



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

**TIMES LIKE THESE...** Even during times that necessitate caution, the density of the crowd at Hatirjheel on Friday afternoon did not wane. As a man strolled around the area wearing a mask, his daughter's face remained unprotected, exposing her to risks of contracting the novel coronavirus. **Top right,** a family is enjoying some together time on the banks of the Hatirjheel, but with no kind of visible cautionary steps. **Bottom right,** a motorcade accompanies a newly-wed couple, moving really close to each other to take selfies, exactly the opposite of what should be done in these times.

SAARC COVID-19 EMERGENCY FUND

**Four countries pledge \$2.3m**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives have announced their contributions to the Saarc Covid-19 Emergency Fund, which was proposed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 15, to fight spread of the deadly virus under a common regional strategy.

Afghanistan and Nepal pledged \$1 million each, the Maldives pledged \$200,000 and Bhutan \$100,000.

Bangladesh is also working on the making contribution to the fund, which will be finalised today, said a foreign ministry official.

The development comes amid rising cases of Covid-19 that has triggered lockdowns in many countries worldwide, especially in Europe. Experts warn that it may turn serious if immediate and effective measures are not taken now, especially in the countries that are highly populated.

Saarc leaders too voiced similar concerns during a videoconference on March 15. On that day, the Indian PM had made an initial offer of \$10 million.

Medical supplies, including masks, testing kits, and sanitisers were already dispatched to Bhutan and the Maldives from India, while requests from other

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2 parties call for 15-day nationwide lockdown

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid the rise of coronavirus cases in the country, two political parties yesterday urged the government to enforce a 15-day complete shutdown in the country, to contain the spread of the virus.

In separate press releases, Workers' Party of Bangladesh and Bangladesh National Awami Party-Bangladesh (NAP) also demanded free food, especially for marginalised people, and medicare services for all during the lockdown.

"Different countries including China and South Korea are dealing with the situation through a complete shutdown, and this country's people are also demanding a strict role of the government; we think, the incumbent government also has that

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CORONAVIRUS TRANSMISSION

**Misinformation spells trouble for pet owners**

Legal notice served on six govt bodies

MATHEWS CHIRAN

With the arrival of novel coronavirus striking fear in the hearts of many, misinformation circulated through social media and leaflets by a number of government bodies has caused worries for pet owners in the capital, as some landlords have notified tenants to get rid of their pets or vacate the house.

In light of this, an animal rights group on March 18 served a legal notice on six government agencies, asking to take necessary steps.

According to the World Health Organization, the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and World Organisation For Animal Health, there is not enough evidence that the Covid-19 virus can be contracted through pets. However, they all suggested to maintain hygiene while dealing with animals.

This correspondent found digital leaflets by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) circulating on social media, as well as a notification of the Press Information Department (PID), saying the virus spreads through animals.

Supreme Court lawyer Sayeda Ferdous Ahmed lives in a flat in Dhanmondi with eight cats. On March 15, the building's flat owners' association issued a notice to keep the flats free from pets, as a precautionary measure to coronavirus.

"They said they held a meeting. I am an owner of a flat too. But I didn't know that such a decision has been taken. The general secretary of the association is not cooperating with me about this either," she complained.

"We can't just dispose of off our pets!" she exclaimed.

The manager of the society was contacted numerous times over phone, but he declined the calls.

Ifkhar Mahmud rented a house this January in Nikunja. He has seven pets including cats, hamsters and gerbils. Last week, his house owner asked him to discard his pets or leave the house.

"I decided to leave the house and look for a house whose owner is not holding on to rumours. Such a situation happened as they [house owners] got misinformation from different leaflets and social media,"

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Bus driver, helper held for killing cop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch of police arrested a bus driver and his helper from Pallabi on Friday on charge of killing a police official in old airport area on March 18.

The arrestees are: driver Mohammad Golam Mostafa (60) and Abdul Mannan Latif (45), said Sahadat Hossain, additional deputy commissioner (Pallabi) of DB.

Jahangir Alam, an assistant sub-inspector of Kafrul Police Station, died after being hit by a bus while trying to catch a mugger in Agargaon.

Jahangir, deployed in the area, saw a mugging incident near the old airport around 8:15pm. As he chased the muggers, a speeding bus hit him.

He died at Suhrawardy Medial College Hospital.

DB sources said Mostafa hit and killed a woman seven years back when he used to drive a Gabtoli-Sayedabad bound bus.

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