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From: PIO, PID, Dhaka
Fax: 9540553/9540026
E-mail: piddhaka@gmail.com
Web: www.pressinform.gov.bd

News Brief

The nationwide holiday has been extended until April 11 to prevent COVID-19 in the country. A circular issued by the Public Administration Ministry in this regard yesterday said, the emergency services like power, water, gas, fire, cleanliness, telephone and internet services would remain beyond the purview of the holidays alongside transportation of food, medical equipment, germicides agricultural goods, fertilizer, industrial goods, other essential products of daily necessities. The order said, restrictions on the movement different modes of public transports like train and bus services and water vessels would be relaxed in phases. It said Bangladesh Bank would revise the current makeshift arrangements about the banking operations gauging the people's necessities.

One more coronavirus patient died in the last 24 hours raising the death toll to six in the country. Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque a virtual media briefing of IEDCR confirming this said, the number of coronavirus cases has stood at 54 as three more people have been infected by the lethal virus. As during the last 24 hours till yesterday, one coronavirus infected people have recovered and the number of the recovered patients stood at 26.

The government has launched COVID-19 testing laboratories in so far five major hospitals across the country against a plan to introduce the service at 15 healthcare facilities by this week. The Health Ministry sources yesterday said, BSMMU and ICDDR,B the centres in capital where the testing labs were launched. The testing facility was introduced in Rajshahi while 10 more similar laboratories are expected to be set up in next three or four days across the country including Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader while speaking at a press briefing in Dhaka yesterday said, BNP criticises the government but does not stand by the country's people during the ongoing coronavirus crisis. He urged the BNP leaders to stand by the people, refraining from reaping political gains in the ongoing hard situation. About the progress of Padma Bridge construction, Obaidul Quader said, with the construction of the last pillar, about 86.75 percent work of the main bridge has already been completed. Earlier in the day, he distributed coronavirus preventive materials among different hospitals at the AL president's Dhanmondi political office.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud has said, BNP is looking for finding out mistakes of the government instead of helping it to combat the coronavirus epidemic. He said this while addressing a views-exchange meeting with leaders of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists and Dhaka Union of Journalists in Dhaka yesterday. He expressed his optimism that the coronavirus epidemic could be prevented with the help of all quarters including the journalists of the country. BFUJ and DUJ handed over to the Information Minister a letter containing a number of demands for incentives for the journalists on coronavirus situation on behalf of the journalists.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister A S M Rezaul Karim while talking to reporters in Dhaka yesterday said, the government has taken all necessary steps to address the crisis of milk, eggs, fish and meat during the ongoing precarious situation caused by the coronavirus.

Environment, Forests and Climate Change Minister Md. Shahab Uddin yesterday joined the distribution of essential commodities among around 1,700 poor families at Barolekha and Juri upazilas in Moulvibazar. Meanwhile, State Minister for Industries Kamal Ahmed Mojumder yesterday distributed essentials and sanitizers among the poor people at Mirpur area in the city.

Please Turn Over

Bangladesh Army will resort to tough action from today against people not maintaining social distancing and violating home quarantine rules to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Meanwhile, the government yesterday instructed the authorities concerned to postpone all the programmes of Pohela Boishakh to avoid mass gatherings aiming to contain the spread of coronavirus.

The Ministry of Finance has revealed the guideline for disbursement of the Taka 5,000 crore stimulus package for the export-oriented industries announced earlier by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to help those overcoming the impact of the global coronavirus pandemic. It said, those industries which usually exports at least 80 percent of their overall production would be able to avail this fund.

The committee at the upazila level to check spread of coronavirus has been entrusted with proper burial of coronavirus-related dead bodies. In this regard, at least 10 people including 3 women from each locality will have to be selected as volunteers for taking measures for the funeral.

The USA Embassy in Dhaka is going to charter another flight from Bangladesh for those US citizens who opted to go back home on their personal choice amid the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, more than 300 Japanese nationals stranded in Dhaka are set to leave for Tokyo by a special chartered flight of Biman Bangladesh airlines this morning.

Saudi Arabia has asked Muslim pilgrims to wait until there is more clarity about the coronavirus pandemic before planning to attend the annual Hajj. The Minister for Hajj and Umrah of the kingdom made the call on the state TV recently.

BGMEA sources said, a total of 1,082 factories reported 932.63 million pieces worth \$2.95 billion export cancelled or held up affecting 2.14 million workers until yesterday. Meanwhile, Tom Tailor Sourcing Limited, Bangladesh Liaison Office, has decided to donate one-day salaries of its employees to the BGMEA fund.

United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh and United Enterprises & Co Ltd have signed a MoU in Dhaka yesterday to aid collaborative response during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bangladesh plans to release 3,000 prisoners, who are facing trials in different cases, amid the coronavirus outbreak in the country. The jail authority has sent a proposal regarding the matter to the Home Ministry along with a list of the inmates.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society has undertaken a plan to provide food assistance to some 75,000 helpless and low-income families across the country affected due to spread of Novel Coronavirus, said a press release yesterday.

Former Land Minister Shamsur Rahman Sherif MP, a Freedom Fighter and Language Hero died at a Hospital in Dhaka this morning at the age of 80. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed deep shock at the death of Shamsur Rahman Sherif.

Banks in the countries started implementing single digit 9 percent interest rate for all kinds of loans except credit cards in compliance with the government directives. All private banks started implementing the order from yesterday while state-owned banks began it much earlier.

The World Bank has approved \$350 million grant for three projects to help the displaced Rohingya in Cox's Bazar district, said a press release received in Dhaka yesterday.


Surath Kumar Sarker
Principal Information Officer
Phone- 9546091