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### News Brief

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has announced four new stimulus packages of Tk 67,750 crore to overcome the possible economic shock from the ongoing shutdown enforced due to the deadly COVID-19 outbreak. With the previously announced Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package, the amount of the whole package now stands at Tk 72,750 crore which will be 2.52 percent of the GDP. The announcement came from a press conference of the Prime Minister held at her official residence Ganobhaban today.

Two more people died from coronavirus in Bangladesh in the last 24 hours, raising the death toll to eight. Nine people were diagnosed with COVID-19 during the period, taking the total of number of such cases in the country to 70. IEDCR informed this in a virtual briefing in Dhaka yesterday. It said 553 samples were collected in 24 hours of which 443 samples tested. Of these, eight have been identified at the IEDCR and another one outside Dhaka. Four new patients have made full recovery and returned home while the total number of recovered patients is now 30. Director General of DGHS Professor Dr. Abul Kalam Azad at the briefing said, so far 4, 28,060 PPEs have been collected and of them, 3, 66,650 PPEs were distributed at different hospitals of the country, while the remaining are in stock. He said, the country had 92,000 test kits, of which 21,000 were distributed at different hospitals. He also added, one lakh more kits will be collected by Wednesday next. He also said, the government has formed a group of medical professionals comprising 12,779 physicians to provide Medicare services to the people.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque has urged the authorities of private hospitals and clinics to continue their healthcare services to the people. If private hospitals and clinics do not provide health services, the government will take stern action including cancellation of licenses. The Minister made the caution while visiting the dedicated corona beds at Kurmitola General Hospital in Dhaka yesterday.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader has said, the statement of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir over the COVID-19 is 'an inconsistent delusion' of a failed politician. The Minister at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday said, when the entire world stands on the same platform to fight coronavirus together, such comment of Fakhrul misleads the country's people. The Minister also said, the public transport services excepting the emergency goods carrying transports will remain suspended across the country till April 11 aiming to contain the spread of coronavirus. He said, trucks, covered vans and the vehicles carrying medicine, fuel and perishable goods will remain out of its purview but those vehicles would not be allowed to carry passengers. He also said, people will be able to renew their driving licenses and fitness of vehicles with regular fees up to June 30 next if the validity of their driving licenses and the fitness certificates of vehicles expire during the general holidays announced by the government.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud urged the owners and practitioners of private hospitals across the country to stand by the people during the ongoing catastrophe triggered by the global pandemic COVID-19. He came up with the remarks while distributing antiseptic soaps, hand sanitizers and masks at AL president's Dhanmondi political office in Dhaka yesterday. The Information Minister bitterly criticizing BNP for its irresponsible statement said, We didn't see BNP to stand beside the people except speaking on the media or distributing leaflets during this catastrophe. Meanwhile, the Information Minister continued to distribute food items among the low-income people on the fifth consecutive day yesterday at Rangunia in Chattogram due to outbreak of Corona virus.

Bangladesh has expressed deep condolences for all those who died in the fight against the fatal Covid-19 outbreak in China as the country observed Mourning Day yesterday. Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen in a letter to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi marking the mourning day also expressed his sympathy to the bereaved families. Meanwhile, the Foreign Minister told yesterday that the government has suggested OECD member-countries including the UK to look for chartered flights for their citizens willing to return home instead of regular flights as Bangladesh wants to stop further transmission of coronavirus. He said, the British citizens, if anybody willing to go, can avail of second chartered flight of the US government which will leave Dhaka on Sunday. Another report says, thirty five more Bangladeshi nationals, who got stuck in the West Bengal during the ongoing lockdown in India, returned home through Benapole check-post yesterday morning under an special arrangement.

The World Bank has approved a fast-track \$100 million financing to help Bangladesh prevent, detect, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen the country's national systems for public health emergencies, said a press release.

State Minister for Information Dr. Md. Murad Hassan on Friday donated Taka 5 lac to Sarishabari UNO's disaster risk reduction and emergency fund in Jamalpur in the wake of the deadly coronavirus outbreak. The State Minister also distributed relief goods among low-income group people at Pogaldigha union in Jamalpur. Meanwhile, the government has decided to begin a special OMS programme from today to sell rice at Tk 10 per kg to poor people rendered unemployed in urban areas due to the ongoing shutdown across the country.

The Dhaka South City Corporation has taken a humanitarian initiative to distribute foodgrains among the people by establishing contacts through hotline telephone as the people of different strata stay at home under lockdown in order to stay safe from coronavirus. DSSC Mayor Sayeed Khokon yesterday said, City Corporation decided to distribute foodgrains to 50 thousand families for one month.

All passenger launches have been made ready as isolation centres to fight against the novel coronavirus. This was decided at a meeting of State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury with launch owners at Sadarghat in Dhaka yesterday.

The Islamic Foundation in a statement yesterday urged all Muslim devotees to offer prayers on the night of the holy Shab-e-Barat at their respective homes in the wake of novel coronavirus outbreak.

Bangladesh Bank has instructed the commercial banks to waive penalty for credit card users on any late payment from March 15 in view of the ongoing holidays due to coronavirus outbreak. The central bank has also instructed the commercial banks to allow maximum 5 percent letter of credit margin for baby food import on the basis of bank-client relationship to ensure sufficient supply of the essential item in the country.

The Supreme Court in a circular yesterday said, all temporary court orders such as those granting bail, surrendering before lower court, staying case proceedings and issuing status quo will be extended for two weeks' till reopening of the court.

A control room to address the crisis emerging in the country's fisheries and livestock sectors due to the coronavirus outbreak was set up at the Department of Livestock Services in Dhaka yesterday and the hotline number is 02-9122557.

BGMEA has urged the garments factory owners to keep their factories closed until April 11 to help tackle the spread of coronavirus. BGMEA President Dr. Rubana Huq made the request yesterday.

  
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