Plea for Khaleda's Release Family wrote to home ministry a few days ago

Fakhrul tells reporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's family members have applied to the home ministry for her "temporary" release, party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Íslam Alamgir told reporters yesterday.

He said the application was filed a few days ago but did not specify whether the BNP chief had sought parole.

None of the Khaleda's family members could be reached for comments.

Asked whether the party would seek any parole, the BNP leader said, "We repeatedly said seeking parole is completely depending on the choice of Khaleda Zia and her family."

Fakhrul came up with the disclosure when he, along with Gazipur BNP leaders, went to BNP founder Ziaur Rahman's grave to place wreaths.

Referring to GK Shamim's bail, he alleged that a criminal got bail. "It proves that there is no rule of law in the country.

"It also proves that Khaleda Zia is kept behind bars just out of political vengeance. A criminal got bail but a former prime minister did not," he said

Khaleda, who is now in the prison ward of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, has been in jail since she was convicted in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case on February 8, 2018. She was found guilty in another graft case later the same year.

March 17 grand

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"We will continue the Mujib Borsho celebration programmes between March 17, 2020, and March 26, 2021 Considering the prevailing situation across the world caused by the coronavirus outbreak, we are going to rearrange the programmes," he told reporters after a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban.

"The re-scheduled programmes will be declared tomorrow [today] after a meeting of the committee," said Kamal, a former principal secretary to the PM.

He said commemorative notes, stamps and other publications would be unveiled on March 17.

Kamal added that the grand rally would be held later, and when the rally would be held, foreign guests, who were supposed to join the programme, would be invited again.

Asked whether Narendra Modi would arrive, he said he was not sure of it, but the Indian PM, along with other foreign guests, would attend the grand rally when it would be held

later. The committee had planned to arrange a gathering of around two lakh people at the rally, Kamal added.



NEWS

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina posing for a photo with the winners of Joyeeta award during a programme observing International Women's Day at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital yesterday. The award is given to women who make extraordinary contribution to the society. PHOTO: BSS

added.

DOING

First coronavirus cases confirmed

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"The situation is not that bad. Officials in hospitals that have no PPE will manage it locally. Maybe they will wear two aprons," DG of DGHS Prof AK Azad told The Daily Star last night.

City

A local company has started supplying PPE to the government, he said. Prof Azad, however, didn't say how

many PPEs would be supplied.

Sources said the government has around 3,000 test kits and many more will be needed.

"Since we had no confirmed cases before, the WHO didn't provide us with the equipment. Today [yesterday], we have talked to the WHO officials. They would provide those soon," Prof Azad added. **RESPONSE PLAN HAS HOLES**

"The main problem with this new virus is it is highly contagious. No patient should be taken to a general hospital; they should be treated in facilities, may be makeshift one, dedicated

only for Covid-19 patients," Prof Muzaherul Huq, founder of Public Health Foundation of Bangladesh, told The Daily Star.

He added, "A single coronavirus patient will put other patients of the hospital at risk. It is a faulty and risky plan.'

He added that a widespread awareness campaign should be launched immediately. "Even the healthcare employees

don't seem prepared," the former WHO regional director said. He suggested that the government

inform people about its response plans immediately so that people can prepare themselves.

[#]Even a single infection may pose a grave danger," added Prof Huq.

Prof Nazrul Islam, former vicechancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University said, "The government has formed a national advisory committee, but it has no virologist. It seems like the

government has taken half-hearted cases. measures.

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS

The government has prepared a four-

'We have engaged representatives Every student should know the from all departments of the government. The law enforcing latest information on how to stay safe by maintaining proper hygiene, he agencies would help implementing the plan," Prof Azad said.

He added that it was not necessary to admit all patients to hospitals as 82 percent of the cases are mild and can be treated at home.

The government has asked people to stay alert, reports UNB.

It also asked people to wear masks in crowded places and avoid contact with pet animals.

Besides, people have been asked to keep their houses clean, wash their hands after returning home, and only eat boiled food.

For any suspected case of coronavirus, people should contact the DGHS on its hotline numbers: 01937 110 011, 01927 711 784, 01927 711 785.

consisted of four categories with the

rookie category named as category D.

matches between the Asia XI and Rest

of the World, slated for March 21 and

22 and a concert on March 18th -

both to mark the birth centenary of

Father of the Nation Bangabandhu

is set to

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Bangladesh

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take immediate appropriate steps if any problem arises in any place, Hasina said.

