



PRESS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT  
GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH  
DHAKA



Most Urgent  
For: Bangladdoot, All Missions  
MSG: 235/2020-21  
Date: Wednesday, 28 April 2021

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### News Brief

China is keen to extend its cooperation to Bangladesh in tackling the COVID-19 outbreak. Chinese State Councilor and Minister of National Defense Wei Fenghe, who arrived here yesterday on a brief visit, said this as he paid a courtesy call on President Md. Abdul Hamid at Bangabhaban last afternoon. The President said, Bangladesh is keen to work together with China in this regard. The President reiterated his call to China for playing an effective role in repatriating the forcibly displaced Rohingyas as China maintains a very good relation with Myanmar. On the defense ties between Bangladesh and China, the President hoped that these relations would be further strengthened in the days to come.

Earlier, after his arrival, the Chinese Minister Wei Fenghe paid tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi-32. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md. Shahriar Alam and Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming were present at the moment. The Chinese Minister also had a meeting with Chief of Bangladesh Army Staff General Aziz Ahmed. At the end of the visit, he left Bangladesh yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sought the G20 nations' 'key role' in stopping global carbon emission and simultaneously called for 'strict implementation' of the Paris Agreement to save the planet from the adverse impacts of climate change. In a recorded statement aired on the inaugural day of the two-day 'Foreign Policy Virtual Climate Summit', the Premier also put emphasis on undertaking united efforts by all countries of the world to get rid of the deadly Covid-19 virus. On the Rohingya issue, the Prime Minister said that Bangladesh has given shelter to over 1.1 million forcibly-evicted Myanmar citizens in the environmentally-critical Cox's Bazar district on humanitarian grounds. "But it heavily affected the ecology of the area," she said. She highlighted different measures taken by her government for climate adaptation and resilience-building in the country.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina donated Taka 10 crore to the Bangladesh Journalist Welfare Trust to aid journalists in need during the Covid-19 pandemic, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim confirmed.

Bangladesh Meanwhile has approved emergency use of the Russian COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V. The Sputnik V vaccine may arrive in Bangladesh in May this year, Maj Gen Mahbubur Rahman, Director General of DGDA said to the national news agency yesterday after an emergency meeting.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader called upon all irrespective of opinions and party affiliation to make united efforts in facing the current coronavirus situation. The Minister was talking to reporters after paying tributes to first Chief Minister of undivided Bengal Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq at his grave at the mausoleum of three leaders near Doyel Chattar in the city on his 59th death anniversary. He said, BNP has failed in both movement and election as well as the party failed to play a responsible role as an opposition party. Noting that many do not work for people when they assume power, he said, great leaders like Sher-e-Bangla and Bangabandhu were exceptional. Following their footprints, Bangabandhu's daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is also working for the betterment of the people, he mentioned.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud urging BNP to stand beside the common people amid COVID-19 pandemic said, they should seek apology from the countrymen for spreading confusion over the coronavirus vaccine. While addressing a distribution ceremony of health protective materials among different organizations of journalists on behalf of AL Relief and Social Welfare sub-committee at AL President's office in city's Dhanmondi yesterday, the Minister said, they even spread confusion that the Indian vaccine produced by Serum Institute would not work. But, when it was late to bring the vaccine, they said something else, he added. He said, the government has taken initiatives to bring vaccines from Russia, China and other countries. A number of vaccines will be brought from Serum Institute in the next month and vaccines from other countries will also come soon, he added. He said, there is no scope of spreading confusion.

Bangladesh is hosting the 3-day 13th Intergovernmental Session of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific-WESTPAC virtually from April 27 to 29, 2021. Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen inaugurated the session on behalf of the host country yesterday. While delivering his welcome remarks, Dr.

Momen emphasized on conducting more timely research on the availability, sustainable utilization and exploration of the marine resources that are available in nature. He requested IOC WESTPAC for more innovative approaches in capacity building program and sought support for engaging young researchers and scientists of Bangladesh in its ongoing and future research initiatives. Chairperson of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific Vo Si Tuan and IOC Executive Secretary and Assistant Director General of UNESCO Vladimir Ryabinin also delivered remarks at the inaugural session.

The first meeting of the China-led initiative called 'China-South Asia Platform for Covid-19 Consultation, Cooperation, and Post-pandemic Economic Recovery' participated by the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Pakistan was held last afternoon. Under the platform, China proposed establishing Covid-19 emergency medical facility, poverty alleviation, and e-commerce in rural areas, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr.Momen, after the event said adding that "We should believe in multilateralism. We emphasized cooperation and partnership."

Bangladesh has sought Covid-19 vaccines from three specific alternatives-China, Russia and the US and it will take at least two weeks to complete the formalities and necessary process, as India has paused exports of Covishield vaccine due to a surge in new infections and a rising death toll in India, Dr. Momen said to media. He also informed that China will give 6 lac doses of vaccine as a gift and hoped that Bangladesh will get a vaccine through commercial purchase soon.

Bangladesh has sufficient amount of oxygen to tackle the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic, the country would not face any scarcity of medical oxygen even if the demand doubles to treat coronavirus patients, Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque said this at a view exchange meeting with journalists at the Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons in the capital yesterday. At present, demand of oxygen is 100 to 150 tons in Bangladesh while it produced roughly 500 tons of oxygen, he added. The Minister further said, corona vaccine will come from India's Serum Institute within few days. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has talked with the government of India to get contracted vaccine from Serum Institute, he added.

The 68th birthday of Sheikh Jamal, son of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is being observed across the country today. To mark the day, Bangladesh Awami League, its associate bodies have chalked out different programs. On August 15 in 1975, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, with most of his family members including Sheikh Jamal, was assassinated by a group of disgruntled army officers.

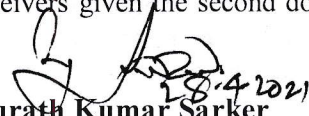
The government has provided medical facilities to 30,241 workers since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum Monnujan Sufian said this at virtual a press conference yesterday. As per the directives of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Taka 1,500 crore were allocated for the jobless workers of export-oriented garment and leather industries under the social safety net program, with support from the European Union and Germany. A total of Taka 5.48 crore has been given so far from this allocation for providing three-month salary of 6,031 workers. This is an ongoing process, she added. The State Minister also informed that Taka 41.32 crore has been given as assistance for the workers of both formal and informal sectors from the fund of Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation formed under her ministry.

The DB of Police has identified 313 individuals who are financing Hefazat-e-Islam. They also gathered information over transaction of Taka 6 crore in different bank accounts of Mamunul Haque, Additional Commissioner of DB of DMP A K M Hafiz Akhter told reporters yesterday.

SME Foundation will provide Taka 300 crore as loans to the entrepreneurs of cottage, micro, small, medium enterprises (CMSME) at 4 per cent interest rate under the 2nd phase stimulus package of the government to recoup their losses from the COVID-19 pandemic and also to improve the livelihood of the marginal people in the rural areas, sources said. Female entrepreneurs will get around 25 to 30 per cent of the total loans.

The 'National Occupational Health and Safety Day-2021' and National Legal Aidm Day are being observed in the country today. President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the eve of the days.

The country recorded 78 fatalities from COVID-19 yesterday, taking the death toll to 11,228. With 3,031 fresh cases, the tally of infections surged to 7,51,659. At the same time recovery count rose to 6,66,927, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. A total of 1,20,861 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 25,79,084.

  
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