



A Palestinian protester uses a sling to hurl stones at Israeli troops during clashes near the border between Israel and Central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Keep outdoor services open after Eid day

Govt asks public hospitals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Outdoor services at all public hospitals will remain open the next day of Eid to minimise sufferings that the patients may encounter during the vacation.

"Ideally, outdoor should not be closed for more than 48 hours. So, we have decided to keep the outdoor open after the Eid day," said Prof Dr Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has instructed everyone concerned in this regard as the three-day vacation sometimes leaves the hospitals in lack of healthcare services.

Emergency medical services for 24 hours as well as indoor services would remain as usual, Dr Abul Kalam told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Usually, the hospitals see fewer patients indoors during Eid vacation. Many of the doctors and other staff also take leave. But the government wants to ensure that no-one suffers due to the vacation," he said.

If required, doctors on leave would rush to the hospital in case of any emergency, he added.

Outdoor services at the public hospitals at upazila level, union health and family welfare centres and community clinics will also remain open from 9:00am to 12:00pm after the Eid day.

Dr Azad said non-Muslim medics and other staff had been requested not to take leave during the Eid holidays. In exchange, they could enjoy the leave anytime later as per their choice, he added.

The DGHS has also directed all the hospitals along the highways and upazila health complexes to remain adequately equipped with ambulances, doctors and medicines to address emergency services for those injured in road accidents.

All the hospitals will also provide improved diet to the patients on the occasion of the Eid-ul-Fitr, says a DGHS statement.

Accidents

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measures to ensure safe journey for passengers, said Md Nazmul Huda, deputy director (route) of BIWTA, Barisal.

Movement of cargo vessels, oil tankers and other goods-laden vessels, which are allowed to sail only at night, has been totally suspended from three days before the festival, although such vessels were seen moving during the daytime even a day ago.

A cargo vessel was seized as it was plying yesterday afternoon violating the special order, Nazmul said, adding the suspension would remain in force till the third day of Eid.

Meanwhile, the rescue operation for the sunken cargo vessel is underway, and a team of BIWTA is always present to facilitate easy movement of the vessels, he added.

NEW LUXURY VESSEL
Tahsin Shipping Lines yesterday launched a luxury and speedy launch, MV Deshantar, on Dhaka-Barisal route on the occasion of Eid, said HM Nurul Hayder Prince, owner of the company.

The vessel can accommodate 675 passengers and travel the distance from Dhaka to Barisal in five hours.

Close Al Jazeera TV

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State, al Qaeda, Hezbollah, and Jabhat Fateh al Sham, formerly al Qaeda's branch in Syria, the Arab official said, and surrender all designated terrorists on its territory.

The four Arab countries accuse Qatar of funding terrorism, fomenting regional instability and cosyng up to revolutionary theocracy Iran. Qatar has denied the accusations.

Qatari officials did not reply immediately to requests for comment. But on Monday, Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani said Qatar would not negotiate with the four states unless they lifted their measures against Doha.

The countries give Doha 10 days to comply, failing which the list becomes "void", the official said without elaborating, suggesting the offer to end the dispute in return for the 13 steps would no longer be on the table.

"The demands are so aggressive that it makes it close to impossible to currently see a resolution of that conflict," said Olivier Jakob, a strategist at Switzerland-based oil consultancy Petromatrix.

Several Qataris who spoke to Reuters described the demands as unreasonable. "Imagine another country demanding that CNN be closed," said 40-year-old Haseeb Mansour, who works for telecom operator Ooredoo.

Abdullah al-Muhanadi, a retired public sector shopping for groceries in Doha yesterday morning, said the boycott must be lifted before negotiations to resolve the dispute could start.

Still unfit

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Khamar" (one house, one farm) project, along with his two-year-old child was travelling on the road. He said, "It is very hard to walk on the road; it should be repaired very soon."

Talking to The Daily Star, Sadhan Moni Chakma and Manik Dhan Chakma, of Montola Para in Rangamati's Naniarchar upazila, said they did not know how long the repair work would take to complete. If the road is repaired soon, it will be good for them, they said.

