

Kajol was followed, his bike tampered with: Amnesty Int'l

Rights group urges govt to find 'missing' journalist

STAR ONLINE REPORT

Unidentified men approached journalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol's motorbike and appeared to tamper with it, the day he was last seen before what is feared to be an enforced disappearance, Amnesty International said yesterday.

"The suspicious activities of unidentified men captured in the footage are compelling evidence that shows that he was being followed only a day after the police opened an investigation against him. Since then, he has not been seen and his fate and whereabouts remain unknown," said Saad Hammadi, South Asia Campaigner at Amnesty International, in a statement.

In a CCTV footage released by the human rights watchdog, Kajol, editor of Dainik Pokkhok, arrived on his motorbike at the newspaper's office at Meher Tower in the capital's Hatirpool at

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Parabat-12 reached Barishal River Port from Dhaka yesterday, with a deck full of passengers. Most launches arriving in the major river port were seen carrying a large number of commuters.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Seven returnees fined for defying quarantine

STAR REPORT

Defying home quarantine orders by the government to fight the novel coronavirus, many expatriates were reported to be freely roaming around after returning to the country recently. Amid such circumstances, mobile courts yesterday fined seven people in separate drives, report our correspondents.

In Chattogram's Rangunia upazila, a UAE expatriate was fined Tk 20,000 for violating home quarantine rules. A mobile court lead by UNO Masudur Rahman conducted the drive.

Dipankar Barua (40), hails from Raozan, and was visiting a relative in Rangunia. This blatant violation of the quarantine led to his being fined, the UNO said.

In Dhaka's Nawabganj upazila, three overseas returnees were fined in Nayanree and Jantral unions, for not conforming to quarantine rules. They were fined Tk 3,000 each by a mobile court, led by UNO Salauddin Manji and Md Razibul Islam, assistant commissioner (land).

In Mymensingh's Gafargaon upazila, a Malaysia returnee was fined and ordered to be in home quarantine yesterday evening.

Md Yunus Ali (35) returned home on March 15 and was supposed to be on 14-day mandatory home quarantine. However, he was roaming around his home at Rasulpur Chakpara freely.

On information, a mobile court led by UNO Kazi Mahbubur Rahman fined Yunus Tk 10,000, and sent him to 14-day home quarantine, said officer-in-charge of Gafargaon Police Station Anukul Sarker.

In Bagerhat's Chitalmari upazila, two Oman returnees were fined for not staying in home quarantine. A mobile court fined Akash Bairagi (40) and Ershad Sheikh (35) Tk 7,000 each for the offence.

'Man behind viral rumour' held in Ctg

STAR REPORT

Police in Chattogram yesterday arrested a physician, for allegedly spreading rumour about coronavirus through an audio clip circulated via Facebook messenger.

The arrest was revealed at a press conference at the office of Deputy Commissioner (north) of CMP, reports our staff correspondent.

The arrestee, Iftekhar Mohammed Adnan -- who was working at a private hospital in the port city -- was arrested from a restaurant at Proborotk intersection, said Bijoy Bosak, deputy commissioner of CMP.

Bosak said Adnan admitted his role behind the audio that went viral on social media.

"We will interrogate him further to find what the purpose of the audio was, and who else are involved in the plot," he added.

The audio, which appeared to be a phone conversation and was allegedly recorded by Adnan, said coronavirus cases were on the rise in Chattogram, urging the man on the other side to be cautious and to pray.

1 HELD IN MANIKGANJ
A youth arrested for spreading rumour on coronavirus through Facebook gave confessional statement before a Manikganj court yesterday, reports our correspondent.

Md Hafizur Rahman, Additional Superintendent of Police in Manikganj, said Saddam Hossein Ovi (25) made a post from his personal Facebook ID on Friday, where he wrote that one person had died in the district of coronavirus, and three others were infected.

"It is a rumour; there is no coronavirus-affected patient in the district," the ASP said.

"After the post came to our notice, he was arrested from Bachamara Bazar on Friday evening," he said.

He was sued under the Digital Security Act, the police official added.

TACKLING CORONAVIRUS IN SYLHET

Preparations fall short

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

A hospital that has been struggling with lack of equipment and staff members for a decade has been declared "Corona Isolation Centre" in Sylhet, without any upgrades.

While visiting the healthcare centre in the city's Chowhatta area recently, this correspondent found the duty doctor, nurses and a staff member were failing to deal with an Italy returnee and his wife -- who came to the hospital following authorities' order to quarantine themselves there.

The medical staff did not have enough hand gloves or masks, let alone any personal protective equipment (PPE). As a result, they were visibly apprehensive to examine the suspected coronavirus-affected persons.

This is the situation at Shaheed Shamsuddin Ahmed Hospital, which is supposed to be the best bet to tackle the spread of the deadly virus and provide healthcare services to people in the division.

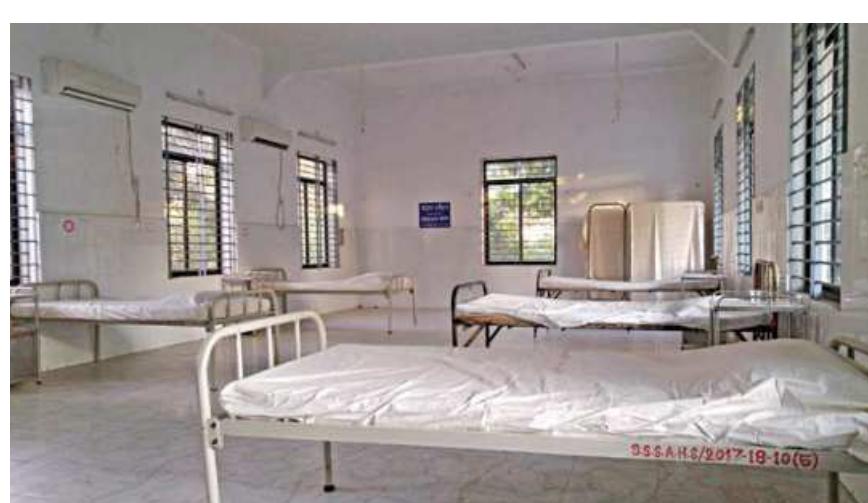
The 100-bed hospital has prepared some cabins and five beds in a ward as an isolation unit.

