



PRESS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH
DHAKA



Most Urgent
For: Bangladdoot, All Missions
MSG: 221/2020-21
Date: Tuesday, 13 April 2021

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News Brief

The government has announced strict enforcement of country-wide lockdown from April 14 (tomorrow) to 21, to contain the spread of COVID-19. The Cabinet Division announced the gazette notification in this regard yesterday saying, "All the government, semi-government, autonomous, financial and private offices will remain closed. All the employees and officials have been asked to stay at the duty station during the lockdown." But the air, sea, river, land ports and its concerned establishments will remain out of the purview of the instructions. All types of inland transportation including road, river and international flight operations will remain shut down. But cargo transportation, manufacturing and emergency services will remain out of the order. Industries and factories are allowed to operate their respective units through maintaining health guidelines. But factories and industries must have to ensure transportation for commuting their respective workers. Law enforcement agencies, emergency utility services, farm inputs including fertilizer, seed, pesticides, farm machineries, food grains, food items transportation, relief distribution, health care services, Covid-19 vaccination, electricity, water, gas, fire service, port operations, telephone, internet, mass media including print and electronic media, private security, postal services and other emergency cargo and service related offices, employees and their own transportation will remain out of the restrictions. Unless of any emergency situation like medicine and essentials purchase, medical treatment, burial or funeral of dead body, none will be allowed to go outside of home. Travelling for vaccination purpose after showing vaccination card will be allowed. All the shops including shopping malls will remain closed during this time. But food shops, hotels and restaurants are allowed to open only for sale and supply of food between 12pm and 7pm and 12am to 6am daily. Commodities and daily essentials sales are allowed in open space from 9am to 3pm daily, but the market authority and the local administration will ensure this. Transportation of farm laborers for harvesting of the Boro crop will be coordinated by the concerned district administrations, the notification said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stressed the need for equipping peacekeepers with appropriate training and equipment with facing new crises in the peacekeeping operations at the advent of newer technologies alongside invisible enemies like the coronavirus. The Premier was virtually addressing the concluding ceremony of 'Exercise Front Runner of Peace-2021' organized by the Bangladesh Army marking the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence, held at the Bangabandhu Cantonment, Ghatail, Tangail yesterday. The Premier also opined that the multinational exercise, participated by the military members from India, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka along with their Bangladeshi counterpart, will be a milestone in establishing Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's philosophy of peace. The Premier highlighted various measures taken by the government aiming to build a highly professional and trained military.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader urged the authorities concerned to remain alert so that goods-laden transport cannot carry homebound passengers during lockdown. He came up with the call while speaking at a view-exchange meeting with the BRTA officials through videoconferencing yesterday. He stressed the need for strengthening monitoring so that health guidelines, including mandatory use of masks, could be ensured in public transport. If necessary, the number of mobile courts should increase. The cooperation of Deputy Commissioners can be sought in conducting mobile courts at district level, he further said. Turning to politics, the Minister said, alongside the ruling party, a non-communal strong opposition is an urgent to institutionalize democracy in the country.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud, who is now on a visit to Europe from April 5 last, is continuing to take university classes online along with performing his ministerial activities through e-filing. Dr. Hasan also maintains regular contact with the party leaders and workers. The Minister, over phone said to media that it has been possible because of mere implementation of 'Digital Bangladesh' by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Dr. Hasan is expected to return home this week.

Bangladesh's economy is showing nascent signs of recovery backed by a rebound in exports, strong remittance inflows, and the ongoing vaccination program, said a new World Bank report titled "Bangladesh

Development Update – Moving Forward: Connectivity and Logistics to strengthen Competitiveness,” launched through a virtual media briefing yesterday. Mercy Tembon, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan chaired the launching session virtually. In FY21, the World Bank said, the real GDP growth for Bangladesh could range from 2.6 to 5.6 per cent depending on the pace of the ongoing vaccination campaign, the extent and duration of mobility restrictions and how quickly the world economy recovers. If the inward remittances to Bangladesh continue its robust and resilient growth, then growth in this fiscal year could be around 5 per cent, Mercy Tembon said.

