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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 is scheduled to inaugurate the newly established four Marine Academies, 500 houses under the Payra Port Rehabilitation Project, 20 dredgers of BIWTA and 63 dredging support vessels, a training and special inspection vessel, a dredger base and two BIWTC passenger ships under the Ministry of Shipping, virtually joining from Ganabhaban today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has set an example of humanity by standing beside the vulnerable people amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader made the remarks yesterday adding that after 1975, no head of the government or political leader set such an instance. While virtually addressing a function arranged by the AL's Relief and Social Welfare Sub-Committee, aiming at supplying oxygen cylinders to various hospitals and distributing food aid to the poor people, the Minister hinting at BNP said, the party has no work without criticizing the government and even it failed to set an example by standing beside people amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Minister also urged people not to go to their village homes secretly during upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr violating the ongoing restrictions aimed at curbing the spread of coronavirus.

The government is procuring paddy directly from the farmers so that they will get fair price through using 'Krishaker App' during Covid-19 pandemic, Agriculture Minister Dr. Md. Abdur Razzaque said this as he virtually inaugurated Boro Paddy procurement program in Dumuria upazila of Khulna yesterday. At present, there is no food scarcity in the country, he said, adding that adequate food was hoarded in the government depot, but a vested quarter is out to campaign about food scarcity.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud said, Awami League would work as vanguard against all anti-state political conspiracies. While addressing a function to distribute Eid gifts, organized by Bangladesh Krishak League at Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday, he further said, when the country is celebrating the golden jubilee of the independence and the birth centenary of Bangabandhu, then mayhem was carried out across the country from March 26 to 28 under the banner of Hefazat. But, BNP and Jamaat took part in the anarchy, he added. The Minister said, the Hefazat leaders met with the Home Minister some times. But the government is determined in taking tough actions against the all culprits. Referring to Begum Khaleda Zia's treatment issue, he said, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has shown her unprecedented generosity by extending Begum Khaleda Zia's release from jail. He said, the treatment of COVID-19 is same in all countries and, even, the treatment of Bangladesh is better. "So, I don't understand the idea of going abroad for the treatment of COVID-19," Dr. Hasan added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is relentlessly working to improve the fate of the country's people, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anisul Huq made the remarks while addressing virtually a program to distribute food aid among 1,000 destitute families of Kasba municipality and 10 unions in Kasba, Brahmanbaria yesterday. He also inaugurated a program to distribute 540 sewing machines among registered fishermen and six harvester machines among farmers to efficiently harvest paddy.

The government will procure a total of 3.60 lac metric tons of MOP, TSP and granular urea fertilizer alongside purchasing 67.20 lac MMBtu LNG to meet the growing demand. The approval came from a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase-CCGP held yesterday virtually with Finance Minister A H M Mustafa Kamal in the chair. The CCGP meeting also approved a proposal for procuring 50,000 metric tons of non Basmati boiled rice from India with around Taka 163.66 crore through railways. A proposal for procuring vocational education equipment for 640 educational institutions was also approved in the meeting. In another proposal from the Secondary and Higher Education Division, necessary public works, machineries, equipment and services would be procured from Korea with around Taka 460 crore.

The government is not at all dependent on a single source for COVID-19 vaccines and trying to procure the vaccines from other sources which are acceptable and safe, the Finance Minister stated this at the briefing after the meeting. Replying to another question whether the Serum Institute of India would refund the money if they fail to provide vaccines to Bangladesh, he said, discussions as well as negotiations are still on with them.

Foreign Minister Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen in a letter congratulated India's Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee on her party's victory in the West Bengal Assembly elections. "With your cooperation and commitment, we are confident to consolidate the relations between the two countries further and resolve outstanding issues," the Minister said.

