



**COVID-19
REGULATORY UPDATES**

28 March – 12 April 2021



COVID-19 Related Directives

As of 12th April 2021, globally there are nearly 135 million coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and nearly 3 million people death due to the pandemic. The new strains of SARS-CoV-2 including the predominating variant in South Africa 501Y.V2 and the UK variant B.1.1.7 with high affinity and transmissibility is causing second and third wave of coronavirus cases in many countries. Bangladesh is experiencing the second wave of coronavirus cases since early March, as a result has seen surge in record number of cases and death per day with most districts put in high alert. In response to the resurgence, the Government has taken various measure to curb the spread of the virus.

The Prime Minister's Office declared 18 – point directive on public gathering effective for two weeks ([PMO COVID-19 circular dated March 29, 2021](#)) considering the ongoing coronavirus situation:

- a) Restriction on public gathering (for social, political, religious or other reasons) and no gathering shall be allowed in high transmitting areas. Birthday/marriage programs are discouraged;
- b) Adhere to health related guidelines in mosque and other places of worship;
- c) Gathering in tourist spot/entertainment center/cinema hall/theatre hall must be limited and all organizing fairs must be discouraged;
- d) Adhere to health guidelines in public transportation and deduce the capacity to transport half;
- e) Inter-district travel must be restricted from high transmitting area, if required completely stop movement;
- f) Passengers coming to Bangladesh must quarantine themselves for 14 days at their own expense;
- g) All essential shops to remain open maintaining COVID-19 related health guidelines;
- h) All educational institutions including primary, secondary, higher secondary, universities, madrasas and coaching centres will remain closed;
- i) Legal action will be taken against those not wearing masks and following the hygiene rules;
- j) All government and private offices, establishments and factories should be managed by 50 percent of the manpower except emergency service providers. Pregnant and ill officials or those aged above 55 should stay at home and take measures to work from there;
- k) Outdoor activity after 10 pm is not allowed, online arrangement is encouraged for meetings, seminars, trainings and workshops;
- l) Hotels and restaurants can serve only up to 50 percent of the customers they can accommodate.

In reference to the PMO Directive, the Cabinet Ministry via circular ([Conditional restriction on regular work/transportation to prevent spread of coronavirus disease, Cabinet Ministry April 04, 2021](#)) imposes partial lockdown for 7-days from 04th April 2021 to 11th April 2021. During this period, all public transportation (road, river, rail & intra-flight) was declared closed, except for vehicles engaged in transporting goods, manufacturing activity, emergency services and those travelling to/from abroad. None is allowed outside from 6 pm to 6am except for emergencies. Restaurants would only operate takeaway services. All members of law enforcement agencies, emergency services – relief distribution, health services, electricity, water, gas/fuel, fire service, ports, telephone and internet, post services etc, and other emergency services shall continue its work and transportation. The government/non-government/autonomous offices, courts and private offices may operate on limited scale for emergency service, subject to providing transportation for the employees. Industries and factories can do the same for their workers. Factories under BGMEA and the BKMEA have to take measures regarding field hospital/treatment for their workers. District and field-level administration will take necessary measures to implement the directives and law enforcement

agencies will patrol areas on regular basis across the country. The Ministry of Religious Affairs provided direction for praying in congregation adhering to health directive ([Prayers in Congregation adhering to health directives, Ministry of Religious Affairs, April 05, 2021](#)) and for prayers during Ramadan ([Urgent Notice required Prayers, Ministry of Religious Affairs, April 07, 2021](#)). The Lockdown is further extended from 14th April 2021 to 21 April 2021 (Cabinet Ministry Circular dated April 12, 2021).

