

Properly renovate

FROM PAGE 2

Dhaka route, route extension of "Dhalarchar Express" (old Pabna Express) on the Dhalarchar-Pabna-Rajshahi route, "Rajbari Express" (old Faridpur Express) on the Pachuria-Faridpur-Bhanga route, and replacement of the coaches of "Udayan Express" and "Paharika Express" on the Chattogram-Sylhet-Chattogram route.

Besides, she opened the Sheikh Russell Water Treatment Plant in Chattogram, Bangabandhu Water Treatment Plant in Khulna, and two bridges -- 575-metre bridge over the Titas river in Brahmanbaria and 456-metre bridge over the Kaliganga river in Manikganj.

The other projects are 12-hour transmission of BTV's Chattogram centre programmes, and mobile app -- "Palli Transactions" -- for digital financial services of Palli Sanchay Bank.

In the videoconference, Hasina exchanged views with beneficiaries and stakeholders of the projects.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen, Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Md Tajul Islam, Railways Minister Md Nurul Islam Sujon and former minister Matia Chowdhury MP were present.

The PM's Principal Secretary Dr Ahmad Kaikaus conducted the programme, while Financial Institutions Division Senior Secretary Md Ashadul Islam, Local Government Division Secretary Helaluddin Ahmed, Information Secretary Kamrun Nahar and Railways Additional Secretary Md Mujibur Rahman made presentations of the projects implemented by their respective ministries.

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Ito Naoki, Indonesian Ambassador to Bangladesh Rina P Soemarmo, World Bank's country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan Mercy Miyang Tembon and ADB country director for Bangladesh Manmohan Parakash also attended the programme.

93k migrants

FROM PAGE 16

couldn't identify their proper number instantly," Momen said in a written reply.

Of the 93,000 Bangladeshi workers with expired visas, 80,000 are staying in the UAE; 5,000 in Kuwait; 4,000 in Egypt; 2,500 in South Korea, and 1500 in Iran, the foreign minister said.

Momen said a total of six lakh Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia got the opportunity to apply for work permits between 2016 and 2018 following diplomatic efforts of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia.

Of the six lakh in Malaysia, the minister said around four lakh had received work permits.

"At present, there is no ongoing process in Malaysia for undocumented migrant workers to get legal status," the foreign minister added.

In the written reply, Momen said as many as 52,000 Bangladeshis had returned from Malaysia over the last five months following the Malaysian government's declaration of general amnesty for illegal migrant workers.

About Saudi Arabia, the minister said the Saudi government in December 22 last year announced a "Special Exit Programme", paving the way for illegal workers with expired visas to return to their respective countries.

The Bangladesh Consulate office in Jeddah has started providing services to eligible Bangladeshi migrants as per the Saudi government's guidelines under the programme.

"The migrant workers who will return to their countries under the Special Exit Programme, will be able to go to Saudi Arabia after obtaining valid visas," Momen said.

He also added that the number of migrant workers with expired visas will be known through the ongoing process.

Foldable Boeing

FROM PAGE 16

finally touched down at Boeing Field in Seattle to rapturous applause from the plane manufacturer's employees.

After the flight, arch-rival Airbus tweeted: "Congratulations @BoeingAirplanes on the maiden flight of the #777X -- a great achievement!"

The Boeing 777 has been a familiar sight at the world's airports for a quarter century. The "X" version has a slightly wider fuselage, significantly larger engines and much wider wings -- spanning 235 feet.

The wingspan places the 777X in the same "ICAO code F" category as the Superjumbo, which would significantly restrict the number of airports in which it could be used.

To counter this, the 777X is fitted with retractable wingtips that, for taxiing, can be raised to reduce the wingspan to 212 feet -- the same as the current Boeing 777-300.

Boeing says new breakthroughs in aerodynamics and engines mean the 777X will deliver 10 percent lower fuel use and emissions and 10 percent lower operating costs than the highly successful Airbus A350.