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert Chatterton Dickson said, the ties between Bangladesh and the United Kingdom are wide and deep. He said, they will continue to work with Bangladesh in the spirit of steadfast friendship embodied by "His Royal Highness." In a statement issued yesterday, he also expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and people of Bangladesh for their condolence at the death of Prince Philip, Husband of Queen Elizabeth.

Maximum 20 devotees can offer daily prayers in congregation at mosques amid the surge in coronavirus cases. However, 20 devotees and five mosque staff, including Khatib, Imam, Muajjin and Khadem, will be able to offer Taraweeh prayers in mosques during the holy month of Ramadan. The Religious Affairs Ministry issued a circular in this regard yesterday. The ministry also urged all to offer Juma prayers at mosques maintaining social distancing and health guidelines.

The Dhaka University authorities have this year decided not to bring out 'Mangal Shobhajatra' in celebration of the Pohela Boishakh, the first day of Bengali New Year, to be observed tomorrow, considering the COVID -19 pandemic. However, portraits, symbols and art works featuring the Mangal Shobhajatra, prepared by the artist of Fine arts faculty, will be exhibited and broadcast through electronic media, a press release said.

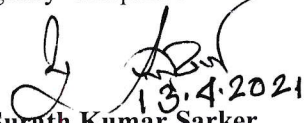
All banks and Non-Bank Financial Institutions will remain closed during the seven-day strict lockdown, Bangladesh Bank took the decision at a meeting yesterday. During this period, alongside the branches of all banks, all the sub-branches providing financial services, booth banking, agent banking services will also be closed. However, all online services including ATM and internet banking will remain open all the time. Besides, some authorized dealer branches in selective areas and branches in port areas will remain open, sources said.

In the wake of sharp surge of COVID-19 infection and fatality, the Supreme Court yesterday imposed a ban on producing under-trial prisoners before any subordinate courts or tribunals for holding bail hearings or any other proceedings. Meanwhile, the hearing of urgent (criminal) bail applications without any physical presence in lower courts and tribunals across the country started from yesterday, sources said.

The Department of Agriculture Marketing-DAM has fixed the price of six essential commodities-chickpeas per KG between Taka 63 to Taka 67, onion per KG Taka 40, edible oil one-liter bottle Taka 139, edible oil five-liter bottle Taka 660, big sized lentil per KG Taka 67 to Taka 69, small sized lentil per KG Taka 97 to 103 and sugar per KG Taka 67 to Taka 68, ahead of the Holy Month of Ramadan so that no businessman could make excessive profit pursuing unholy means. Several government agencies headed by the ministry of Commerce will regularly monitor the markets to ensure selling of essential products with the newly-fixed price, DAM Director General Mohammad Yusuf said.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission-BERC re-fixed the retail price of a 12.5 kg LPG cylinder marketed by the state-owned company at Taka 591 while a 12 kg LPG cylinder supplied by private companies would cost Taka 975, Chairman of BERC Md. Abdul Jalil said this at a press briefing yesterday. The price will be adjusted every month based on the Saudi Contract Price of Propane and Butane, the raw materials for the cooking gas, he said.

The country yesterday recorded the highest COVID-19 deaths for the third consecutive day with 83 more fatalities, taking the death toll to 9,822. With 7,201 fresh cases, the tally of infection surged to 6,91,957. At the same time recovery count rose to 5,81,113, DGHS disclosed this information in a press release yesterday. A total of 22,456 people were administered the first dose of COVID-19 vaccines while 1,38,879 received the second dose of the vaccine across the country yesterday. With this, the number of vaccine receivers given the first dose of vaccine rose to 56,49,563, while a total of 5,22,596 people received the second dose of the vaccine. Meanwhile, the government on Sunday signed a loan agreement of US\$ 500 million with the World Bank, as additional financing for the purchase of the COVID-19 vaccine under the "COVID- 19 Emergency Response and Pandemic Preparedness" project being implemented by the Health Services Division.


13.4.2021
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