Thereafter, the Cabinet Ministry directed that the local shops/shopping malls to remain open from 9 am to 5 pm subject to adhering to strict health related guidelines, and the vaccination programme will continue ([Cabinet Ministry circular on Shop and Shopping opening upon adhering to strict health related guidelines, April 08, 2021](#)). NGO Affairs Bureaus directed the NGOs and local representative to assist the Govt. in registering general public for vaccination programme from the hard to reach area ([NGOs Affairs Circular on Hard to reach area and COVID-19 vaccination, April 01, 2021](#))

The ongoing restrictions are extended until April 14, 2021 via Memo no. 04.00.0000.514.16.003.20.118 of Cabinet Ministry [Not available online] ([Conditional restriction on regular work/transportation to prevent spread of coronavirus disease, Cabinet Ministry April 11, 2021](#))

It is pertinent to mention here that although the government planned to reopen schools, university, institutions, however, due to surge in coronavirus cases, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education directed that the all government/non-government schools, kindergarden and institutions to remain close with 22 May 2021, though it encourages activities from home using online technology ([Closure of all types of govt./non-govt. institutions until 22 May 2021, March 28, 2021](#)). In this respect, the Ministry of Education decided to take action against madrasas who failed to close it during the ongoing lockdown ([Ministry of Education circular residential and non-residential madrasa, April 06, 2021](#)).

BANKING & FINANCE

In order to ensure smooth implementation of the ‘Special Incentive Refinance Scheme’ in the agricultural sector, the time limit for disbursement of loans at the bank customer level has been extended till 30th June 2021 vide [ACD Circular Letter No. 01: Refinance scheme of 5000 crore taka for providing working capital in agriculture sector due to break-out of Novel Corona Virus](#). Moreover, the maximum loan disbursement in any single sector is set at 40% instead of 30%, set previously.

In light with the [Government decisions on existing conditions of corona virus \(Covid-19\) infection](#), Bangladesh Bank instructed through [DOS Circular Letter No. 11: Conducting Banking Service in Limited Scale, April 04, 2021](#), that the Banking Transactions will be carried out from 10:00 am to 12:30pm, extended to 1 pm for 12 & 13 April, 2021 [DOS Circular dated April 11, 2021](#). However, if necessary, to carry out ancillary activities, the concerned bank branch might be kept open till 2:00 pm.

Previously on 31st March 2021, the Central Bank published [BRPD Circular Letter No. 19: Directives to Prevent Outbreak of Corona Virus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) March 31, 2021](#) directing the scheduled banks to adhere to the PMO 18-point directive. Moreover, BB published another [DFIM Circular Letter No. 08: Instructions for the Financial Institutions to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19, April 04, 2021](#), which is symmetrical to the previous circular.

In addition to that, the Central Bank, vide [PSD Circular No. 04: Continuation of Uninterrupted Banking and Payment Services in Response to COVID-19 April 04, 2021](#), has extended mobile financial services (MFS) transaction limits and credit card billing time, following the announcement of nationwide seven-day lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19.

According to a circular by the Central bank's payment systems department, monthly transaction limit for individual customers using MFS, has been increased from Tk75,000 to Tk2 lakh. At the same time, the limit of uncharged single transaction has been increased to Tk10,000.

Credit card bills cannot be taken during lockdown. The bill payment date must be extended to the next five working days after the lockdown ends. No delay fee may be charged for this extended period. Also, interest can be charged only on principal. In addition, no new interest can be charged on the next month's bill on the previous month's bill's interest.

The central bank also instructed all banks to take all necessary measures to keep all types of digital transactions uninterrupted. These instructions will be valid for the lockdown period of 5 to 11 April. But, if the lockdown period extends, the instruction period will also extend. This means, as long as there is a lockdown, this directive will remain in force.

The Central Bank vide [DOS Circular Letter No. 13: Keeping bank branches closed from 14 April 2021 to 21 April 2021](#), has stated that all scheduled banks will remain closed during the lockdown period of 14 to 21 April 2021, but the officers and employees of the banks should be present at their respective workplaces on time. Additionally, bank branches, sub-branches, and its ATM booths located in the sea, land and airports, as well as customs areas should be opened at all times by consulting with the local administration and customs authorities.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Reviewing the deterioration tendency of COVID-19 pandemic throughout the country and globally, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) [mandated 14 days of institutional quarantine](#) for all passengers coming to Bangladesh at government facilities or government approved hotel at passenger's own expenses. Passengers from the European countries and the following countries are barred from entering into Bangladesh: 1. Argentina 2. Bahrain 3. Brazil 4. Chile 5. Jordan 6. Kuwait 7. Lebanon 8. Peru 9. Qatar 10. South Africa 11. Turkey 12. Uruguay. Irrespective of the COVID-19 vaccination, all passengers coming to Bangladesh shall mandatorily possess & show 'PCR based COVID-19 negative certificate' during departure from origin and on arrival at the Airport. The PCR test shall be done within 72 hours of the flight departure time.

