measures relating to reconstruction of damaged houses and distribution of cash incentive and relief materials among the people affected by the cyclone 'Amphan' that made landfall in Bangladesh on Wednesday evening, said a press release of the Prime Minister's Office. The PMO, particularly its secretary and directors, have already started working on the matter in coordination with the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of the cyclone-affected districts and decided to continue the efforts even on the holidays following the premier's directives. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday approved an allocation of Taka 25 crore for paying salary and allowances of the officials and employees of the municipalities across the country from her relief and welfare fund this morning, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told media. As many as 12,000 permanent officials and employees of 328 pourasabhas and their 20,000 cleaners, recruited through outsourcing, will be brought under the facilities.

Bangladesh yesterday recorded the biggest single-day spike of deaths of 22 people from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), raising the total number of fatalities from the pandemic to 408 and reported 1,773 fresh positive cases, the highest single-day jump, increasing the virus caseload to 28,511, said Additional Director General (Admin) of Directorate General of Health Services Prof Nasima Sultana in a virtual media briefing. Among the total infections, 19.47 percent patients have recovered while 1.04 percent died so far. She said a total of 2,14,114 samples have so far been tested adding 10,262 tests in 47 labs across the country in the past 24 hours. Nasima said now 54,382 people are at quarantine 3,897 people are in isolation and over 2007,322 PPE were distributed and 3,51,707 are in stock. Meanwhile, the Health Ministry yesterday received one thousand doses of a generic version of Remdesivir - the intravenous drug from Beximco Pharmaceuticals. Beximco has decided to provide Bemsivir free of cost to all those severely ill patients of government hospitals. While talking about the drug, the Health Minister Zahid Maleque said, the Department of Drug Administration has initially given permission to six companies to manufacture generic versions of Remdesivir. These drugs need more analysis before being brought to market.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday in a virtual press briefing on contemporary affairs from his official residence here said the government has once again set a rare example in disaster management by facing the cyclone 'Amphan' properly. The Minister said the government took all necessary preparations in tackling the super cyclone. Quader, also Awami League General Secretary, said the government and the Awami League would remain beside the affected people in addressing the disaster aftermaths, their rehabilitation and repairing the damaged polders.

Super cyclone 'Amphan' caused a loss of Taka 1100 crore as it damaged homesteads, roads, crops, coastal embankments and fish farms and claimed at least 10 lives across the country on Wednesday, State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Ministry Dr Md Enamur Rahman said this while addressing a virtual press briefing at his offices at the secretariat here this afternoon. Dr Enam said the ministries of fisheries and livestock, water

resources and agriculture ministries and Local Government Division (LGD) have given a primary estimation of loss to the sectors while some other ministries reported no such casualties caused by the super cyclone 'Amphan'. He said the giant cyclonic storm claimed at least 10 lives, including a volunteer of Disaster Management and Relief Ministry.

Agriculture Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque yesterday in a virtual view-exchange meeting from his official residence here said the cyclone Amphan wrecking havoc on coastal areas of the country extensively damaged crops on about 1,76,007 hectares of land yesterday. Razzaque said various stimulus packages, including distribution of fertilizers and seeds and providing cash assistance, would be announced in upcoming Aman season to help the cyclone-affected farmers minimise their losses. Besides, the Agriculture Minister said, loans will be distributed at four percent rate among the affected farmers and fruit producers. On the other hand, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Shahab Uddin said his ministry has formed four committees to assess the loss and damage caused by the cyclone Amphan. The bodies were asked to submit their reports within three working days, he said.

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid yesterday while holding a meeting with top officials of different subordinate bodies of Power Division through videoconference has asked the officials concerned to take immediate steps to restore electricity to cyclone Amphan-affected areas across the country within 24 hours. He also asked the officials to take steps to supply electricity to hospitals through emergency generators, if necessary. The directives came from the State Minister against the backdrop of the report that around 20 million electricity connections were cut off when cyclone Amphan hit the country's south western region on Wednesday night.

Over 5.5 crore people of 1.25 families across the country have received relief as the government continues its humanitarian assistance. As of yesterday, a total of 1,72,467 metric tons of rice was allocated as relief and of the volume, 1,42,880 metric tons was distributed among over 5.4170 crore people of 1.2242 crore families across the country, said an official handout. The government has so far distributed Taka 66.6073 crore among 3.4266 crore people of 73.15 lakh families. Besides, While Taka 16.7019036 crore has been distributed as baby food aid among around 1088,598 people of 5,13,485 families across the country.

The European Union has decided to provide 334 million euro to Bangladesh for helping the country in its fight against COVID-19 pandemic under its 'Team Europe' initiative, a press release issued by EU Bangladesh office said yesterday. Of the fund, it said, 263 million euro will be allocated to Bangladesh government to mitigate the economic and social impact of COVID-19 while 64.8 million euro will be used to scale up interventions through the United Nations and NGO partners for vulnerable Bangladeshi host communities and Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar.

The government, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has formally inaugurated first two Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) of COVID-19 in Cox's Bazar for Rohingyas and host Bangladeshi communities there. These two SARI ITCs will serve the needs of almost 200 COVID-19 suspected patients suffering from moderate to severe symptoms, according to a press release issued by UNHCR here yesterday.

The results of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent examinations will be published on May 31. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will publish the results and other statistical data on the exam results through a videoconferencing from her official residence Ganabhaban at 10 am on the day, said an official press release yesterday.

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