However, there is no central oxygen supply at the hospital, intensive care unit (ICU) and critical care unit (CCU), advanced medical equipment or any non-contact infrared thermometer.

Sushanto Kumar Mahapatro, resident medical officer at the hospital, said, "We received some PPEs recently, but we weren't satisfied with the quality and asked the authorities to replace those soon."

Meanwhile, to provide healthcare services to Covid-19 affected people, isolation centres have been set up at two hospitals in Sylhet, plus one in Moulvibazar, two in Sunamganj and one in Habiganj.

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Even though Shaheed Shamsuddin Ahmed Hospital has been declared a "Corona Isolation Centre" in Sylhet, facilities there remain far too inadequate. This photo was taken recently.

Waterways feel the rush

Nearly 1 lakh people leaving Dhaka daily to southern districts amid Covid-19 panic

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Amid growing concerns over the spread of coronavirus, thousands have started returning to their homes in Barishal region via waterways.

Passengers said they were leaving Dhaka, as the city has become "unsafe". Besides, the authorities were limiting activities at workplaces, they said.

Barishal Deputy Commissioner SM Ajior Rahman said any restriction is yet to be imposed on waterways vessels as well as road transport, but there is an advisory not to carry overseas returnees and those who are ill.

During a visit to Barisal River Port yesterday morning, six launches were found coming from Dhaka. Their authorities said some 12,000-15,000 passengers were aboard the vessels. None of the launches -- except MV Manami that plies on Dhaka-Barishal route -- examined passengers before boarding. Manami supervisor Sahadat Hossain said they were allowing passengers to board only after going through a thermal scanner.

"If anything is found unusual, we discourage them to travel," he said.

SM Zakir Hossain, supervisor of MV Sundarban, said they are trying to make passengers aware of the situation.

Ajmol Huda Mithu, joint director of BIWTA, said more than one lakh people have been leaving Dhaka every day for the country's southern region via 38 routes for the last one week. The turnout was almost twice of the usual number, said the official.

Monir Hossain, a fruit trader from Dhaka's Shyambazar, said he went home with four family members, as his children's educational institution was closed.

Dr Basudeb Das, divisional director of DGHS in Barishal, said they called upon people to avoid mass gatherings and crowds.

90 businesses fined Tk 9 lakh for hiking price

STAR REPORT

When the whole world is frantically trying to tackle the novel coronavirus, some unscrupulous traders are capitalising on the situation to earn a quick buck. As a result, prices of necessary commodities have risen in the last couple of days.

In such circumstances, authorities are carrying out drives at markets in different districts to stop this practice. Approximately 90 businesses were fined around Tk 9 lakh in the last two days.

In Dhaka, several drives were conducted at different areas by separate authorities yesterday and slapped fines amounting to around Tk 5.06 lakh.

At Mirpur-1 Kacha Bazar, two businesses were fined Tk 25,000 for failing to produce price list of products. During other drives, five traders were fined Tk 45,000 in the area.

At Wari, supermarket chains Shwapno and Big Bazar were fined Tk 10,000 each for hiking prices of onion and hand-gloves, respectively.

Three shops were fined a total of Tk 8,000 for failing to show price list at Kamrangirchar. Four shops were fined Tk 13,000 in total at Shantinagar. At Dhamrai, eight people were fined Tk 1.66

lakh for hiking the price of rice. Two shops were fined Tk 13,000 at Baridhara Bazar for failing to show product price list.

During drives at Banasree, supermarket chains -- Shwapno, Meena Bazar and Daily Shopping -- Abbas Rice Agency and a poultry shop were fined a total of Tk 1.25 lakh.

At Karwan Bazar, nine traders were fined Tk 47,000 for hiking prices and not showing correct price list. Nine traders were fined Tk 44,000 for different reasons at Tejgaon Nakhalpara.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) of Dhaka Shafiqul Islam said the drives will continue until further notice. Dhaka Additional District Magistrate Kazi Nahid Rasul said the mobile courts are being properly supervised.

In Pabna, police and the district administration launched massive drives in key markets of the district yesterday and fined several traders for hiking prices.

Pabna Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kabir Mahamud and Pabna Superintendent of Police Md Rafiqul Islam visited rice markets in the morning and fined four large wholesale shops a total of Tk 1.25 lakh for hiking prices.

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DRU to provide ambulance service for its members

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) yesterday launched an ambulance service for its members and their families in the wake of coronavirus outbreak.

Deputy Minister of Water Resources Enamul Haque Shamim formally inaugurated the service at an event at the DRU auditorium, said a press release.

Journalists will be able to avail ambulance facilities equipped with staff members wearing protective gears for transporting suspected coronavirus patients to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, DRU said in a statement.

A DRU team will work in coordination with IEDCR.

DRU said it took the initiative to ensure swift detection and treatment of any suspected infection among its 1,800 members and their families. "Two ambulances will remain ready on DRU premises round the clock to provide the service," the statement said.

If any member or someone in the member's family shows coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, they may call the DRU coordination committee members for arranging the service and necessary treatment facilities. The names and contact numbers of coordination committee members have already been e-mailed to the members.

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