CAAB has also [imposed an entry ban from 03.04.2021](#), for passengers from European countries except UK and 14 other countries, including, Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Chile, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Peru, Qatar, South Africa, Turkey and Uruguay. Lastly, CAAB [suspended all domestic flights](#) from 04.04.2021 to 11.04.2021 amid surging coronavirus cases.

Following the government guidance and instruction, with effect from 0001 BST on 12 April 2021 until 2359 BST on 13th April 2021, all schedule domestic passenger flights and charter flights of Helicopter/General Aviation will remain suspended. However, medevac, humanitarian/relief and corporate flights are out of the purview of this restriction. With effect from 0001 BST on 14 April 2021 until 2359BST on 20 April 2021, all sorts of domestic/local/training flights will remain suspended. Only the cargo, medevac, humanitarian/relief and the flights cleared under special consideration will be allowed to operate ([CAAB Suspension of domestic flights, April 04, 2021](#))

Following the government guidance and instruction, With effect from 0001 BST on 14 April 2021 until 2359BST on 20 April 2021, all international passenger flights to/from Bangladesh shall remain suspended, except for medevac, humanitarian/relief/cargo, technical landing and flights cleared under

special conditions remains out of the purview of the suspension ([CAAB Suspension of all International Passengers flights to/from Bangladesh, April 11, 2021](#))

Furthermore, the Forest Department under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change vide a [circular dated 03.04.2021](#) has called for closure of all tourist spots regulated by the department including parks, safari parks, eco parks, national parks, botanical gardens, aviaries, wildlife sanctuaries, etc. from 03.04.2021 till 15.04.2021 to restrict visitors amidst rapid rise of Covid-19 cases.

In order to assist the bus and mini-bus owners adhere to restriction on its carrying capacity (reduced to half), the Ministry of Transport and Bridges pursuant to section 34(2) of the Road Transportation Act, 2018 increased the fares of tickets by 60% to next two weeks, subject to the bus owners adhering to the health-related guidelines ([BTRA Circular on Bus fares, March 29, 2021](#), [April 07, 2021](#) and [April 11, 2021](#)).

The Ministry of Health has taken steps to increase general public from district, sub-district and division level to see treatment in their local hospitals and to avoid influx into the capital - Dhaka ([MoHS circular on Patients travelling to Dhaka for COVID-19 related treatment, April 08, 2021](#))

BUSINESS ORGANISATION AND STOCK MARKET

The Ministry of Commerce has informed that due to the ongoing coronavirus situation, the deadline for holding annual general meeting and electing committee for all trade organisation is extended until 31st December 2021 ([Ministry of Commerce licensed organisation may hold annual general meeting and election of executive committee until 31st December 2021, April 06, 2021](#) and [April 07, 2021](#)). Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) has informed factories in Karnaphuli EPZ that the Govt. is going to declare 07 days complete lockdown from 14 April 2021, as such compliance to the buyers requirements the factories may be opened until then, and arrangement for production plan should be made according ([BEPZA Circular dated April 10, 2021](#)).

Considering the Covid-19 pandemic situation and interest of the investors, Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission has issued a [Directive on 04.04.2021](#) stating that TREC (Trading Right Entitlement Certificate) holders of the stock exchanges will extend maximum limit of credit facilities to their approved clients under the Margin Rules 1999.

Sub-registry office

Considering the present situation and by referring the circular no – 04.00.0000.514.16.003.20.111 dated 04.04.2021 the Directorate of Registration declared on 05.04.2021 by a circular that only register the important Deeds/documents by maintaining physical distance and preventive safety measure.