Security personnel patrol in Lal Chowk area during the Republic Day parade happening at Sher-i-Kashmir cricket Stadium in Srinagar, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Invisible they remain

FROM PAGE 16

University. Since February 2018, the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) has been working to create a digital database of farmers.

According to the database, the number of female farmers in Kapasia upazila is only 425. To put this into context, the number of agricultural families is 68,701 and there are a total of 1,76,298 women in the upazila.

Mohammad Mokhesur Rahman Khan, sub-assistant plant protection officer at the DAE Kapasia, said they are working to create a more comprehensive database, which now has 63,110 male and 5,591 female farmers listed in the upazila. "We are going door-to-door to collect the information of farmers," he said.

However, local women engaged in agriculture, said they are not listed as farmers and have not encountered such activities by the local DAE officials.

"We are directed to enlist only one name from an agricultural family. If the husband and wife are both engaged in agricultural work, we take down the information of the husband only," said Mokhesur.

When asked why the DAE Kapasia was asked to only collect the names of male farmers for the digital database, Md Azam Uddin, director of the Integration of Farmers' Information in Agriculture Portal Programme, said the DAE office is not able to allocate sufficient funds to each local officer for all the work involved in the database.

"The officer you mention may only be covering the male members of agricultural families to accommodate the allocation he received," he said. The vast amount of information to be gathered means the work is happening slowly, he added.

The DAE, however, is targeting a

complete database by 2022, he said.

Of the roughly 2.05 crore agricultural cards distributed by the DAE, only 6.6 percent are held by women. These women, too, only got these farming debit cards because they were the head of the household, or there were no male members in the family, said Md Mizanur Rahman Khan, deputy director (monitoring), DAE.

"We basically give one card to each family and if it is headed by a male, he usually takes the card," he explained.

Although both the National Women Development Policy 2011 and the National Agriculture Policy 2018 mention taking the necessary steps to assess and recognise women's farm activities and contribution, and eradicate wage discrimination in agriculture, the reality is quite different.

If we look at national level data, the number of female farmers in the database is 3,791,272 in a total of 9,183,763 farmers, according to Azam.

Agriculture Information Service (AIS) data, however, shows that more than 68 percent of the female labour force is involved in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.

Women's work invisible According to AIS data, 45.6 percent of women in agriculture work for free. While the rest 54.4 percent are paid for their labour, their wages are lower than the market rate.

Shykh Seraj, award-winning agriculture development activist, says if we think just about rice cultivation, of the 23 separate tasks involved in rice production, women directly participate in 17 of these -- including seed preservation, sowing, and applying fertiliser.

"The other six steps -- planting,

reaping, threshing, carrying the crop home, storing in woven bamboo containers, and selling in the market -- are men's jobs. But, with the passage of time, women have proved that they too are engaged in these steps, especially in threshing," he said.

On the other hand, women are usually engaged in 90 percent of the tasks in the beef fattening value chain, said Dr Md Shaukat Akbar Fakir, project coordinator of ActionAid's Making Market Work for Women project.

"They only depend on the male members of the family to sell the cows and milk, as women usually don't have access to the local cattle market," he added.

Rezaul Karim Siddique, eminent agricultural researcher and the anchor of BTV's longest-running agricultural show Mati O Manush, said that since the price of the male labour has increased over the years, the participation of women in agro-based activities has increased.

According to an October 2018 report in The Daily Star, the female participation rate in agriculture has gone up from 58.9 percent in 1988 to 76.7 percent in 2016.

"In semi-commercial agriculture, women's presence is seen in every node of the value chain. But they remain invisible because it is the men who are engaged in the activities, from buying inputs to selling the products in the market, that take place in public," said Rezaul.

According to a 2011 report by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase farm yields by 20-30 percent. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5-4 percent.

Coronavirus' ability

FROM PAGE 1

still many unknowns surrounding it, such as how dangerous it is and how easily it spreads between people. It can cause pneumonia, which has been deadly in some cases.