"All have to remain neat and clean and follow the health ministry's instructions," she opined.

In this connection, the PM said the health ministry is issuing its instructions daily regarding the coronavirus. "I will request all to follow those instructions.

Hasina urged all to create awareness about the disease.

She added that due to coronavirus, countries across the globe are facing economic hardship.

The coronavirus was first reported n China's Wuhan and now it has spread in more than 100 countries. It has infected more than 100,000 people and killed over 3,400 while half of the infected people have so far recovered.

Italy quarantines ROM PAGE 1

jumped by over 1,200 in a 24-hour period

GENUINE SACRIFICES

The World Health Organization yesterday saluted Italy's "genuine sacrifices" after the government put a quarter of the population under lockdown to try to halt the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"They are making genuine sacrifices. @WHO stands in solidarity with Italy & is here to continue supporting you," WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus tweeted.

Pope Francis expressed solidarity Sunday with the victims of the nove coronavirus in his first livestreamed prayer and message from the Vatican, reports AFP.

Two more people succumbed to the coronavirus in Washington state in US, officials said, bringing the nationwide toll to 19, while the number of confirmed cases in New York rose to 89. Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York issued a declaration of emergency.

Bulgaria, Maldives, Paraguay, Moldova and Bangladesh yesterday reported their first cases as virus veeps globe.

Five of a family in Kerala have ested positive for the coronavirus, aking the total number of cases in India to 39.

Iran's health ministry reported 49 new deaths, the highest toll within 24 hours since the start of the outbreak in the country.

"At least 194 of our compatriots who fell sick with the COVID-19 illness have passed away," health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said in a televised news conference.

Saudi Arabia said yesterday it has imposed a temporary lockdown on the eastern Qatif province, an oilproducing region and home to a large Shia Muslim population, to prevent the spread of coronavirus after 11 people there were infected.

LOWEST NEW INFECTIONS

South Korea -- which has the highest number of confirmed cases outside China with 7,313 -- added 272 new cases yesterday, far below daily increases

tier emergency response plan. The country is at level-2 after the cases STAY ALERT were confirmed. If the situation deteriorates and the country has more than 10 confirmed cases with more local transmissions in multiple areas, the emergency would

be raised to level-3 and level-4 would mean there is an epidemic. At level 3 or 4, the administration would lock down areas having high numbers of patients and quarantine

the suspected cases. colleges and Local schools, public institutions would be used as quarantine centres, while the isolation units at hospitals would handle severe

Tamim takes over as ODI captain

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two cases.

orders, he said.

the evening yesterday. The board president said that although they were initially thinking of a short-term solution, they later went with the decision to hand Tamim the captaincy for the long haul.

"We had thought of naming a captain for the short-term but after discussions on the matter in a board meeting, we have decided that we will leading in T20Is and Mominul Haque ppoint Tamim as the captain for the long term," Hassan said during a press conference following the meeting. Mashrafe had earlier announced, was to announce the names of the

that granted bail to GK Shamim in the

The appeals needed not to be moved before the Appellate Division

of the Supreme Court for canceling

the HC orders of bail as the HC

benches themselves recalled the bail

Attorney General Md Fazlur Rahman

Khan (FR Khan), who is engaged

with the HC bench of Justice AKM

Asaduzzaman and Justice SM Mozibur

Rahman, told him that he (FR Khan)

did not know about the HC order that

AG Mahbubey Alam said Deputy

a day before the third ODI, that he centrally contracted players this year. would be stepping down. Tamim's first assignment as captain will be the one-off ODI against Pakistan on April 1 in Karachi.

Tamim's appointment as ODI captain means that Bangladesh once more have three separate captains for the three different formats of the game, with Mahmudullah Rivad

time. Altogether, the central contracts Mashrafe Bin Mortaza had already retracted his name from players to The BCB president also said that BCB's annual general meeting will take place in April this year. The T20 be centrally contracted and BCB had redacted Shakib Al Hasan from the list following his ban last year. Batsmen Imrul Kayes and Shadman Islam were excluded from the list of 16 players handed by the BCB while pacers Abu Hider, Khaled Ahmed, and Rubel

Hossain also did not make the list. Mazmul Hossain

Kyrgyz police arrest dozens at Women's Day march

AFP, Bishkek

Police in Kyrgyzstan yesterday arrested dozens of protesters -- most of them women -- at a rally to mark International Women's Day after masked men attacked them and tore up their placards.