COURTS IN BANGLADESH

Both High Court Division and Appellate Division of Supreme Court of Bangladesh have issued notifications on 04.04.2021 regarding to conducting the judicial activities of the Court to a limited scale during the period of two weeks lockdown. These notifications shall be effective till 11.04.2021. Due to constitutional reasons, the Chief Judicial Magistrate/Chief Metropolitan Magistrate court would remain open adhering to health directives ([COVID-19 situation – Opening of Chief Judicial Magistrate/Chief Metropolitan Magistrate and bail related issue, April 04, 2021](#)). Under the circular,

those having received bail from lower court or high court shall have their bail deemed extended for next two weeks.

The [Bangladesh Supreme Court issued notifications in regard to functioning of High Court division on limited scale, on April 04, 2021 and April 11, 2021](#) , which stated that from 05.04.2021 onwards, the Bench of the High Court, constituted by the Hon'ble Chief Justice, shall hear the cases of Divisional Bench, Writ and Company-Admiralty, on urgent civil and criminal matters, through virtual presence. Accordingly, four benches have been duly constituted by the Hon'ble Chief Justice by issuing a notification on [April 05, 2021](#) and [April 11, 2021](#).

According to the [Bangladesh Supreme Court Appellate Division Notification dated April 04, 2021](#), the chamber judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court will hold hearing on urgent matters only through virtual presence on Tuesday and Thursday from 11 am. Similar instruction was posted to continue the Chamber judge on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9.30 am to 12 pm ([Bangladesh Supreme Court Appellate Division Notification dated April 11, 2021](#)).

The Court has directed that considering the ongoing coronavirus situation, bail and urgent criminal related matters/applications can be heard through virtual means using information technology from 12 April 2021 until further notice on par with Use of Information Technology by Court Act, 2020. Due to constitutional reasons, the Chief Judicial Magistrate/Chief Metropolitan Magistrate court would remain open adhering to health directives ([Bail application and urgent criminal matters through use of information technology, April 11, 2021](#) and [procedure for disposing bail application and urgent criminal matters through use of information technology, April 11, 2021](#))

RMG, SPINNING AND WEAVING SECTOR

In light of the surge in coronavirus cases, the Ministry of Labour and Employment direct that the organisations/businesses adhere to health-related guidelines for prevention/spread of the disease ([MoLE Circular on surge in coronavirus cases, March 25, 2021](#)). Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) in its circular no. [BGA/health/2021/41 dated April 03, 2021](#), has instructed the members to keep open factories on the condition of strict hygiene compliance during lockdown. The members were further instructed to transport its employees to work via private transportation of the concerned organization, to transfer any sick employees to its health center in order to ensure treatment, to ensure compliance with government policy regarding worker movement and to run office on minimum workforce. Furthermore, by [circular BGA/health/2021/2038 dated 30.03.2021](#), it was instructed to comply with factory opening protocols.

Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) in its circular no. [BTMA.600.1470 dated 04.04.2021](#), has instructed its members to attach a logo of BTMA that has been signed by its president in all its vehicles to ensure round the clock movement during the government-imposed lockdown. The vehicles that are used for the purpose of transporting yarn and cloth manufactured by export-oriented spinning and weaving mills to supply to the local market, transporting workers and employees falls under the scope of this.

LIST OF CIRCULARS / NOTIFICATIONS

Banking and Finance	Date
ACD Circular Letter No. 01: Refinance scheme of 5000 crore taka for providing working capital in agriculture sector due to break-out of Novel Corona Virus	31.03.2021
DOS Circular Letter No. 11: Conducting Banking Service in Limited Scale	04.04.2021
DFIM Circular Letter No. 08: Instructions for the Financial Institutions to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19	04.04.2021
BRPD Circular Letter No. 19: Directives to Prevent Outbreak of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)	31.03.2021
PSD Circular No. 04: Continuation of Uninterrupted Banking and Payment Services in Response to COVID-19	04.04.2021
DOS Circular dated April 11, 2021	11.04.2021
DOS Circular Letter No. 13: Keeping bank branches closed from 14 April 2021 to 21 April 2021	12.04.2021