Al Amin and Mohammad Sumon, sons of Rokeya Akther, 52, of Bogachhari, had to carry their mother to Rangamati General Hospital for emergency treatment as condition of the two-km road was bad.

Contacted, Abu Musa, sub-assistant engineer of the roads and highways department in Rangamati, said it would take more than a week to complete the repair work.

Amal Kanti Chakma, headman (chief) of Dholuchhari Mouza, said the district administration should fix the road as soon as possible.

Jumatul Wida

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country and the Muslim Ummah. The biggest congregation was at Baitul Mukarram national mosque.

Special arrangements were made to accommodate devotees in mosques in different parts of the capital.

Many congregations spilled over onto the nearby streets at places as mosques lacked enough space for the large number of devotees.

"There's a lot on the list that is simply not true or unreasonable, so how can we comply?" he said. "There are no IRGC (Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps) elements in Qatar and the agreement with Turkey is a long-standing diplomatic agreement so we cannot ask them to leave."

The demands, handed to Qatar by mediator Kuwait also require that Qatar stop interfering in the four countries' domestic and foreign affairs and stop a practice of giving Qatari nationality to citizens of the four countries, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Qatar must pay reparations to these countries for any damage or costs incurred over the past few years because of Qatari policies, he added. Any resulting agreement to comply with the demands will be monitored, with monthly reports in the first year, then every three months the next year, then annually for 10 years, the official said without elaborating.

US President Donald Trump has taken a tough stance on Qatar, accusing it of being a "high level" sponsor of terrorism, but he has also offered help to the parties in the dispute to resolve their differences.

Turkey has backed Qatar during the three-week-old crisis. It sent its first ship carrying food aid to Qatar and dispatched a small contingent of soldiers and armoured vehicles there on Thursday, while President Tayyip Erdogan spoke with Saudi Arabia's leaders on calming tension in the region.

Hasina

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the world as a role model of development. "This has to be continued to maintain the pace of development and the Awami League has to form the government again to serve people."

She urged people to compare the tenures of AL with those of other political parties.

Hasina directed the AL men to build themselves up following the ideals of Bangabandhu and stand by people to ensure their welfare.

She said whenever the AL came to power, it made arrangements for ensuring food, shelter, education and healthcare services for people, and improving the socioeconomic condition of the rural people.

Terming the 1996-2001 tenure of her then government a golden era of Bangladesh, she said people for the first time had realised that a government is for serving them.

During 2009-2017, the country achieved development in all sectors, including economic, social and cultural fields.

She reiterated her commitment to turn Bangladesh into a middle-income digital nation by 2021 and a developed one by 2041.

AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader also spoke on the occasion.

Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Housing and Public Works Minister Mosharrar Hossain and AL presidium members Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Sahara Khatun were present, among others.

The 10-storey AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue will have offices for the party and its associate bodies as well as a conference hall, seminar room, digital library, VIP lounge, canteen, journalist lounge and a dormitory.

'Trump village'

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The symbolic gesture comes just days before Modi's first meeting with Trump this weekend at the White House.

The water and sanitation group Sulabh, which has been installing toilets in the impoverished settlement, suggested the name change to the local council.

Sulabh founder Bindeshwar Pathak said the idea sprang to mind during a recent visit to the US.

"I was speaking there and I thought why not in the name of Trump?" Pathak told AFP, adding other villages in the region had also been renamed in recent years.

Aziz Ahmed, a villager, said he was sure the new name would stick even without official approval.

"They will only call it Trump Village. Everyone in the village is very happy about it," he told AFP.

Children at the village waved placards of Modi and Trump and a huge banner of the US president describing his Indian counterpart as "very energetic".

The leaders of the world's two-largest democracies exchanged pleasantries in a phone call in January when Trump invited Modi to the White House.

Ties between New Delhi and Washington warmed during the Obama years as India sought greater foreign investment and trade deals with Western nations.

During his election campaign, Trump courted Indian-American voters and even released a campaign advertisement in Hindi.

There have been other at times bizarre overtures from India toward Trump and the US.

