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**PLACE: Cox's Bazar**

**DATE: 21/05/2020**

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### **First Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) Isolation and Treatment Centres officially opened by the Government of Bangladesh in Cox's Bazar**

UNHCR and the Government of Bangladesh, including the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mr. Md. Kamal Hossain and the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Mr. Md. Mahbub Alam Takluder, as well as partners Relief International, Food for the Hungry, BRAC and WHO, have inaugurated the first two Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) for refugees and Bangladeshi communities in Cox's Bazar.

These two SARI ITCs, one located within Camp 5 of Kutupalong refugee camp, the second in Ukhiya Upazila, will serve the needs of almost 200 COVID-19 positive patients suffering from moderate to severe symptoms.

"It is a historical moment for us. We have inaugurated this first centre virtually. Right from the beginning of our humanitarian activities, UNHCR has been a pioneer," said Mr. Md. Mahbub Alam Talukder during the first inauguration ceremony on Monday 18 May, which he officially opened via an online connection.

"From the Government side, we are very grateful to UNHCR. In this urgent COVID-19 situation, UNHCR has made this facility which will help many COVID-19 positive patients, both inside and outside of the camps" said Mr. Md. Kamal Hossain, Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar District today at the second inauguration ceremony for the 144 bed SARI ITC in Ukhiya.

"While there are cases in both the camps and the host community, now people have a place to come for isolation and proper treatment, where they can recover and return to their communities. This will keep the community safe. This has been a truly collective effort and achievement" said Hinako Toki, Senior Operations Manager, UNHCR Cox's Bazar.

This is part of a broader humanitarian effort by all partners in Cox's Bazar to provide support to the Government of Bangladesh to combat COVID-19, and to ensure capacity to respond to the clinical needs of those with the most severe symptoms. A total of 12 SARI ITCs will be constructed overall, with a capacity of approximately 1,900 beds for refugees and host community.

Additional resources and support including personal protective equipment (PPE) has already been provided to existing national health care facilities in Cox's Bazar District as well as to primary health centres within the Rohingya refugee camps.

UNHCR will also soon complete the preparation of an 18 bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in the Sadar Hospital in Cox's Bazar, with 10 ICU beds and 8 high dependency beds, as well as providing staffing, for those with the most severe needs.

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