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**News Brief**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address the nation this evening on the overall coronavirus situation in the country. The Premier, in her address, is expected to highlight various steps and necessary preparations of the government in the wake of coronavirus spread.

Public transport services will remain suspended from March 26 to April 4 across the country aiming to contain the spread of coronavirus. Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader in a video message yesterday informing this said, truck, covered van and the vehicles carrying medicine, fuel and perishable items will remain out of its purview. Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan at a press conference yesterday said, all train services, were suspended from yesterday evening. However, he said, the goods- and oil-carrying trains would remain operational in a limited scale. Meanwhile, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority has shut river transportation from yesterday afternoon. Cargo vessels will operate as usual. On the other hand, operation of all domestic flights will remain suspended from this midnight until further notice.

The government has extended the closure of educational institutions, including coaching centers, across the country till April 9 aiming to prevent spread of coronavirus. The decision was taken at a meeting with Education Minister Dr. Dipu Moni in the chair at the Education Ministry in Dhaka yesterday. As all educational institutions are closed, the Education Minister further informed the meeting that classes for students of sixth to tenth grades will be broadcast through 'Sangsad TV' from 9 am to 9 pm from March 28. Meanwhile, the Primary and Mass Education Ministry yesterday decided to keep all the government and non-government primary schools and kindergartens across the country closed till April 9.

The government has given 5-point directives to control the outbreak of the coronavirus. A press release issued by the Cabinet Division yesterday referring to the directives given by the governments on March 23 said, general leave declared by the Government from March 26 to April 4 are applicable for government and non-government offices. Healthcare, newspapers, and other urgent services would remain outside of the 10-day long office shutdown. It also said, government officials and employees must stay in their respective workplaces during this shutdown. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Administration in a separate office order also directed all officials to stay in their respective workplaces.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr. Ahmad Kaikaus urging all to stay at home said, the government has announced public holidays not for enjoyment but for staying at home to prevent the spread of deadly coronavirus. He said this at a press briefing at the Prime Minister Office yesterday in view of the mad rush of people at different bus, train and launch stations for going to their ancestral homes.

One more coronavirus patient, aged over 70, died in the country and six new cases were confirmed in the last 24 hours till yesterday, taking the number of cases to 39 in the country. IEDCR informed this while briefing the media through videoconference from IEDCR in Dhaka yesterday. It also said, of the six new patients, one returned from Saudi Arabia while the other five got infected after coming in contact with COVID-19 patients.

Armed Forces were deployed yesterday to assist the civil administration take effective steps to maintain social distancing and keep coronavirus suspects in quarantine. Sources at the Inter Services Public Relation said, members of the Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force are being assigned at the division and district levels and in coastal areas.

Please Turn Over

The second batch of medical logistics including 10000 testing kits for COVID-19, 10000 personal protective equipment and 1000 infrared thermometers will arrive in Dhaka from Kunming tomorrow by a special aircraft of the government of China.

The government has decided to release imprisoned BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia conditionally on humanitarian grounds for six months. Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anisul Huq yesterday informed media, following Prime Minister's order and as per the law the government has decided to stay her sentence for six months and she will be released for a period of six months when she must stay in her own house and take treatment in the country and she would not be able to go abroad during the time. The Law Minister said the decision was taken as per section 401 (1) of Code of Criminal Procedure.

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen through a video message to media said, the Bangladesh government has consulted with the USA, European Union and Group 77 to take special measures as Dhaka fears to lose export orders due to outbreak of deadly COVID-19. The BGMEA has predicted that Bangladesh will lose export orders worth two billion US dollars and the readymade garments sector may witness hundreds of job cut due to the prevailing global situation.

Local Government Minister Md. Tajul Islam has said, all the local representatives are working in their respective areas to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Tajul Islam in a video message yesterday also said, a committee headed by respective union parishad chairman has been formed in each union to ensure the home-quarantine of the overseas returnees.

People who have returned from abroad since March 1 and staying at addresses different than the ones in their passports have been asked to contact nearby police stations. All returnees must inform police about their current locations and provide mobile phone numbers, a notification from the Police Headquarters said yesterday. Police warned of legal action if anyone violates the directive.

Commerce Ministry has opened a control room to monitor the market and provide information on the import and export operations considering the worldwide coronavirus outbreak. Meanwhile, holidays of all officials and employees of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh and Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection were cancelled to facilitate supply of essential commodities in market.

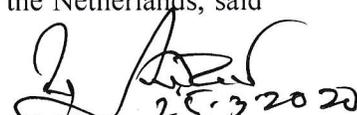
Power, Energy and Mineral Resources has taken steps to ensure uninterrupted power and gas supply during the countrywide government holidays to prevent coronavirus. State minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources in a video message said this yesterday.

The 'Genocide Day' is today. On the black night of March 25 nearly five decades ago, the Pakistani occupation forces launched brutal genocide codenamed 'Operation Searchlight' on the unarmed Bengalees. President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the eve of the 'Genocide Day'. This year the government and political, social and cultural organizations including the ruling Awami League have suspended all programmes in the wake of the deadly coronavirus outbreak.

Activities of all courts of the country will remain suspended from March 29 to April 2 to prevent the transmission of coronavirus, a notification in this regard was issued yesterday.

Bangladesh Bank has asked the scheduled banks to keep unchanged the classification status of loan, lease or advance till June 30 to facilitate business activities amid the coronavirus outbreak.

The government has appointed M Riaz Hamidullah, currently serving as the High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Sri Lanka, as the new Ambassador to the Netherlands, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

  
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