

Turkey suspends collective mosque prayers over virus

March 16 2020

Turkey on Monday suspended collective mosque prayers, including the important Friday prayer, until further notice to limit the spread of the new coronavirus.

"It is necessary to suspend collective prayers at mosques for a period," said Ali Erbas, the head of Turkey's religious affairs authority, Diyanet.

Around 90,000 mosques will however remain open to individuals who wish to pray individually, Erbas told reporters in Ankara.

Turkey has in recent days stepped up its measures to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, shutting schools and universities for a limited period.

The interior ministry on Sunday said nightclubs, bars and discotheques would be "temporarily" closed from Monday.

Turkey officially has recorded 18 cases of the virus. On Sunday, thousands of pilgrims returning from Saudi Arabia were quarantined.

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