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**News Brief**

The agriculture sector would definitely get priority in the next budget while the government would do whatever necessary to make this sector more dynamic. Finance Minister A H M Mustafa Kamal made the remarks while briefing reporters virtually after holding a pre-budget meeting for the next fiscal year with the noted media personalities yesterday. Responding to the participants' suggestions to reduce corporate tax rate and also to stop alleged misuse of funds in government's expenditure, the Finance Minister said, the government would try to incorporate those recommendations which are acceptable and thus reflect those in the budget. Asked about the reasons behind the high trend of rice price, he said good production of food grains depend to a big extent on nature while the country remains self sufficient in food subject to normalcy in nature. He said Boro crop was damaged last year for which the government has been delivering an incentive package to the affected farmers. About the budget recommendations from the media personalities, Kamal said noted media personality Shykh Seraj suggested for increasing subsidy in the agriculture sector, increasing the depth of the poultry sector through extending necessary support. Besides, the participants also recommended the government to complete the development works on time and also to stop misuse of funds in government expenditure.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader at a regular press conference at his residence yesterday said, BNP has taken the people and the police as the party's opponents to hide its political failures. He urged the BNP to stop spreading their political propaganda during the coronavirus crisis in the name of criticizing the government. Mentioning that the people know very well about BNP's double standard policy, he said, BNP earlier said lockdown was imposed but nobody was abiding by the restrictions. Mentioning that going for a blame game over the coronavirus would worsen the situation, he urged the BNP to come out of the politics of blaming for the betterment of the country. Actually, BNP makes some absurd allegations and Awami League has to reply to these allegations, he said.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anisul Huq said, the Chief Justice will take a decision on whether to continue or suspend court proceedings during this ongoing coronavirus situation. He said while talking to the reporters after attending the namaj-e-janaza of former Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru on the Supreme Court premises. About the contribution of Abdul Matin Khasru, Anisul Huq said Khasru was a dedicated follower of ideals of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and he had full faith in the spirit of War of Liberation. Abdul Matin Khasru died of coronavirus at the capital's Combined Military Hospital on Wednesday. Meanwhile, Abdul Matin Khasru was laid to eternal rest at his family graveyard at Mirpur village under Brahmanpara upazila in Cumilla yesterday.

'Corona Management Guidelines' will be prepared for all organizations under the Local Government Department to tackle COVID-19 and keep the development works running in the country. Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Md. Tajul Islam said this virtually at a view exchanging meeting with mayors and senior officials of all city corporations of the country on the ongoing corona infection prevention and development activities from his residence in Dhaka yesterday. The guidelines will include plans to address various development projects, especially income generating and productive activities, he said. Meanwhile, the mayors of the city corporations also informed the Local Government Minister about the progress of the ongoing development projects.

The government has decided to allow airlines operating special flights to five countries Saudi Arabi, Oman, Qatar, UAE and Singapore from April 17 so that stranded Bangladeshi expatriate workers here can go back their workplaces. The decision was taken yesterday at a virtual inter-ministerial meeting attended by Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen. Earlier, CAAB suspended passenger flight operations on all domestic routes following weeklong countrywide restriction from April 5.

The government is going to impose a 65-day restriction on fishing in the Bay of Bengal from May 20 to July 23. The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock has issued a notification to this end under the Section 3 of the Marine Fisheries Act, 2020 for proper breeding, production and conservation of marine fisheries resources in the country's marine waters, a notification was issued on April 13.

The government is going to announce a new incentive package to help the poor families affected by the strict lockdown. Under this package, 50 lakh poor families will be given cash assistance of Tk2500 each. The announcement of the new incentive package of Tk1, 256 crore may come soon, the Finance Ministry sources said.

A total of about 3.16 lakh movement passes were issued by last afternoon, for going out on the first two days of the weeklong "strict lockdown" imposed by the government to curb the spread of Covid-19. According to Police Headquarters, the number of total visitors to the "movement pass" app was about 16 crore. Meanwhile, the presence of people and vehicles was very much low on the roads in the capital and most of the cities and towns across the country yesterday on the second day of the eight-day-long "strict complete lockdown" enforced from Wednesday. The government has imposed the complete lockdown from April 14 to 21 aiming at combating the alarming spread of the coronavirus.

The country yesterday recorded 94 COVID-19 deaths, taking the death toll to 10,081. With 4,192 fresh cases, the tally of infections surged to 7,07,362. At the same time recovery count rose to 5,97,214, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. A total 10,572 people were administered the first dose of COVID-19 vaccines while 19,69,76 received the second dose of the vaccine across the country yesterday, DGHS said. With this, the number of vaccine receivers given the first dose of vaccine rose to 56,86,885, while a total of 93,01,51 people received the second dose of the vaccine. As many as 70,86,825 people got registered till 2.30 pm yesterday to take COVID-19 vaccines, DGHS sources said.

Japan has decided to extend emergency support of around \$1 million for the victims and survivors of the Rohingya camp fire in Cox's Bazar. The aid comes through Japan Platform, an international emergency humanitarian aid organisation. This support will include health and medical care, food, water, sanitation, and shelter assistance, the Japanese Embassy in Dhaka said yesterday.

  
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