

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK GP, Brac to provide cash aid to one lakh families

STAR REPORT

Grameenphone yesterday said they have donated Tk 15 crore to Brac's emergency food assistance fund, which will help 100,000 families, who have become jobless following the coronavirus pandemic in the country.

Each family will receive Tk 1,500 for two weeks' essential food supplies, the leading mobile carrier said in an online video conference said.

It is part of a joint initiative, "Dakhe Amar Desh" (My Nation Calls), by the world renowned non-government organisation Brac and telco Grameenphone.

During the conference, they said the ongoing social distancing drive and restriction on movement due to the Covid-19 pandemic is taking a toll on people who survive on daily wages and live in extreme poverty.

According to a nationwide survey by Brac among 2,675 low-income people in 64 districts, it was seen that 14 percent of low-income families do not have food at home. Due to the general holidays and lockdowns to enforce social distancing measures, 72 percent of the respondents reported job loss or reduced work opportunities.

In the video conference, Chief Executive Officer of Grameenphone Yasir Azman said in this global crises all in the public-private sector need to come together to tackle the upheaval caused by Covid-19.

He also requested all individuals and enterprises to join the initiative or similar ones of the government and other entities.

Asif Saleh, executive director of Brac, said, this is a humanitarian crisis, not just a health pandemic.

Brac has committed and mobilised Tk 30 crore to support 200,000 families, said Saleh, thanking Grameenphone for their generous support which will enable Brac to scale up further.

They have mobilised the entire organisation from the onset with over 100,000 field staffers, health workers, and volunteers on the ground.

Three more die

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Her sample has been collected for coronavirus tests, the health officer added.

Our Benapole and Faridpur correspondents contributed to this report.

Charged

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On September 25 in 2003, Aslam was sentenced to death for killing Manikdaha Union Parishad chairman AKM Saheb Ali Mia.

Abu Sayad Mia, chairman of Manikdaha union parishad, said Aslam often engaged in clashes and mob violence after coming out of jail.

Sub-inspector Abdullah, who is investigating the case, said police had arrested seven accused.

They told a court on Thursday that Aslam had earlier called them on the phone and asked them to take part in the clash.

While on death row, Aslam pleaded guilty to the murder and appealed to the president for mercy on May 19, 2013. On October 13, 2014, the plea was rejected and November 13, 2014, was fixed for executing his death sentence.

On November 12, Aslam started behaving in a strange manner and it appeared that he was not sane. This resulted in the suspension of the execution.

On the same day, the second petition was filed with the president on behalf of Aslam.

Aslam's sentence was commuted on February 28, 2015, and he was sentenced to 14 years in prison. After 13 years and two days of imprisonment, Aslam was released from jail, officials said.



Traders sorting out dates, a popular iftar item for Ramadan, at a shop in the capital's Purana Paltan area yesterday. With the country's Muslims beginning their fasting month of Ramadan today, the demand for iftar items like dates, gram and puffed rice has gone up significantly.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

UK, EU

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of negotiating rounds scheduled before then - from May 11 and June 1. Britain described the second round of talks as "full and constructive", but said in a statement that the two sides had made limited progress in bridging gaps.

There were "significant differences of principle" and the European Union was making demands it had not sought from other trading partners, it said. Brussels says Britain's proximity and already close ties to Europe means it is an exceptional case.

The European Commission, which is negotiating on behalf of the 27 EU members, sent to London a 350-page text on March setting out the EU's position. Barnier said Britain had only sent texts back on certain subjects.

"We need to make progress on all issues in parallel. We need to find solutions for the most difficult topics. The UK cannot refuse to extend the transition and at the same time slow down discussions on important areas," he said.

There were four areas in particular where progress was disappointing, he said.

The European Union has insisted on guarantees of a level playing field, including in areas such as taxation and state aid. Britain said this was not found in other EU trade deals.

The talks had also highlighted problems surrounding governance of the future partnership. The EU wants a single framework to oversee all areas, while Britain wants separate agreements with separate arrangements, Barnier said.

Britain was failing to give firm guarantees on fundamental rights and insisted on lowering current standards and deviating from standards on data protection and this created "serious limitations" for a future security partnership, Barnier said.

Finally, the EU negotiator said the talks had made no tangible progress on fisheries.

"The EU will not agree to any future economic partnership that does not include a balanced, sustainable and long-term solution on fisheries."

