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News Brief

The Cabinet Division issued gazette notification yesterday extending the timeframe of the ongoing restrictions till May 5 considering current surge of coronavirus throughout the country. In the latest official circular, the government enforced strict embargo on access of any person except commodity transportation from India to Bangladesh by using land, water or air ports. But only those Bangladeshis whose visas' tenure has already expired can enter Bangladesh in special consideration by the Bangladesh High Commission in India. After entering into Bangladesh, they must have to stay in fourteen days quarantine as per the rules of the health directorate. The shops and shopping malls are allowed to open from 10am to 8pm daily by maintaining all the necessary health guidelines, the official release said. The passengers who will carry non-covid-19 certificate along with certificate of covid-19 vaccination coming from Middle East, Singapore and China must have to stay in 14 days' quarantine in their respective houses. The travelers who have only non-covid-19 certificate coming from those countries will have to stay in quarantine for 14 days at their respective houses after receiving permission from the local physicians. But the travelers who will come to Bangladesh from other countries must have to stay in quarantine in hotels at their own cost, the circular added.

An EU-accredited non-profit think tank 'The European Foundation for South Asian Studies-EFSAS' has lauded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina government's "robust" handling of terrorism and religious extremism in Bangladesh while ripping into Pakistan, saying its Muslim-majority neighbor has "encouraged, sheltered and promoted extremists and terrorists". EFSAS in the Apr 23 commentary headlined, 'Bangladesh and Pakistan: acting against extremism versus making a show of acting against extremism' saying, "Pakistan, consequently, lacks the moral conviction and authority to fearlessly counteract terrorists and extremists, something," concludes effusively, "that Sheikh Hasina's genuineness of purpose empowers her in ample measure to do with great efficacy."

The government will collect COVID-19 vaccines from anywhere in any way to protect the country's people, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said this adding that there is no need to maintain a special relationship with anyone over coronavirus vaccines. The Minister was talking to reporters after placing wreaths at the grave of Shaheed Sheikh Jamal on his 68th birth anniversary. Mentioning that Sheikh Jamal was one of the instances of Bangabandhu family's courageous politics, he said: "Let us swear on his birthday that the nation must be made free from the tragedy of the politics of murder and conspiracy." He said, if Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not killed in 1975, another murderous group would not have dared to kill Ziaur Rahman. Ziaur Rahman was the mastermind of the Bangabandhu killing and that is why he had to suffer the consequences, he added.

The 68th birthday of Shaheed Sheikh Jamal, son of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was observed yesterday in a befitting manner. Bangladesh Awami League and its associate bodies took different programs on his birthday. In the morning, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League placed floral wreaths at the grave of Shaheed Sheikh Jamal at Banani graveyard. An e-poster has been published at the initiative of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Birth Centenary Celebration National Implementation Committee marking the 68th birthday of Sheikh Jamal.

Hefazat-e-Islam wanted to see recurrence of Shapla Chattar incident by provoking violence across the country, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal disclosed the information while briefing reporters yesterday. Intelligence agencies are working on those who financed Hefazat, he said adding, "We have got some information, but don't want to say right now. I will tell about this after a few days. From where and whom they have got the money. Investigation will reveal this," he said.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud while replying to a query of newsmen over a comment of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said, BNP itself is deranged, not the government, and the party has clearly sided with miscreants. Dr. Hasan further said, BNP tried to spread confusion over coronavirus vaccine among the commoners, saying that it will take six months to arrive vaccines. But in

reality, the vaccines arrived in the next month, the Minister said. He said, the government is tackling the COVID-19 pandemic situation with utmost sincerity, protecting the lives and livelihoods of common people. Dr. Hasan paying rich tribute to Martyred Sheikh Jamal on his 68th birthday said, Sheikh Jamal was a brave and fearless freedom fighter.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Finance Minister approved a proposal on producing Chinese and Russian vaccines-Sinopharm and Sputnik V, in the country for ensuring Covid-19 vaccine for all. Briefing the reporters virtually after the meeting, the Minister said, the government will simultaneously pursue procuring vaccines from the country's primary source-Serum Institute. The meeting also approved another proposal for procuring RT-PCR test kits and PCR lab under the Direct Procurement Method under the Health Services Division. The committee also approved the proposal of purchasing health care equipment and medical equipment under DPM under the Health Services Division.

