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### News Brief

The government has scrapped the Independence Day ceremonies in view of the coronavirus outbreak in the country. This was disclosed as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on President Md. Abdul Hamid at Bangabhaban yesterday. It was informed that placing of wreaths at the National Memorial on March 26 and civic reception at Bangabhaban would not be held this year considering the public health. The distribution of Independence Day medals has been postponed. The two-day special session of the Jatiya Sangsad on the 'Mujib Year' marking the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to be held on March 22-23 has also been suspended. The Premier informed the President the novel coronavirus situation and the country's preparedness in combating the pandemic.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged the people to refrain from buying excessive goods after being panicked, saying categorically that the country has adequate stock of food grains. The Premier said this while talking to reporters after casting her vote in the Jatiya Sangsad by-polls to Dhaka-10 constituency at Dhaka City College yesterday. Sheikh Hasina said, there are 17 lakh metric tons of food grains in the government warehouses apart from 3:50 lakh MT wheat and a huge quantity of food grains in the private rice mills. She said, the government is importing and also producing masks and personal protective equipment locally for the doctors and nurses. Sheikh Hasina asked those who have returned from abroad recently to strictly follow the health procedure and the 14-day quarantine procedure.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque has said, a total of 400 new Intensive Care Unit beds will be added to the country's government hospitals to tackle coronavirus situation. The Health Minister at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday confirmed the second death from coronavirus and four new patients increasing the total number of patients to 24 and casualties to 2. Zahid Maleque said, 50 people are in institutional quarantine and around 14,000 are home-quarantined across the country. It was also informed that the Coronavirus detection kits reached Chattogram yesterday and from now on, the test will be carried out at the Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases in the port city.

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen has said, China will send 10,000 testing kits and 10,000 protective equipments in Dhaka soon through a charter flight to help Bangladesh combat deadly coronavirus pandemic. Dr. Momen said, the Foreign ministry also directed all heads of Bangladesh missions abroad to discourage the expatriates from visiting Bangladesh in this pandemic situation. Bangladesh has imposed a ban on entry of commercial flights from 10 overseas countries commencing from last midnight to March 31 midnight. Apart from these 10 countries, flight operations from the UK, Bangkok, China and Hong Kong will remain open. It was also informed that immigration police at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport have started stamping quarantine information on the hands of the incoming passengers with irremovable ink to ensure that they remain in home-quarantine.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader has urged all to abide by the health rules instead of being panicked over the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. He said this while talking to journalists after distributing hand sanitizers and masks among people in Dhaka yesterday.

The government has decided to keep mills-factories open despite the coronavirus pandemic. The decision was taken in a tripartite-meeting with government, owners and labors with State Minister for Labour and Employment Minister Begum Munnujan Sufian in the

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chair in Dhaka yesterday. The government has asked the school students to stay at home without moving around unnecessarily and maintain the highest caution in view of the coronavirus outbreak. Meanwhile, in a bid to minimize the risk of coronavirus infection, the government has imposed a restriction on the presence of visitors at all hospitals across the country.

The Election Commission yesterday postponed the Chattogram City Corporation election slated for March 29 due to the coronavirus scare. The EC also postponed the parliamentary by-polls to Bogura-1 and Jashore -6 constituencies, scheduled for March 29 on the same ground. Meanwhile, Awami League candidates have won the by-elections of Dhaka-3, Gaibandha-3 and Bagerhat-1 constituencies that held yesterday.

The World Health Organization yesterday recommended a set of suggestions, including maintaining social distancing in Bangladesh, to limit the spread of the COVID-19. A delegation of WHO, led by its representative to Bangladesh Dr Bardan Jung Rana, placed the suggestions at a meeting with Dhaka South City Corporation out-going Mayor Sayeed Khokon in Dhaka yesterday. The World Health Organization delegation also said, Bangladesh should go for partial or full lockdown and declare emergency to check further spread of deadly coronavirus.

Jack Ma, co-founder and former executive chairman of the Chinese company Alibaba Group, announced to help Bangladesh and some other Asian nations contain the spread of coronavirus. Jack Ma, in a tweet yesterday promised to donate emergency supplies, including masks, test kits, protective suits, plus ventilators and thermometers.

President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in separate messages expressed deep sorrow at the death of 12th Sangharaj Dr. Dharmasen Mohathero, the highest religious leader of the Buddhist community in Bangladesh. Dr. Dharmasen breathed his last at his 92 at a Chattogram hospital yesterday.

The World Bank has approved \$170 million to improve sanitation services in Dhaka city which will benefit around 1.5 million people. The loan for the Dhaka Sanitation Improvement Project was approved at the World Bank's headquarters in Washington on Friday.

  
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