An AFP correspondent saw dozens of women detained and placed in police vehicles in the centre of the capital Bishkek where women's groups had begun to rally against gender-based violence.

The detentions came after the men wearing face masks and pointed national hats attacked the crowd, tearing up their posters, popping balloons with toy pistols and throwing eggs at the women before fleeing the scene.

Erlan Atantayev, deputy head of the Sverdlovsky police department where the women were taken, told AFP that the protesters had been detained for their own safety and because police had not been warned about the rally.

"Clashes began between the demonstrators and men wearing the face masks," said Atantayev

"We detained (the women) for violation of public order."

Atantayev said that some of the demonstrators could face fines for resisting police.

Police also detained three male assailants but did not chase after those who ran away.

Journalist Nurjamal Djanibekova said that one of the attackers broke her telephone to prevent her filming the attack

Djanibekova said 70 people were being held in the Sverdlovsky police station. Atantayey told AFP police were carrying out "explanatory work" with the detained protesters.

A court in Kyrgyzstan this week banned rallies in the centre of Bishkek until July 1 in response to a request by the city administration.

of the board of directors yesterday

Naim got central contracts for the first coronavirus outbreak.

Another agenda in BCB's meeting Mohammad Mithun, Ebadot Hossain, take place as planned but will be Afif Hossain and opener Mohammad dependent on the state of the ongoing

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested

Shamim, an influential contractor of

the Public Works Department and an

expelled Jubo League leader, on charges

of extortion and tender manipulation.

and office in the city's Niketan area

and seized eight firearms, a huge

amount of ammunition, bank fixed

deposits worth Tk 165 crore, around

Tk 1.8 crore in cash, a large stash of

US and Singaporean dollars and some

the Narcotics Control Act and Arms

Act against Shamim with Gulshan

Police Station. Anti-Corruption

Commission also filed a case against

Shamim and his mother for amassing

Later, Rab lodged three cases under

foreign alcohol.

On that day, Rab raided his house

His bodyguards were also arrested.

of around 500 recently. Two more people died, bringing the death toll to 50, according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

At least ten people were killed in the collapse of a hotel used as a quarantine facility in eastern China.

China yesterday reported its lowest number of infections since January, with nearly all the 44 new cases in the outbreak epicentre Wuhan. There were 27 new deaths from the virus, all in Wuhan and the lowest in more than a month, bringing the nationwide toll to 3,097, according to the National Health Commission.

The wife of South Africa's first novel coronavirus patient tested positive yesterday becoming the third confirmed case in the country, the health authority said.

North Korea has released more than 3,600 people quarantined over the new coronavirus, reports said.

SPORT STRUCK

Organisers of Bahrain's Formula 1 Grand Prix scheduled for March 22 said the race would go ahead without spectators

The Shanghai Grand Prix, slated for April 19, has already been postponed although the season-opening race in Australia on March 15 is set to go ahead as planned.

The Asian Champions League was put on temporary hold on yesterday, while Italy's sports m a called for an immediate suspension of the Serie A season.

Stock markets in the energydependent Gulf region plunged to multi-year lows yesterday after OPEC's failure to agree oil output cuts with its allies, especially Russia.

UK PM faces probe over luxury holiday: report

AFP, London

Britain's parliamentary watchdog is investigating Prime Minister Boris Johnson amid questions over who paid for his recent Caribbean holiday, it was reported yesterday.

The Observer newspaper said that Kathryn Stone, the parliamentary commissioner for standards in the House of Commons, had launched an inquiry earlier this week.

Johnson and his fiancee Carrie Symonds, with whom he recently announced he was expecting a baby, went on a trip to the privately owned island of Mustique over the New Year.

granted bail to Shamim. recall orders. However, I feel that the Deputy Attorney General Jannatul Ferdoushi Rupa, who is engaged with High Court benches passed the recall orders after they realized that their bail the HC bench of Justice Md Rezaul granting orders were not right," he said. Haque and Justice Bhishmadev The attorney general said his office Chakrabortty, told me that there is a had readied two separate appeals mess-up in the name of GK Shamim earlier in the day against the HC orders

HC cancels bail for GK Shamim

in his bail petition on which the bench granted him bail," he added. DAGs FR Khan and Jannatul Ferdoushi Rupa could not be reached for their comments over cell phones despite repeated attempts.