China's National Health Commission Minister Ma Xiaowei said the incubation period for the virus can range from one to 14 days, and the virus is infectious during incubation, which was not the case with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

SARS was a coronavirus that originated in China and killed nearly 800 people globally in 2002 and 2003.

"According to recent clinical information, the virus's ability to spread seems to be getting somewhat stronger," Ma told a packed media briefing on the second day of the Lunar New Year holiday, adding that knowledge of the virus was limited.

Containment efforts, which have thus far included transportation and travel curbs and the cancellation of big events, will be intensified, Ma said.

Outside the epicentre, four cities -- including Beijing, Shanghai and two in Shandong -- announced bans on long-distance buses from entering or leaving their borders, a move that will affect millions of people travelling over the Lunar New Year holiday.

The popular southern province of Guangdong, Jiangxi in the centre, and three cities made it mandatory for residents to wear face masks in public.

President Xi Jinping said during a politburo meeting on Saturday that China was facing a "grave situation".

China yesterday announced a temporary nationwide ban on the sale of wildlife in markets, restaurants, and e-commerce platforms. Wild and often poached animals packed together in Chinese markets are blamed as incubators for viruses to evolve and jump the species barrier to humans.

Snakes, peacocks, crocodiles and other species can also be found for sale via Taobao, an e-commerce website run by Alibaba.

The New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society called on China to make the ban permanent.

The US State Department said it will relocate personnel at its Wuhan consulate to the United States and will offer a limited number of seats to private US citizens on a January 28 flight to San Francisco.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said yesterday the government was working with Chinese authorities to arrange a charter flight for any Japanese nationals who wish to return from Wuhan.

France's government and the French carmaker PSA also said they were formulating plans to evacuate staff and families, who will be quarantined in a city in a neighbouring province, reports AFP.

The World Health Organisation this week stopped short of calling the outbreak a global health emergency, but some health experts question whether China can continue to contain the epidemic.

China confirmed 1,975 cases of patients infected with the new coronavirus as of January 25, while the death toll from the virus has risen to 56, state broadcaster CCTV reported yesterday.

No fatalities have been reported outside China.

The outbreak has prompted widening curbs on movements within China, with Wuhan, a city of 11 million, on virtual lockdown, with transports links all-but severed except for emergency vehicles.

HEALTH AUTHORITIES AND MISTRUST Health authorities in Beijing urged people not to shake hands but instead salute using a traditional cupped-hand gesture. The advice was sent in a text message that went out to mobile phone users in the city yesterday morning.

Beijing also postponed the reopening of the city's schools and universities after the Lunar New Year holiday, state radio reported. Hong Kong had already delayed the reopening of schools to February 17.

Health officials in Orange County, California, reported that a third case of the virus had been registered in the United States, in a traveller from Wuhan, who was in isolation and in good condition.

On Saturday, Canada declared a first "presumptive" confirmed case in a resident who had returned from Wuhan. Australia confirmed its first four cases.

China has called for transparency in managing the crisis, after a cover-up of the spread of the deadly SARS virus eroded public trust, but officials in Wuhan have been criticised for their handling of the current outbreak.

"People in my hometown all suspect the real infected patients number given by authorities," said Violet Li, who lives in the Wuhan district where the seafood market is located.

"I go out with a mask twice a day to walk the dog -- that's the only outdoor activity," she told Reuters by text message.

The outbreak has overshadowed the start of the Lunar New Year, when hundreds of millions of Chinese travel at home and abroad to be with families, with public events cancelled and many tourist sites shut.

Overall passenger travel declined by nearly 29 percent on Saturday, the first day of the Lunar New Year, from a year earlier, with air passengers down nearly 42 percent, a transportation ministry official said.

Many cinemas across China are also closed with major film premieres postponed.

Hong Kong Disneyland and the city's Ocean Park were closed yesterday. Shanghai Disneyland, which expected 100,000 visitors daily through the Lunar New Year holidays, has already closed.

