90 businesses fined

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The monitoring team also visited several grocery shops at the city's Boro Bazar and warned shopkeepers to not hike prices of daily commodities.

Due to high demand and people stockpiling commodities, prices have rapidly increased. A bag of rice went for Tk 400 a few days ago, but is now being sold for Tk 500.

"There is no shortage of rice and other goods. Some traders are taking advantage of the predicament to earn extra profit, so market monitoring teams are trying to prevent them from doing so," said DC Kabir.

In Noakhali, mobile courts conducted drives at shops in several upazilas and slapped a total fine of Tk 2.78 lakh.

The drives were conducted in six upazilas -- Chatkhil, Companiganj, Senbagh, Subarnachar, Begumganj and Hatiya -- on Friday from the morning till 10pm.

Kulsum Moni, assistant commissioner (land) and executive magistrate, said many traders were hiking prices of commodities in Chatkhil upazila, and on information, authorities started the drives. They fined eight shops Tk 32,000 in total.

In the district's Companiganj upazila, four businesses were fined Tk 13,000. Four shops were fined Tk 12,000 in Hatiya upazila. At Senbagh Pouro Bazar, two rice traders were fined Tk 9,000.

In Subarnachar upazila, drives were conducted at several markets throughout the day. A total of 18 businesses were fined Tk 1.07 lakh.

In Begumganj upazila, a mobile court fined Jagannath Rice Mill Tk 80,000 for hiking prices. Meanwhile, authorities seized 1800kg of onion from a storehouse at Choumuhani Bazar and sold them for Tk 30 per kg in the open market.

Noakhali DC Tonmoy Das said there is no shortage of commodities, and action will be taken against those who will create artificial shortage.

2nd Edition

A mobile court inspects a shop at a kitchen market in the capital yesterday, to see whether any trader has hiked prices. Such drives will continue as unscrupulous businesses are trying to capitalise on the situation centring the coronavirus. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Govt prohibits visitors at hospitals Bss, Dhaka

In a bid to minimise the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, the government has imposed a restriction on the presence of visitors at all hospitals across the country.

The ban will remain in force until further notice, a DGHS press release said yesterday.

A letter signed by Additional Director General of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) Prof Dr Nasima Sultana has been sent to all authorities concerned in this regard.

They include specialised institutes, medical college hospitals, district-level hospitals and civil surgeons - prohibiting visitors at the hospitals, the press release added.

The move came after the recent coronavirus outbreak in the country.

This initiative is part of various steps taken by the government to tackle the deadly virus.

Kajol was followed

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4:14pm on March 10. Several unidentified men can be seen suspiciously moving around his motorbike and keeping an eye on it for nearly three hours before he leaves the premises.

In six minutes between 5:59pm and 6:05pm, three men approached his motorbike separately and appeared to tamper with it, it added, referring to the footage.

The journalist is seen getting out of his office with another person at 6:19pm and walking past his motorbike. He then comes back and can be seen leaving the place on his motorbike alone at 6:51pm.

That is the last time anyone has seen or heard from him, the rights body added. Police registered a complaint from

the family on March 11 regarding his

disappearance, but refused to accept a case for investigation during the crucial first days, and have denied having him under custody. It was only after a High Court order was conveyed to the police on March 18 that they carried out the first actions, the statement mentioned.

after Saifuzzaman Shikhor -- a ruling party lawmaker from Magura-1 -- filed a case against him, editor-in-chief of daily Manabzamin Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, and 30 others on charge of publishing a report with "false information" and

"We urge the authorities to immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of the journalist and release him if he is under state custody without any further delay," said Saad Hammadi.

2 parties call FROM PAGE 3

capability. There is no scope for hesitation in this regard," said a press release by Workers' Party.

The left-leaning party also urged citizens to follow the government's outlines in controlling coronavirus outbreaks and safety measures.

They claimed that a corrupt group of businessmen, creating a syndicate in markets, is gaining profit by increasing commodity prices illegally.

"That is why people are buying more products at a time, and the situation would lead to a severe crisis soon; so the government should enforce a complete

Kajol's disappearance came a day

circulating it on social media.