Meanwhile yesterday, Law Minister Anisul Huq said the government will examine the issues regarding the state counsels' (DAGs) unawareness about the HC's granting bail to GK Shamim.

The incident of DAGs' unawareness about the HC's granting bail to GK Shamim is unfortunate, he said while talking to reporters at Hotel Sonargaon in Dhaka.

Shamim's lawyer Advocate Momtazuddin Ahmed Mehedi told reporters that his client can move fresh petitions before the HC for bail in the cases.

Shamim may also move appeals before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging yesterday's HC orders that withdrew the orders of bail, he said.

The HC benches granted bail to Shamim in the narcotics and arms cases as he (Shamim) has been in jail for over five months, while the maximum punishment in the cases is six months' imprisonment, his lawyer Shawkat Osman told The Daily Star on Saturday.

The lawyer said Shamim could not be released from jail following the HC order, as he is arrested in two other criminal cases.

Shutdown not in consideration yet

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He said this while replying to questions about the measures they were taking and whether they would close schools across the country. The education ministry oversees 41,906 schools, colleges, madrasas and universities, with 1.94 crore students and 5.59 lakh teachers.

"We are closely monitoring the situation. We will act according to the situation and take necessary steps, Secondary and Higher Education Division Secretary Mahbub Hossain said.

"No such situation has arisen for us to close down schools and colleges. But everyone should avoid mass gatherings," Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research Director Meerjady Sabrina Flora said.

Three Bangladeshis, including two of a family who returned from Italy, have been infected with coronavirus, IEDCR confirmed yesterday.

Against this backdrop, many have requested the guardians government to close schools as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the virus.

"Many countries have already announced the shutdown of schools.

Our government should follow suit. My children are my biggest priorities. I will not send my children to school," said Jahanara Begum, a guardian in Rampura.

Motijheel Ideal School and College Principal Shahan Ara Begum said that closing schools might cause panic among the citizens. "We have already asked all students to wash their hands properly," she added.

À government hospital pediatrician said although the mortality rate of children due to the coronavirus is low, mass gathering can be a hot bed for the spread of the novel virus.

The shutting down of schools is the best option. But if the government cannot do that, they should instruct all guardians not to send their children to school if they feel feverish or are suffering from a cough or cold," the doctor added.

"If possible, school authorities should sanitise the schools and fumigate each classroom every day," the doctor proposed.

Meanwhile in India, some states have closed down schools as the number of coronavirus cases there reached 31 on Friday.

On Saturday, the Jammu and Kashmir

government ordered all primary schools in Jammu and Samba districts to shut down till March 31 with immediate effect as the union territory braced itself for possible coronavirus cases.

On Friday, Biswa Bharati authorities at Santiniketan university in West Bengal "postponed" the Boshonto Utsav (spring celebrations) scheduled on the day of Holi on March 9 to avoid large public gatherings.

The decision was taken on Friday, day after the University Grants Commission advised all universities and colleges across India to avoid large gatherings as a precautionary measure. Primary classes of all schools in Delhi will remain closed till March 31 to prevent the spread of coronavirus, the Delhi government said on Thursday. The government also asked all schools not to conduct school assemblies.

UNESCO said the coronavirus has hit the education sector hard. A record number of students are not attending schools because of temporary or indefinite school shutdowns mandated by governments in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19.

As of March 4, 22 countries in three different continents have announced or implemented school shutdowns.

Thirteen countries have shut schools nationwide, impacting almost 290 million students, who would normally attend pre-primary to uppersecondary classes.

The countries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, China [including Hong Kong and Macao], Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Georgia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mongolia, Republic of Korea and United Arab Emirates.

Nine other countries have implemented localised school shutdowns to prevent or contain the spread of the virus. Should these countries also order nationwide school shutdowns, it would prevent an additional 180 million students from attending school, said UNESCO.

Campaign for Popular Education Executive Director Rasheda K Choudhury said that shutting down schools can hamper the academic calendar.

"The government should take preventative measures, including very strong awareness programmes. They should immediately issue directives regarding the do's and don'ts at schools and those should be properly circulated among students," she said.

wealth worth Tk 297.08 crore beyond known sources of income. On September 20, a team of