A small Hindu group marked the occasion of Trump's 71st birthday last week by feeding a giant poster of the president slices of cake in the heart of New Delhi.

London fire

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of the Hotpoint fridge model, manufactured between 2006 and 2009, to establish whether further action needed to be taken, but said there was no need for owners to switch off their appliances.

Whirlpool Corp, the world's largest maker of home appliances, owns the Hotpoint brand in the Europe and Asia Pacific regions. In the United States, the brand now belongs to Haier, following the Chinese group's purchase of General Electric Co's appliance business.

"We are working with the authorities to obtain access to the appliance so that we can assist with the ongoing investigations," Whirlpool said in a statement. "Words cannot express our sorrow at this terrible tragedy."

Police said both the insulation and tiles used in cladding at the 24-storey Grenfell Tower block failed all post-fire safety tests.

"Preliminary tests show the insulation samples collected from Grenfell tower combusted soon after the test started," McCormack said.

Such were their concerns after the tests that the information was immediately shared with government to disseminate more widely.

"Given the deaths of so many people we are considering manslaughter as well as criminal offences and breaches of legislation and regulations," McCormack said.

The blaze, Britain's worst since World War Two, has heaped pressure on Prime Minister Theresa May, already fighting for her political survival after her party lost its parliamentary majority in a snap election on June 8.

When speaking about the 79 people dead or missing, presumed dead, McCormack said: "I fear that there are more."

Wheat import triples

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consumed locally as part of it is used by the bakery industry that exports processed wheat-based food items, they pointed out.

The USDA report titled "Grain: World Markets and Trade" projected that Bangladesh's wheat import would hit 6.8 million tonnes in fiscal 2017-18, making the country the fifth largest importer of the grain in the world.

The other four leading wheat importers are: Egypt (12 million tonnes), Indonesia (9.5 million tonnes), Algeria (8 million tonnes) and Brazil (7 million tonnes).

Market sources attributed this significant growth to an increasing domestic demand and stable international prices of wheat, the world's second most consumed cereal after corn.

Now, Bangladesh produces only one million tonnes of wheat a year on average. It has to import the cereal from Russia, Ukraine, Argentina, Australia, Canada and several other countries to meet the remaining 80 percent of its demand.

Wheat production had hit a record high of 1.9 million tonnes in fiscal 1998-99. But later, the acreage and production began to fall gradually as many farmers switched over to other crops such as maize, potato and vegetables that fetch higher profits.

Wheat acreage fell to its lowest level at 3.58 lakh hectares in fiscal 2011-12. It, however, started to rise with farmers giving preference to wheat over Boro due to slide in rice prices till last year.

But this year, rebound in rice prices and wheat blast disease discouraged farmers from growing wheat.

A move is underway to turn the state-run Wheat Research Centre (WRC) in Dinajpur into an independent research institute for giving fresh impetus to wheat production.

At present, the WRC operates under Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury piloted a bill in parliament on June 15, seeking to transform the WRC into Bangladesh Wheat and Maize Research Institute and give it greater mandate for taking measures to increase productivity of both wheat and maize in the country.

Contacted, WRC Director Naresh Chandra Deb said, "We're trying to increase domestic production, develop better breeds and increase the crop's acreage."

He said wheat production is expected to cross 1.4 million tonnes this year with per acre yield rising to 3.25 tonnes from 3.03 tonnes in the previous year. The rise in per acre yield was possible mainly due to better crop management by farmers in the wake of wheat blast disease.

Talking to The Daily Star, Kamruzzaman Kamal, director (mar-

keting) of PRAN-RFL Group, a leading manufacturer of wheat-based food items, said, "The consumers' dietary habits and lifestyle have changed a lot. Many of them now skip rice in lunch or dinner and have snacks, breads, noodles and other food items in which wheat is used."

He said they are exporting many wheat-based food products to markets in India, Europe, USA, Malaysia and the Middle East.

Kamal stressed the need for government efforts to increase wheat production.

Touhiduzzaman, general manager (sales and marketing) of Olympiac, one of the country's largest biscuit manufacturers, said imported wheat is milled and the flour is used for manufacturing biscuits, cake, pizza, burgers and other food items.

