

Kazakhstan bans public events over coronavirus

March 12 2020

Kazakhstan on Thursday said it would close schools and universities and ban public events to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus after the WHO declaration of a pandemic.

"The government is beginning to implement special preventative measures. Public events are cancelled," President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said on Twitter.

Kazakhstan, which shares borders with a number of countries including China and Russia, has not confirmed any cases of the coronavirus.

But Tokayev told officials to take measures to prevent the spread of the disease in the oil-rich Central Asian country of 18 million people.

"A temporary ban is being introduced on mass cultural and sporting events, conferences and exhibitions," the president's office said in a statement.

Cinemas will be closed while sporting events will take place without spectators.

The measures are to take effect from Friday.

Authorities said [school holidays](#) would begin early on Monday, while universities would move teaching online.

Celebrations for Nowruz, a traditional spring festival later this month, have been cancelled as has a parade to mark 75 years since the end of World War II in May, Tokayev's spokesman Berik Uali said on Facebook.

International forums will also be postponed, Uali added.

Kazakhstan said it would hold consultations in Geneva over whether to go ahead with a World Trade Organization ministerial conference set to take place in the capital Nur-Sultan in June.

Tokayev said it was important to ensure there is no shortage of food and essentials and that containment measures did not hurt small- and medium-sized businesses.

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