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News Brief

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given necessary directives to the authorities concerned to contain the novel coronavirus pandemic. The Premier issued the instructions at a meeting on the latest COVID-19 situation at Ganabhaban last morning. At the meeting, the Premier reviewed the measures taken so far to stem the transmission of the deadly virus, plan for procurement of medical equipment and future initiatives to fight the COVID-19.

President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have conveyed their heartfelt felicitations and warmest greetings to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on her 94th official birthday, which falls on the second Saturday in June. In separate messages sent on June 13, both the President and the Prime Minister have wished Her Majesty's good health, happiness, and long life as well as the continued peace, progress and prosperity of the friendly people of the United Kingdom.

Bangladesh yesterday recorded 43 more fatalities from the novel coronavirus in a daily count, raising the death toll from the pandemic to 1305. At the same time recovery count rose to 38,189 after another 1925 patients were discharged from the hospitals during the period. Directorate General of Health Services-DGHS came up with the disclosure at its daily health bulletin. The country also saw further rise in coronavirus cases with the detection of 4,008 new cases, the steepest jump in a single day, taking the total number of cases to 98,489. A total of 17,527 samples were tested at 59 authorised labs across the country during that time, DGHS added. Director General of DGHS Prof. Abul Kalam Azad has said, studies are underway in line with medical protocols to examine the efficacy of the combination of two drugs Ivermectin and doxycycline in curing COVID-19 patients. The combination has been developed recently by a team led by a senior Bangladeshi doctor who claimed that it worked very well in curing the virus at a minimal cost. Bangladesh-based global health research institute ICDDR'B has already launched the clinical trial of the two-drug combination.

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen while addressing a video conference of visiting Chinese medical team with the doctors of Sylhet, Chattogram and Dhaka yesterday underlined the need for enhancing initiatives to boost up international cooperation in combating COVID-19 pandemic. The Minister thanked the visiting medical team as well as the people of China mentioning that Chinese government, Ali Baba Foundation, Jack Ma Foundation and many other state-owned Chinese firms have contributed various medical supplies in substantial numbers to Bangladesh.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader has said, since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, BNP has been making blind criticism and negative statements against the government without standing beside the country and the nation amid the crisis. The Minister made the remarks while speaking at a virtual press briefing on contemporary affairs from his official residence yesterday. Highlighting various initiatives of the government to tackle the coronavirus crisis, the Minister asked the BNP leaders to extend their hands to the government in implementing the initiatives and stand by the country's people amid the ongoing crisis.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud has expressed his utter resentment over the uploading of obscene and indecent contents on webseries and said, the government would take legal actions against those publicising illegal and immoral web contents. The Information Minister while addressing a press briefing at his ministry yesterday also said, as per the Act, the people who publicise these types of contents could be arrested and the offender will have to face the highest 10 years of imprisonment. Responding to a query Dr. Hasan Mahmud said, identifying high, medium and less coronavirus affected areas is going on. Different developed nations that are in delicate stages have opened their all activities including economic activities for protecting livelihood, the Minister said. A report, published just the previous day, showed that Bangladesh is one of the

lowest countries in the death ratio among the Coronavirus affected people, he mentioned. State Minister for Information Dr. Murad Hasan and Information Secretary Kamrun Nahar, among others, were present on the occasion.

Agriculture Minister Dr. Md. Abdur Razzaque has said, the government is giving emphasis on cultivating high-yielding variety crops reducing less productive variety ones to face possible food crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said this while inaugurating a free online seed distribution programme arranged by Bayer Crop Science from his official residence yesterday.

Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder while interacting with the concerned people of Barishal division through video conference from his official residence yesterday said, paddy will be collected as per the pre-announced price of the government. To keep the price rate stable, he asked the officials concerned to expedite the government collection in this regard. The Minister said, legal action will be taken against the persons who will be involved with any irregularities.

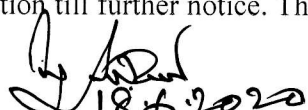
The United States at a special online conference titled "Bangladesh Forward: Avenues for Recovery and Growth" jointly organised by the Prime Minister's Office and the US Chamber of Commerce's US-Bangladesh Working Group yesterday held in view of the novel coronavirus situation, expressed its keen interest to invest more in Bangladesh's different sectors alongside boosting bilateral trade. Prime Minister's Private Industry and Investment Advisor Salman F Rahman, State Minister for ICT Division Zunaid Ahmed Palak, Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Md. Ziauddin, US Ambassador in Dhaka Earl R Miller, among others, took part in the conference. At the conference, Bangladesh and the United States decided to form a working group to further expand joint investment and trade between the two countries. The US and Bangladesh business leaders also agreed to examine the issue of formation of Bangladesh-US Trade Council and hold a number of technical-level meetings to increase bilateral trade and investment. PM's Principal Secretary Dr Ahmad Kaikus and Senior Vice President of South Asia, US Chamber of Commerce Nisha Biswal jointly moderated the programme.

Kits developed by Gonoshasthaya Kendra are not effective to detect suspected coronavirus cases. Vice-Chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Prof. Dr. Kanak Kanti Barua at a press conference at the BSMMU yesterday said, eleven per cent patients could get accurate results of coronavirus using Gonoshasthaya Kendra kits, if they are tested within one week after developing symptoms while 40 per cent patients could get accurate results of the virus within two weeks of their symptoms. Gonoshasthaya Kendra kits could be used for 70 per cent coronavirus patients after three weeks of their infections, the BSMMU VC said.

The government is continuing relief distribution across the country as part of its humanitarian assistance to mitigate people's sufferings in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Till June 16, about 2,11,000 metric tonnes of rice has been allocated as relief while the government has already distributed 1,76,389 metric tonnes of rice to around 6.7826 crore people of 1.5460 crore families across the country, said an official handout. The government has so far allocated about Taka 123 crore in cash as relief for distribution, it said.

Local Government Division in a notification issued yesterday said, a total of 100 public representatives -30 UP chairmen, 64 UP members, a zila parishad member, four municipality councillors and one upazila vice-chairman have so far been suspended so alleged irregularities in cash aid and relief distribution among the destitute since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak.

Maritime ports of Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Mongla and Payra have been advised to hoist local cautionary signal number three as a deep convection is taking place over the North Bay and adjoining areas, said weather bulletin last evening. All fishing boats and trawlers over the North Bay have been advised to come close to the coast and proceed with caution till further notice. They have also been advised not to venture into the deep sea.


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