Airports around the world have stepped up screening of passengers from China, although some health officials and experts have questioned the effectiveness of these efforts.

Let people decide

FROM PAGE 16

"tear up all of the ballots" from the 2016 presidential election and attempting to prevent Trump from running for re-election in November.

"They are here to perpetrate the most massive interference in an election in American history and we can't allow that to happen," the White House counsel said. "Let the people decide for themselves."

DEATH VALLEY

The Democratic-controlled House impeached Trump on December 18 in a party-line vote, setting up a trial in the Senate, where Republicans hold a 53 to 47 seat edge and the president enjoys the support of Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

A two-thirds majority, or 67 senators, is required to remove a president from office and Democrats do not appear to have made any significant inroads so far in Trump's wall of Republican support.

Following the session, top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said the president's attorneys "made a really compelling case" for calling witnesses during the trial, a move Trump has opposed.

Senator Mitt Romney, a Republican from Utah and occasional Trump

critic, said he was "likely" to support the Democrats' demand but other Republicans indicated that their minds were all but made up.

"Today we heard a case that was strong, that was clear and that completely undermined the case of the Democrats," Senator John Barrasso, a Republican from Wyoming, said of the White House defence.

Just before his lawyers began speaking, Trump fired off a tweet with insulting nicknames for leading Democrats and told his supporters to tune in to the live television broadcast.

The White House lawyers kept their opening arguments short -- just under two hours -- in part, perhaps, because Trump, a former reality television star, had complained that Saturday is the "Death Valley" of TV viewership.

IMPEACHMENT HOAX

Following the defence presentation, Trump claimed it had demonstrated how "unfairly" he has been treated and showed he was the victim of a "partisan Impeachment Hoax."

Trump's lawyers will resume his defence today. They will have 24 hours spread over three days for their

arguments but have said they are unlikely to use all the time allotted.

Saturday's brief session was a relief to the four senators battling for the Democratic presidential nomination, allowing them to return to the campaign trail.

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar and Colorado Senator Michael Bennet have been forced to remain in Washington while Biden and other candidates campaign in Iowa, which kicks off the nominating process on February 3.

Senators will have 16 hours next week to direct questions to both sides and consider whether they should subpoena witnesses, something Democrats have sought but Republicans have opposed.

The questions from senators will be submitted in writing to US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, who is presiding over the trial and will read them out loud.

Americans appear about evenly split on whether Trump should be removed, though several polls show a healthy majority want the Senate to subpoena witnesses for Trump's trial.

12 lakh

FROM PAGE 16

Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b) organised a vaccination campaign at Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar between 2017 and 2018.

Between October 2017 and December 2018, 2.2 million doses of oral cholera vaccine were given to the Rohingyas and the host community.

Bangladesh has around 66 million people at risk of cholera, said Tajul Islam Bari, a consultant at the icddr'b told The Daily Star, adding that under the National Cholera Control Plan, the government aims to eradicate cholera from the country by 2030.

Dhaka closely observing

FROM PAGE 16

considered the NRC and the CAA India's internal affairs.

"... We believe the Indian government will give full attention to its trust and understanding with the government and the citizens of their neighbouring country [Bangladesh] while taking steps on the basis of its political commitment," the home boss said in a written answer.

The highest authority of the Indian government has assured the Bangladesh government that the NRC issue would not put any unwanted impact on Bangladesh, he added.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) is on the high alert to prevent any kind of border-related illegal activities.

Actions will be taken in line with the international and border laws if any tension arises, the minister opined.

Responding to a question from treasury bench lawmaker AKM Rahmatullah, the minister said the government was implementing three projects to set up a fire station in each district.

It has taken up various initiatives to make the fire service more modern, he said, adding that the government already procured modern water pumps and necessary equipment spending Tk 223.38 crore and handed over those to different fire stations.

At least 414 fire stations are now in operation countrywide, he added.