Though Olympiac made a late entry into the export market after meeting the huge demand in the domestic market, its current growth is higher in the export market than in the domestic market.

"We export biscuits in India, the UK, the US, and African and Middle Eastern countries," he added.

Importers credited the rise in wheat's domestic consumption to its lower prices compared to that of rice, change in food habits, and expansion of bakeries and restaurants.

Growing export-oriented food processing sector as well as wheat's stable prices in the global market also contributed to the surge in its import, they said.

Abul Bashir Chowdhury, chairman of Chittagong-based wheat importer BSM Group, said low-income groups in both urban and rural areas are increasingly choosing wheat-based food items for their cheap prices.

According to a FAO report, while rice prices marked a steep rise, prices of imported wheat and flour have been generally stable over the last 12 months as a result of improved availabilities from the 2017 wheat harvest and increased imports in recent months.

The continuing distribution of flour by the government through Open Market Sales also helps keep its prices at low levels, the FAO noted.

London police

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everyone to pray for peace, not any retaliation.

On June 19, a van ploughed into a crowd of Muslims near the Finsbury Park Mosque, leaving Ali dead and 10 others wounded.

Darren Osborne, 47-year-old van driver from Cardiff, was charged with "terrorism-related murder and attempted murder" over the attack.

WARMBIER DEATH N Korea accuses US of 'smear campaign'

AFP, Seoul

North Korea yesterday accused the US of waging a "smear campaign" over the death of a student who was sent back home in a coma, denying he was tortured or abused.

President Donald Trump has slammed the treatment of 22-year-old American Otto Warmbier, who spent more than a year in detention in the secretive state, as "a total disgrace".

"The smear campaign against (North Korea) staged in the US compels us to make firm determination that... we should further sharpen the blade of law", the foreign ministry spokesman said according to state media.

"The US should ponder over the consequences to be entailed from its reckless and rash act," he said in an apparent warning over the fate of three other US citizens currently being held in the country.

The spokesman said that Warmbier was provided with proper medical treatment, and questioned why he died so soon after returning to the US.

"The fact that Warmbier died suddenly in less than a week just after his return to the US in his normal state of health indicators is a mystery to us as well," he said.

Warmbier had been on a tourist trip to North Korea when he was detained and sentenced to hard labour early last year for allegedly stealing a political poster from a North Korean hotel.

Doctors said the University of Virginia student had suffered severe brain damage while in North Korean detention. He died on Monday at a Cincinnati hospital and was buried on Thursday. His family declined an autopsy.

The foreign ministry official denied that Warmbier was abused while in custody, condemning "groundless public opinion now circulating in the US that he died of torture and beating during his reform through labour."

He said that North Korean medics had "brought him back alive" after his "heart was nearly stopped" but did not give any further details as to why he fell ill.

The US doctors had also said that Warmbier's severe brain injury was most likely -- given his young age -- to have been caused by cardiopulmonary arrest cutting the blood supply to the brain.

In the first official reaction to his death, a spokesman for the National Reconciliation Council earlier Friday said that Warmbier was treated according to "international standards".

"Those who have absolutely no idea about how well we treated Warmbier under humanitarian conditions dare to utter 'mistreatment' and 'torture'," he said according to the official KCNA news agency.

Warmbier's fate has sparked strong condemnation in Washington, and inflamed already high tensions stoked by Pyongyang's atomic tests and missile launches.

On Wednesday, Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis said that US patience with Pyongyang was running out.

"To see a young man go over there healthy and, (after) a minor act of mischief, come home dead basically... this goes beyond any kind of understanding of law and order, of humanity, of responsibility toward any human being," he said.

The North's foreign ministry spokesman put the blame for Warmbier's death on the previous US administration of Barack Obama which it said had "not even once" made an official request for his release.

"Warmbier is a victim of policy of 'strategic patience' of Obama who was engrossed in utmost hostility" against North Korea and refused to hold any dialogue, he said.

The spokesman said that Warmbier was released on humanitarian grounds after repeated requests from the current administration but that it had been repaid with criticism that represented a "frontal challenge."