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

**News Brief**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called upon the people not to worry and be ready to face any situation in the wake of the outbreak of coronavirus across the globe. She also said, it is very much necessary to reach foods to the day-labourers and working class people during this crisis period. She mentioned that the country has enough food stock and there will be no problem for the country in the next one year. The Prime Minister said this while receiving donation for her relief and welfare fund from various government and private organisations through a videoconference from her official Ganabhaban residence in Dhaka yesterday. Bangladesh Army Chief General Aziz Ahmed handed over cheques of Tk 250 million, Navy Chief Admiral Nizamuddin Ahmed Tk 40.50 million, Air Force Chief Air-Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman Serniabat Tk 12 million, Bashundhara Group Taka 100 million to Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr. Ahmed Kaikaus for the Prime Minister's relief fund.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed profound sadness for Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, who has been infected with novel coronavirus, and reiterated Bangladesh's stand to work with the UK diaspora to fight the lethal disease. In a letter sent to Prince Charles, the Prime Minister wished Prince Charles full recovery from Covid-19 at the soonest. On the previous day, the Bangladesh Premier in a similar letter expressed deep concern as the UK Premier Boris Johnson and Health Secretary Matt Hancock also tested positive for coronavirus.

No new patient tested positive for COVID-19 in Bangladesh in the last two days, keeping the total number of confirmed cases in the country at 48. In the past 24 hours, IEDCR and BITID in Chattogram tested 109 samples. No-one of them was positive. Now 47 people have been kept in isolation. IEDCR informed this in a virtual briefing in Dhaka yesterday.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday informed that there is no crisis of personal protective equipment (PPEs) in the country. Three lakh PPEs have already been distributed among physicians across the country for their safety and 20,000 to 25,000 PPEs are being distributed to doctors and nurses everyday. By April, nearly 5 lakh PPEs will be received, said the Minister after joining an online press briefing of the IEDCR. The Minister said, the government has 45,000 kits in stock and 85,000 more will come. He further said, we still have around 500 ventilator, 300 more are coming. Coronavirus will be tested from 11 places. In order to provide treatment to coronavirus patients, he said as many as 3000 beds have been prepared at Dhaka division.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader has urged the affluent section of society to extend their helping hands at this critical time caused by global COVID-19 outbreak. He made the call while seeking humanitarian assistance from affluent people at Awami League President's Dhanmondi political office in Dhaka yesterday.

Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen talking to media yesterday said, foreign nationals living in Bangladesh will be allowed to leave the country on chartered flights, as commercial flights have been suspended to tackle the global Covid-19 pandemic. He also said, the United States showed its interest in purchasing medical equipment like PPEs from Bangladesh. Other countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia and India also contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka requesting it to supply some essential medical equipment to be used during treatment of COVID-19 patients, the Foreign Minister added. Meanwhile, BGMEA said, it wants to export PPEs meeting domestic demand as their demand is growing across the globe amid coronavirus pandemic.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md. Shahariar Alam has assured to look into the wellbeing of the Bangladeshi nationals, who went to India for medical treatment and stranded there due to the ongoing lockdown in the neighbouring country. In a message on his verified facebook post yesterday, he also advised the stranded Bangladeshis to contact with the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi.

Posts and Telecommunications Minister Mustafa Jabbar yesterday said, the government has formed a national taskforce to set future measures to combat COVID-19 using technology. All mobile phone users in the country will get a SMS where they will be asked to make a call to \*3332# free of cost to provide health information by self-reporting method. If people provide information spontaneously responding to the SMS, the government can easily fix next next course of action to minimize COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The Telecommunications Minister also said, the Directorate of Posts has been carrying PPEs, coronavirus testing kits and awareness leaflets to all 64 districts free of charge.

Following the countrywide shutdown to tackle the novel coronavirus, the government has started food distribution among low-income people. Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon yesterday distributed daily essentials among 50,000 low income people in front of Nagar Bhaban. On the other hand, newly elected Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation Atiqul Islam has distributed food among 1,000 families at Mirpur's Tolarbagh. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief has allocated 31,000 tonnes of rice and Tk 9 crore to be distributed across the country. Under the scheme, 10kg of rice will be distributed among 31 lakh families and Tk 500 would be provided among 1.80 lakh families across country.

The Cabinet Secretary Khandaker Anwarul Islam through a videoconference today will instruct the high officials in the field especially the Divisional Commissioners, Divisional Directors of the Health Department and the Deputy Inspectors General of police on their preparedness for coronavirus. Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police Dr Mohammad Javed Patwary yesterday talking to media issuing a note of warning said, harsher action will be taken if anyone spreads misleading information and rumors about coronavirus through social media.

Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation sent 300,000 masks to Bangladesh which was received by Bangladesh government officials yesterday.

A high-level committee of the Ministry of Commerce, in coordination with the field-level administration and law enforcement agencies, is working to keep stable the supply and prices of the essential commodities in the market amid the worldwide coronavirus outbreak.

Dhaka Metropolitan Shop Owners Association yesterday decided to extend the closure of all shopping complexes and malls in the city till April 4 coinciding with the government's 10-day public holiday to contain coronavirus.

  
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