London said Brussels needed to accept Britain would control access to its waters at the end of this year and not simply demand the continuation of current quotas.

Britain formally left the bloc on Jan. 31 this year, just before the coronavirus epidemic struck Europe.

People from all walks

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Abdul Ahad, deputy commissioner of Sunamganj, said, "Labourers from different districts are coming. We are providing them with food, accommodation and ensuring their health safety as much as possible. We also arranged relief for them. Moreover, we are trying to encourage people from all social classes to take part in the harvesting."

Arman Hossain, who runs a decorator shop at Gajaria Bazaar in the district's Jamalganj upazila, said, "Since March 26, my shop has remained closed and it became difficult to survive. As I am a farmer's son, I know how to harvest and joined a team of 42 people to harvest the Boro paddy. We are getting relief, wage, and farmers are also getting help."

Around 4,000 VDP members have been working since April 21, said Rafiqul Islam, director of Bangladesh Ansar-VDP's Sylhet range.

Ariful Haque, a farmer of Gajaria village in Jamalganj, said, "I did not have enough money to employ labourers to harvest my paddy, but volunteers arranged by the local union parishad harvested an acre of Boro field without any wage. It helped me a lot."

Meanwhile, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) on April 21 issued a circular urging teachers and students to be in assistance of farmers during the harvest and permitting farmers and farm labourers to use schools and colleges.

Prof Harunur Rashid, director of DSHE in Sylhet, said, "We are getting immense responses from teachers and students. We are not sure how many of them are working. We urged all to work maintaining social distancing."

Like others, leaders and activists of Bangladesh Krishak League, Chhatra League, and other pro-Awami League organisations are working as volunteers.

Shamima Akther Khanam, a lawmaker from the reserved seats for women, has been monitoring the paddy harvesting in haor fields since April 14.

Shamima, also human resource affairs secretary of Bangladesh Krishak League central committee, said more than 1,000 leaders and activists of the organisation were involved in harvesting the paddy.

As people have extended their helping hands and the weather is favourable, 42 percent of Boro paddy in the region have been harvested till Thursday, said Srinibash Debnath, additional director of Department of Agricultural Extension in Sylhet.

But farmers are in fear as it rained yesterday morning and Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre of Bangladesh Water Development Board earlier issued a warning of flash flood on April 27 or later there.

Sunamganj DC Ahad said, "This year, the cultivation was late due to slow receding of haor water and most farmers cultivated BRRI 29 variety as neck blast disease hit BRRI 28 variety last year, which delayed the harvesting time."

[Our Lalmonirhat correspondent contributed to this report]



BSRM has been distributing PPE materials for doctors and Nurses in various Hospitals of Chattogram and Dhaka. Recently BSRM distributed PPE material at Dhaka Kurmitola General Hospital (Left) and Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital (Right). In-charges of both the hospitals received the materials from BSRM.

China unveils name of first Mars exploration mission

REUTERS, Beijing

China's space agency yesterday unveiled the name of its first Mars exploration mission, coinciding with China's annual Space Day and the 50th anniversary of the launch of its first satellite.

The Mars mission has been named Tianwen-1, the official Xinhua news agency reported, citing the China National Space Administration (CNSA).

The unmanned exploration mission to Mars is expected to be launched this year.

The name comes from "Tianwen", or "Questions to Heaven", a poem written by Qu Yuan who lived more than two millennia ago.

In the poem, questions were raised about stars and other celestial bodies.

Engineer dies

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with the death. The body was sent to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Robin used to work with a sub-contractor of the project. The main Russian construction firm is investigating the death and would submit a report soon, Ruhul added.

Lease system goes

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The Cabinet also discusses the damage suffered by the non-government educational institutions of the country during the Liberation War. An amount of Tk 3.21 has been sanctioned for these institutions. The money will be placed at the disposal of the institutions to be spent according to their plans.

ORGANISE COOPERATIVES

Bangabandhu today calls upon the people to organise cooperatives with a view to increasing agricultural production and protecting the interests of the farmers against exploitation. He further says that the government policy is to promote the cooperative movement on an intensive scale all over the country. To do that, a suitable work plan needs to be prepared without any delay, the PM adds.

NATIONALISATION OF ROAD

TRANSPORT LIKELY

Bangladesh government is likely to nationalise the entire road transport industry of the country after a complete assessment of the requirements of the people and the economy of transport mechanism. A prospective transport policy for the new-born state is also being finalised to reconstruct the war-ravaged transport system of the country.

