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News Brief

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called for a strong collaboration among SAARC nations in devising a collective strategy and mobilising resources to combat coronavirus. The Bangladesh Premier made the call while addressing the virtual summit of the SAARC heads of the Governments and States on coronavirus through video-conference from Ganabhaban in Dhaka yesterday. The Prime Minister proposed for establishing an institution in Bangladesh to prevent and fight against any public health threat in the South Asian region in future. The Premier said, Bangladesh successfully contained entry of the virus through strong surveillance and rigorous checks-up at all international airports, sea ports and land ports and already formed committee for providing guidance to all ministries. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who moderated the videoconference proposed for developing a collective emergency fund to tackle coronavirus in the South Asia region.

The new coronavirus infected two, are 'doing well'. IEDCR informing this yesterday said, some 20 samples were tested in the last 24 hours, but no new patient was detected. A total of 2,314 people have been kept in home quarantine across the country so far under strict monitoring of local administrations, said IEDCR at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday. A total of four people are in institutional quarantine while 10 are in isolation and 63 people visited IEDCR directly for screening so far, it said, adding 231 patients were tested so far, including the infected five. A total of 186 more Bangladeshi nationals returned home from Italy on Sunday, taking the total number of returnees from the worst coronavirus-hit country in Europe to 417 in the last two days. Sources at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport said, the Bangladeshis who returned yesterday on two flights were sent to Hajj Camp at Ashkona on completion of their screening at the airport.

The birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would be celebrated tomorrow. On the occasion, President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will lay wreath at the mausoleum of Father of the nation at Tungipara tomorrow. The yearlong programme of Mujib Barsha also begins tomorrow. Various institutions and organisations will celebrate the day a limited form to avoid public gatherings in view of the outbreak of coronavirus. The day is a public holiday and also observed as National Children's Day. With the sunrise early in the morning, the national flag will be hoisted in all public, private buildings. Lighting, beauty enhancement and cleanliness operations will be conducted in all government-non-governmental institutions. The inauguration ceremony of the anniversary 'Muktir Mohanayak' will be simultaneously broadcast on all private televisions, social media and online media including Bangladesh Television on March 17 at 8 pm.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader has said, the government is mulling over closing the educational institutions in view of the outbreak of coronavirus. He said this at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday. About the progress of the Padma Bridge construction work Quader said, 26 spans out of 41 have already been installed. The construction work of the bridge will face no problem even if the corona situation prevails for more two months, he added. Installation of all 41 spans will be completed by July this year.

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud while talking to journalists after inaugurating 'Mujib Corner' at Jatiya Beter Bhaban in Dhaka yesterday said, the arrest of Bangla Tribune's Kurigram correspondent Ariful Islam and his punishment process were not made properly. Responding to another question about the reported missing of journalist

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Shafiqul Islam Kazal, Dr. Hasan Mahmud said, law enforcement personnel are looking into the matter. About the celebration of birth centenary of Bangabandhu he said, the programmes marking the Mujib Barsha have been revised due to coronavirus outbreak despite having mass enthusiasm among the people.

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen has said, the government wants to protect over 16 crore people of the country by not allowing anybody with "imported" coronavirus in the country. He said, Bangladesh has suspended on arrival visas for all countries and stopped taking travellers from Europe, except England, until March 31 to keep Bangladesh safe. The Foreign Minister said this while speaking at a seminar titled "Bangabandhu's Unfinished Memoirs: A Review" in Dhaka yesterday. Meanwhile, foreign nationals with valid visas staying in Bangladesh now will have the option of extending their existing visas by three months, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka. The ministry has formally notified all diplomatic missions, offices of the UN agencies and international organisations stationed in Dhaka about the temporary travel restrictions it imposed in an effort to halt the spread of coronavirus in the country.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi while attending a discussion marking the World Consumer Rights Day-2020 in Dhaka yesterday inaugurated the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection's hotline 16121. Now any deprived consumer could get help dialing 16121.

Local Government Minister Md. Tazul Islam has said, the government will devise a public-private partnership framework soon to ensure health services for poor and vulnerable population in urban areas. He came up with the information while speaking at a workshop on the issue in Dhaka yesterday.

Environment, Forests and Climate Change Minister Shahab Uddin in Dhaka yesterday inaugurated a Climate Bus marking the celebration of the birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Through this bus, students are being informed about environment and climate change.

A drive to increase the country's potato exports reached an important landmark yesterday with the inauguration of a special shipment. The potatoes, which were grown in Rangpur, are destined for Singapore, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates. Agriculture Secretary Md Nasiruzzaman inaugurated the export at a function in Pairabandh in Mithapukur yesterday.

The government of Bangladesh and the Asian Development Bank signed a loan agreement of US\$400 million to help upgrade the Dhaka -Northwest international trade corridor in the country. ERD Secretary Fatima Yasmin and ADB Country Director Manmohan Parkash inked the loan agreement in Dhaka yesterday.

The government has allocated 22,477 tonnes of rice under the Vulnerable Group Feeding programme to over 2.80 lakh registered fishermen's families in 20 districts during the prohibited time of catching hilsha fry.


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