Four countries pledge

FROM PAGE 3

countries are under various stages of progress, reported Economic Times

"The emergency fund is up and running. The quantum of assistance requested so far as crossed \$1 million,' India's Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said.

Sediq Sediqqi, spokesperson for the Afghan president, vesterday tweeted that the Afghan government has approved the contribution of \$1 million.

Bhutanese Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering said, 'Thank you. The amount may be small but it is contributed with lots of prayers and affection from all Bhutanese for the larger interest of the people in the region. This noble initiative of PM @narendramodi will be of huge help to those more needy.'

Maldives Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid said, "We welcome PM @narendramodi's initiative to create a COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund and its pledge of USD 10million. Government of Maldives joins the initiative and pledge USD 200,000 to address issues emanating from COVID-19.

A foreign ministry official of Bangladesh said Dhaka is working on its contribution to the fund, as well as a number of other aspects that could help address the special situation created due to coronavirus, without revealing details.

Preparations fall

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Airport, Tamabil Land Port and several immigration check posts in the area from February 6 to March 20.

Dr Premananda Mandal, civil surgeon of Sylhet, said, We have started enforcing home quarantine from March 15 and generating a list of people who came from abroad." He said the lists were being forwarded to all the offices of civil surgeons in the division.

So far, 1,214 people were in home quarantine till Friday while four have been hospitalised.

Misinformation spells FROM PAGE 3

said Ifikhar, a university student.

It has been only one month since Mozammel Hoque Hridoy rented a house in Rayerbag. But since the news of coronavirus spread, his house owner asked him to leave the house immediately with his cats.

"It is difficult to find a house at such a short notice. I tried to convince them, but they did not listen. They misbehaved with me for trying to persuade them," said Hridoy, a private jobholder.

Despite repeated attempts to contact a number of building owners who had given out such notices, none could be reached over phone for comments.

LEGAL NOTICE ON GOVT BODIES

People for Animal Welfare (PAW) Foundation, an animal rights organisation, sent legal notices on March 18 to six different government entities -- DGHS, Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), DNCC and DSCC, Department of Livestock Services and PID to immediately stop the circulation of the misinformation.

Founder Chairman of Paw Foundation Rakibul Haq Emil said, "Leaflets and social media posters are circulating that animals can spread Covid-19. However, WHO, CDC

followed their activities for several months.

CID sues 12

FROM PAGE 5

and OIE never said any such thing; rather they said to maintain hygiene always, and it is a regular drill for everyone."

"Without understanding the fact, people are panicking. If it continues, imagine what will happen to livestock in villages. Besides, us pet owners are also facing difficulties in this regard. Government entities should take steps regarding the matter," he told The Daily Star.

When asked if PID checked on the matter before circulating it, Chief Information Officer of the department Surath Kumar Sarker said, "The information was given by DGHS, as they are the experts on it. We don't have experts. But we will look into it."

Contacted over phone, DNCC Chief Health Officer Brig General Momimur Rahman Mamun said, "We didn't know that people are panicking over the spread of the disease by animals. We will talk with our health officers and raise awareness so that people don't panic over misinformation of spreading of the virus by animals."

Asked the same the question, Prof Dr Sanya Tahmina, additional director general (planning and development) of DGHS, said, "There is no evidence that Covid-19 spreads through animals directly. If someone disseminate such information on behalf of us, then we'll check it.'

Aminur Rahman, Shafiqul Islam Shafik, Shah Azam, Faisal Rahman and Enamul Haque.

Each of them stand accused in three to The CID said their bank accounts have

According to CID Abdus Shukur has wealth worth around Tk 1.30 crore, Ekram Hossain around Tk 69 lakh, Nurul Kabir 16 previous cases, said the police official. has 19 plots of land worth around Tk

to take realistic initiatives including arrangement of essential safety measures of doctors who are involved in treatment of

Nayapaltan, NAP secretary general M Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan urged the government to impose section 144 countrywide for at least 15 days, in order to prevent a massive outbreak of coronavirus, said a party press release.

the virus, and urged all political parties, irrespective of their ideological differences,

said the statement. The party also urged the government

Covid-19 patients. While speaking at a discussion in

He stressed on national unity to combat



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shutdown countrywide as early as possible," to help the countrymen