The government has intensified its efforts to get vaccine from the United States, as it will share up to 60 million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine with other countries, Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen said to newsmen yesterday, adding that Bangladesh Ambassador to the US M Shahidul Islam is in touch with the concerned officials of the US government in this regard. He requested the Bangladeshi diaspora to approach the US government so that they feel the urgency with communication from all sides. However, he said, Dhaka heard that the US is giving priority to India and Brazil to provide its surplus vaccine as most COVID-19 deaths were reported in these two countries recently. The US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl Miller is likely to meet him today to update on overall issues including supply of oxygen to Bangladesh, he said. Dr. Momen said, the Chinese government is supposed to start delivering 5 lac doses of China Sinovac vaccine as gift before Eid-ul-Fitr. He said, Russia is also interested to give vaccines to Bangladesh. "We'll procure vaccines from wherever we get it," he said.

The Cabinet Division yesterday issued a gazette notification extending the ongoing restrictions until May 16 with six more fresh directives along with the existing ones in a bid to halt the spread of Covid-19 in the country. All the staff of government, semi-government, autonomous, private offices, banks and financial institutions have to stay in their respective work stations during the Eid vacation, it said. The shops and malls will remain open from 10am to 8pm maintaining strict hygiene rules. They will be shut down if any violation of health regulations is found, the notification added. The inter-district bus service will remain closed while only intra-district transport services will operate following health rules from Thursday (today). However, launch and train services will remain off. The notification said, the use of face masks has to be ensured everywhere. If it is necessary, legal action has to be taken using mobile courts. Social, political and religious gatherings will not be allowed during this period.

President Md. Abdul Hamid will receive the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine at Bangabhaban today, President's Press Secretary Md. Joynal Abedin informed the national news agency yesterday.

Bangladesh Bank in a circular extended the banking hours from 10am to 2pm until May 16. As per another circular of the central bank, non-bank financial institutions will remain open from 10am to 2pm.

The government has distributed over Taka 5 crore as incentive among the corona-affected livestock farms owners of Trishal upazila in Mymensingh, officials said. State Minister for Social Welfare Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru yesterday distributed foodstuffs among 500 distressed and jobless people to mitigate their sufferings amid Covid-19 pandemic in Netrakona. A total of 220 hairdressers were given humanitarian assistance from the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund to mitigate their sufferings amid the coronavirus pandemic in Sadar upazila of Narail district yesterday. Mayor of Khulna City Corporation yesterday distributed foodstuffs among 100 physically challenged persons amid COVID-19 pandemic. Food items were distributed among 1000 people of Shibalaya in Manikganj as the Eid gift yesterday. With the direction of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, a total of 1,400 Imams, Khatibs, Muazzins, Khadems and Hafezs of all mosques in the Rajshahi city were given food and financial assistance as Eid greetings on Tuesday. A total of 500 jobless and distressed people of Chandanpat union in Sadar upazila of Rangpur received Taka 500 each as general relief in the wake of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic on Tuesday.

A total of 160 Bangladeshi migrant workers returned from Libya yesterday under the arrangement of the International Organization for Migration-IOM. The body of a Bangladeshi national who died in Libya was also flown back home.

The Dhaka University authorities at a virtual meeting of the university's dean committee held yesterday with DU Vice-Chancellor Md. Akhtaruzzaman in the chair decided to take the final examinations of all academic years online from July 1 if the current Covid-19 situation in Bangladesh does not improve by June. The decision will be finalized in the next academic council meeting.

Bangladesh has announced to send emergency medicines and medical supplies to India to combat the pandemic. As part of this, 10,000 injectable anti-viral Remdesivir were sent in the first phase yesterday. Besides injectable anti-viral, oral anti-viral, 30,000 PPE kits and a few thousand zinc, calcium, vitamin-C and necessary tablets will also be sent, the Foreign ministry said. Other emergency medicines and medical equipments will be sent in phases.

The country recorded 50 fatalities from COVID-19 yesterday, taking the death toll to 11,755. With 1,742 fresh cases, the tally of infections surged to 7,67,338. At the same time recovery count rose to 6,98,465. A total of 1,03,800 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 32,10,509. Registration for the Covid-19 vaccination program will remain closed until further notice.

Surath Kumar Sarker
Principal Information Officer 08.5.2021