COTTON YARN TO BE DISTRIBUTED THROUGH CARDS

The government is contemplating setting up a handloom marketing corporation with a view to providing the 10 lakh weavers of the country with raw materials at fair prices and sound marketing facilities for their products. First, a survey of the looms and weavers will be conducted. Secondly, cards will be issued to weavers. Thirdly, fair price shops will be established in the handloom centres. The weavers will get cotton yarn and other raw materials as entitled by their cards from these shops at fair prices.

SOURCES: April 26, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Ittefaq

Control

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"So, self-counselling is a big motivation and they should do it," she said, adding that if anyone feels anxious or tensed they can talk to psychiatrists over phone to get some relief.

She suggested breathing exercises and physical activities to vent the frustration and restlessness.

Biman

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cancellations of flights, said Mokabbir. **PAY CUT FOR EMPLOYEES** In an effort to reduce costs, Biman has announced a 10 percent cut in the basic pay of March for all employees, except the rank and file.

The airline also slashed other employee benefits from March.

Employees and staff of all level may see up to 50 percent deduction in their basic pay with the senior employees forfeiting a larger share, according to Biman sources.

Paying salaries of some 4,300 permanent staff would be very difficult for Biman if the loan is not sanctioned, said an official of the airline.

The deadline for suspension of air communication may extend further, sources at the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh said.

BIMAN TO OPERATE FLIGHTS ON DHAKA-GUANGZHOU ROUTE

In a major development, Biman Bangladesh Airlines has got approval from Chinese authorities to operate flights on Dhaka-Guangzhou route.

Biman is planning to begin flight operation on this route from May, a top official of Biman told The Daily Star.

Dhaka-Guangzhou route is considered as a profitable route as many Chinese and Bangladeshis travel this route for business and tourism, said the official.

US-Bangla Airlines and China Southern Airlines are currently operating flights on this route.

Remembering on Her 9th Death Anniversary

"Whoever works righteousness, male or female, and has Faith, Verily, to him will We give a new Life, a life that is good and pure and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions."

Al-Koran; Sura Al-Nahl: verse-97

*A friend philosopher and guide to us
You had been with loving care.
You are in our heart with eternal fragrance.
And now that to infinity you have journeyed
Your teachings and wisdom we cherish and share.*



Fawzia Samad
(1929 - 2011)

Ex-President, Dhaka Ladies Club
(1973 - 2011)

Towhid Samad, Fancy Samad Alam, Tamju Samad Anwar, Sabrina Samad

Armenia decries crimes against 'civilisation' on genocide anniv

AFP, Yerevan

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan yesterday decried crimes against "civilisation" and demanded an apology from Turkey as his country marked the 105th anniversary of the WWI-era Armenian genocide.

The genocide is a "crime not only against our ethnic identity, but also against human civilisation," Pashinyan said in a message after laying flowers at a genocide memorial in the capital Yerevan.

Commemorative events were scaled back this year due to the coronavirus restrictions imposed throughout the country, and the Yerevan memorial was closed to the public.

In a short video address at the memorial, Pashinyan said that after more than a century, "the consequences of the genocide have not been eliminated."

"Turkey has not yet apologised for what it did," he said, adding that Yerevan "demands" that Ankara officially recognise the massacres as genocide.

Armenians say up to 1.5 million people were killed as the Ottoman Empire was falling apart during World War I in what amounted to genocide, a claim supported by some 30 countries.

Turkey fiercely rejects the genocide

label, arguing that 300,000 to 500,000 Armenians and at least as many Turks died in civil strife when Armenians rose up against their Ottoman rulers and sided with invading Russian troops.

Yerevan has long demanded Ankara provide financial compensation and restore property rights to the descendants of those killed in the 1915-1918 massacres, which Armenians call Meds Yeghern or the Great Crime.

Pashinyan said Armenians "are still facing the challenges posed to our people at the outset of the twentieth century."

He said that instead of visiting the memorial, Armenians worldwide will be able to send their names to a mobile number to have them displayed on the pillars of the memorial until dawn.

Commemorations started in Armenia on Thursday evening, when street lights were switched off and church bells chimed across the country.

Yerevan residents also switched off lights in their homes and many lit candles or waved mobile telephone flashlights at windowsills.

Last month, Armenia -- which has reported 1,596 coronavirus cases and 27 deaths -- declared a state of emergency and imposed a nationwide lockdown to slow the spread of the infection.