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## News Brief

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has announced introduction of “special health insurance” for physicians, nurses and others working in containing the coronavirus. The Premier made this announcement while exchanging views this morning with the public representatives and officials of the 15 districts in Chattogram and Sylhet divisions through a videoconference on the present coronavirus situation in the country. The Premier said, the government wants to reward the brave health workers, including doctors, nurses and others who are working day and night to provide health care services to the people in the critical time. To this end, a special health insurance scheme amounting Taka 5 lakh to Taka 10 lakh will be introduced to encourage them, she said. Sheikh Hasina came down heavily on those doctors and nurses who are not performing their responsibilities in this critical time and hinted at taking stringent action against them. Referring to announcement of Taka 72,750 crore stimulus package to overcome the possible impact on the country’s economy, she directed all concerned to spend the money properly. She issued a strong warning against corruption in this regard. The Prime Minister reiterated her call to officials concerned to prepare a list of the distressed people who remain out of the social safety net programmes and provide food to them.

Abdul Mazed, a key fugitive convict in the killing of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, has been arrested. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan talking to media this morning said, Abdul Mazed has been arrested and he'll soon be produced in court. Reports in the media at various times indicated that Mazed was absconding in neighbouring India. On whether he had been extradited from India, the Home Minister said, "We found him in Bangladesh. May be fears over the coronavirus brought him back home."

The Cabinet has directed the law enforcement agencies and the local administration to be more alert and strict to apply the social distancing and self-quarantine guidelines alongside carrying out massive awareness-raising campaign to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus in the country. The directives came at the weekly meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair at Ganabhaban yesterday. The Cabinet also requested all to offer prayer at home on the holy night of Shab-e-Barat as it is a nafal prayer and Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) used to offer it at home. During the meeting, the Cabinet also fixed the office time during the month of Ramadan from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm for all offices of government, semi-government, autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies. As per the decision, all offices will have a 15-minute break for Zohr prayers from 1:15 pm to 1:30 pm. The Cabinet also gave a final approval to a draft of Fish and Fish Products (Inspection and Quality Control) Law, 2020 by increasing jail terms from six months to maximum seven years for adulterated fish production and marketing to local and international markets.

The coronavirus claimed 3 more lives and infected 35 others increasing the toll to 12 and number of infected people to 123 in the last 24 hours. IEDCR in its virtual media briefing yesterday informed among the 123 coronavirus cases, 64 were found in Dhaka, 23 in Narayanganj, 11 in Madaripur and five in Gaibandha. The rest of the cases were reported from elsewhere. Meanwhile, Health Minister Zahid Maleque speaking at a meeting with concerned officials under his ministry in Dhaka yesterday urged all to be more cautious against COVID-19 in the next one month as the community transmission of the virus began.

Please Turn Over

The seventh session of the 11th Jatiya Sangsad will begin at 5:00pm on April 18. President Md. Abdul Hamid yesterday summoned the session.

The Prince of Wales, Prince Charles in a letter sent yesterday extended his sincere thanks to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her letter in which she had wished Prince Charles's early recovery from the novel coronavirus. Prince Charles also appreciated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her strides to contain the lethal virus in Bangladesh.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader while addressing a press conference at his official residence in the city urged all political parties including BNP to stand by the people shunning the politics of blame-game during the country's ongoing crisis period triggered by the global pandemic. The Minister further said, movements of public transports other than the emergency services will remain suspended until April 14 as the general holidays have been extended till the date.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud in an online statement from his official residence yesterday castigating BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's statement over the stimulus package announced by the government said, BNP has failed to understand the essence of the stimulus. Before making such comments, Fakhrul should have known thoroughly about economic stimulus package, he added.

A total of 178 Russian nationals those were stranded in Bangladesh due to COVID-19 pandemic left Dhaka for Russia last evening by a special chartered flight. Earlier, nationals from the USA, Japan, Malaysia and Bhutan also left Bangladesh by chartered flights amid suspension of regular flights.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs in an urgent notice released yesterday directed all to avoid mosques and offer prayers at home to prevent the transmission of fast-spreading coronavirus. It asked people to offer Zohr prayers at home instead of Jum'a on Friday considering the current situation of coronavirus. It also asked the people of other regions to offer prayers at home instead of congregation at religious institutions.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday issued some directives asking for closing the kitchen markets and the super shops in the city by 7pm and grocery shops in the residential areas by 2 pm to prevent the spread of coronavirus. However, the drug stores and other emergency services will remain out of purview of the directives.

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