Travel restriction [Local/International]	Date
PMO Coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission related directive on public gathering	29.03.2021
Registration guidelines for vaccination against covid-19 for foreign nationals residing or working in Bangladesh	03.03.2021
Conditional restriction on regular work/transportation to prevent spread of coronavirus disease, Cabinet Ministry April 04, 2021	04.04.2021
Prayers in Congregation adhering to health directives, Ministry of Religious Affairs, April 05, 2021	05.04.2021
Urgent Notice required Prayers, Ministry of Religious Affairs, April 07, 2021	07.04.2021
Cabinet Ministry circular on Shop and Shopping opening upon adhering to strict health related guidelines, April 08, 2021	08.04.2021
NGOs Affairs Circular on Hard-to-reach area and COVID-19 vaccination, April 01, 2021	01.04.2021
Conditional restriction on regular work/transportation to prevent spread of coronavirus disease, Cabinet Ministry April 11, 2021	11.04.2021
Closure of all types of govt./non-govt. institutions until 22 May 2021, March 28, 2021	28.03.2021
Ministry of Education circular residential and non-residential madrasa, April 06, 2021	06.04.2021
CAAB circular on Mandatory 14 days institutional quarantine for the passengers coming to Bangladesh	30.03.2021
CAAB circular on Revised travel restrictions due COVID-19 pandemic	31.03.2021
CAAB circular on All schedule/non-schedule domestic passenger flights and charter flights of Helicopter/General Aviation will remain suspended	04.04.2021
CAAB circular on Impositions of conditions on overall activities and movement in order to prevent the spread of Coronavirus	04.04.2021
MOEF circular on Closure of Tourist Spots regulated by Forest Department	03.04.2021
Ridesharing app restriction	31.03.2021
CAAB Suspension of domestic flights, April 11, 2021	11.04.2021
CAAB Suspension of all International Passengers flights to/from Bangladesh, April 11, 2021	11.04.2021
Lockdown April 14, 2021 to April 21, 2021	12.04.2021

Business Organisation and Stock Market	Date
<u>Ministry of Commerce licensed organisation may hold annual general meeting and election of executive committee until 31st December 2021, April 06, 2021</u>	06.04.2021
<u>BSEC Order regarding Margin loan facilities</u>	04.04.2021
<u>BSEC Directive on Margin loan facilities</u>	04.04.2021
<u>BEPZA Directive on lockdown from 14th April 2021</u>	10.04.2021

Courts in Bangladesh	Date
<u>Dressing for lawyers to conduct hearing in Civil/criminal court/tribunal</u>	30.03.2021
<u>High Court Division Notification No. 124 regarding carrying out court activities in limited scale from 05.04.2021 to 11.04.2021</u>	04.04.2021
<u>Formation of Four High Court Division Benches</u>	05.04.2021
<u>Appellate Division Notification No. 05 regarding carrying out court activities in limited scale from 05.04.2021 to 11.04.2021</u>	04.04.2021
<u>High Court Division Notification No. 08/2021 regarding carrying out court activities of Chief Judicial Magistrate/Chief Metropolitan Magistrate in limited scale</u>	04.04.2021
<u>Bangladesh Supreme Court functioning of High Court division on limited scale from April 12, 2021</u>	11.04.2021
<u>Bangladesh Supreme Court Appellate Division Notification dated April 11, 2021</u>	11.04.2021
<u>Bail application and urgent criminal matters through use of information technology, April 11, 2021</u>	11.04.2021
<u>Procedure for disposing bail application and urgent criminal matters through use of information technology, April 11, 2021</u>	11.04.2021

Business Associations	Date
<u>Factory Opening Protocol</u>	30.03.2021
<u>In the context of following health rules in vehicles used to transport factory workers</u>	03.04.2021
<u>In the context of keeping the factory open on the condition of compliance with hygiene during lockdown</u>	03.04.2021
<u>BTMA regarding ensuring round the clock movement of vehicle</u>	04.04.2021
<u>REHAB Circular on transportation of goods</u>	04.04.2021