The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase-CCGP at a virtual meeting yesterday chaired by Finance Minister A H M Mustafa Kamal approved five proposals, including one for a 15-year agreement between Bangladesh Power Development Board and Desh Power Limited to set up 15 megawatt Heavy Fuel Oil based power plant at a cost of Taka 1,396.85 crore. Along with other three proposals, the CCGP also approved a variation proposal of the construction of 3rd and 4th dual gauge lines in Dhaka-Tongi section and dual gauge double line in Tongi-Joydevpur section implemented by Bangladesh Railway under the Ministry of Railways.

The China-led Foreign Ministers' meeting of five South Asian nations including Bangladesh over COVID-19 cooperation, held virtually on Tuesday showed concern over 'vaccine nationalism' saying it would hinder the global efforts in curbing surge of the deadly coronavirus and underscored the need to avoid the 'immunity gap', a joint statement said yesterday. At the meeting, the Ministers agreed that vaccines, as a key weapon to defeat the Covid-19 pandemic, should be distributed in accordance with the principle of equity and justice, the statement said. The Ministers also exchanged views on international and regional cooperation on pandemic response and post-Covid economic recovery. Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen joined the meeting along with Foreign Ministers of China, Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Effective measures have been taken to reopen the closed mills of BJMC in the private sector on a lease basis at the earliest, Textile and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi said this at a virtual meeting of the ministry yesterday adding that international tenders have already been called in this regard. The workers who have been laid off in the privately-run mills will get job opportunities on priority basis, he added. In the first nine months (July-March) of the current fiscal year 2020-21, Bangladesh earned US\$953.56 million by exporting jute and jute products. This is 22.94 per cent more than the same period last year.

Government has set a target to increase the country's green coverage to 24 per cent by 2025. Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Md. Shahab Uddin yesterday said while speaking at a virtual dialogue titled, 'Road to Glasgow: Restoring Our Earth and Climate Protection' marking the World Earth Day 2021.

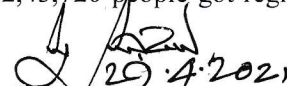
The ongoing limited banking hours from 10am to 1pm have been extended until May 5 for facilitating the financial transaction of their clients during the lockdown, a Bangladesh Bank circular said yesterday. As per another circular of the central bank, non-bank financial institutions will remain open from 10am to 2pm.

DB of Police arrested Hefazat leader Mufti Habibullah Mahmud Qasemi from the city yesterday. Qasemi is accused of leading the violence at Shapla Chattar on May 5, 2013. Besides, he was directly involved in the recent sabotage incident in city's Paltan area.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Portugal Tarik Ahsan presented his credentials to President of Guinea Bissau Umaro Mokhtar Sissoco Embaló in Bissau as the non-resident Bangladesh Ambassador to the country with residence in Lisbon on Tuesday. Ambassador Tarik Ahsan is the first Bangladesh Ambassador to present credentials to the Head of State of Guinea Bissau.

Three Bangladeshi Researchers-Dr. Salma Sultana, Dr. Firdausi Qadri and Prof. Samia Subrina have been included in the sixth edition of Asian Scientist 100 list, which celebrates the success of the region's best and brightest scientist, highlighting their achievements across a range of scientific disciplines, according to the website of Asian Scientist, an English language science and technology magazine published in Singapore.

The country recorded 77 fatalities from COVID-19 yesterday, taking the death toll to 11,305. With 2,955 fresh cases, the tally of infections surged to 7,54,614. At the same time recovery count rose to 6,72,319. A total of 1,19,071 people were administered the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine yesterday, taking the total number of vaccine receivers given the second dose of vaccine to 26,98,155. As many as 72,43,720 people got registered till 2.30 pm yesterday to take COVID-19 vaccines.


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