

## Deadly H5N1 bird flu found in UK

REUTERS, Edinburgh

Tests have shown that a wild swan found dead in Scotland had the lethal H5N1 strain of bird flu, the British government said yesterday.

Britain becomes the 14th country in the European Union to find on its territory a disease that has been blamed for 109 human deaths elsewhere since 2003.

A spokesman for the Scottish executive confirmed that the Mute swan, found last week in Cellardyke harbor in eastern Scotland, had the deadly flu strain.

The partially eaten carcass of the swan was found late on March 29 and sent to a laboratory in Weybridge, southern England, for analysis on March 31.

Amid a media frenzy over the discovery of H5N1 in Britain, government and officials tried to calm the public's concerns about the risk of transmission of the disease to humans.

"There is a better chance of a person winning the national lottery than catching bird flu in the U.K. today," doctor Jim Robertson from the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control said.

"This is an unwelcome and important development from the point of view of poultry health, but there are no implications either for human health or consumers," the National Farmers' Union said.

Scotland's chief veterinary officer Charles Milne said it was not known whether the swan was from a local or

migratory flock.

Milne said there was no indication of infections in domestic poultry, and no reason to believe the carcass had been partially eaten by a domestic animal.

Officials have set up a 3-km (1.8-mile) protection zone around where the swan was found.

Owners of birds within the zone have been told to take them indoors. A further 10-km surveillance zone is in force.

Government officials reviewed bird flu contingency plans at a London meeting on Thursday and concluded that "all relevant steps are being taken."

Bird flu remains essentially an animal disease, but can infect people who come into direct contact with infected birds.

Milne said properly prepared poultry and poultry products were entirely safe for human consumption.

Bob McCracken, past president of the British Veterinary Association, said that contact between wild birds that may be infected and poultry should be kept to a minimum.

"We also have to work on the assumption that there is some spread among wild birds ... There is no doubt we are getting closer to the day when moving birds indoors will be necessary," he said.

Scientists said they were confident that surveillance for possible cases of the disease was good enough.

## Sunny, Awal remanded again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The investigation officer (IO) of an August 17 blast case said that JMB Military Commander Ataur Rahman Sunny and its Majlis-e-Shura member Abdul Awal gave important information on the last year's country-wide serial blasts.

Both were placed on fresh remand yesterday for further interrogation.

They will provide more information and disclose names of their accomplices if they are interrogated intensively, Detective Branch (DB) Inspector Shah Mohammad Moshir Rahman, the IO, said in his forwarding report.

The case was filed with Ramna Police Station in connection with an August 17 blast on the Supreme Court premises.

Meantime, JMB (Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh) chief Abdur Rahman was taken on a 10-day remand in the case and is being interrogated.

Sunny and Awal were produced before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiqe Anwar yesterday on expiry of their eight-day remand in another August 17 blast case filed for the explosion near the TSC on Dhaka University campus. They were wearing helmets and bullet-proof vests.

The IO sought another seven days' remand for them for further interrogation in the case of the Supreme Court premises blast, which the court granted. When the magistrate asked the accused whether they want to appoint any lawyers to defend themselves, they remained silent.

Earlier, operations commander of banned Harkatul Jihad (HuJ) Bangladesh chapter Mufti Abdul Hannan and JMB Gazipur Regional Commander Enayet Ullah were shown arrested in the case and placed on remand for interrogation.

## Khagrachhari AL calls off hartal for April 9-10

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Khagrachhari district Awami League (AL) yesterday cancelled their dawn-to-dusk hartal called for April 9 and 10, as an opposition parliamentary team starts visiting the district town tomorrow.

Protesting the attacks and false cases lodged by BNP cadres and police, AL had called the hartal in Khagrachhari but cancelled it due to an opposition parliamentary team's coming to Khagrachhari, AL President Jatindra Lal Tripura said.

The team will visit Maischhari, College Gate, Muslimpara, Golabari and Modhupur areas, where the BNP activists attacked AL men, he said.

Led by Faruq Khan MP, the team also includes Birbahadur MP, Rafiqul Anwar MP and Fazlul Karim MP.

## Next polls

FROM PAGE 20  
opposition leader Sheikh Hasina at Sudha Sadan.

Barbara said she discussed with Hasina the current political situation in Bangladesh, the process of holding dialogue between the government and the opposition and the coming polls.

Briefing the reporters, Hasina's Political Adviser Saber Hossain Chowdhury said the opposition leader informed the Canadian diplomat about the rationality of 14-party combine's proposals for electoral reform.

Saber described Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's remarks on militancy in her interview with the Time Magazine as untrue.

"Khaleda has told the Time Magazine that she came to know about militancy in Bangladesh only after serial bombings across the country on August 17. But Sheikh Hasina and other party leaders came under grenade attacks on August 21 in 2004. So, Khaleda's statement is clearly incorrect," Sabersaid.

## Ershad, Manju

FROM PAGE 1  
secretary to Ershad, arranged the meeting. But he was not present at the meeting attended by JP (Ershad) presidium member Kazi Zafar Ahmed.

The JP (Ershad) sources said Ershad requested Manju to return to his party, but Manju showed reluctance.

Ershad told Manju that the way he (Ershad) expelled Tasmina Hossain, former lawmaker and wife of Manju, from the party was not logical, the sources added.

## Husband

FROM PAGE 1  
been absconding.

Azfa's dead body was taken to the Khulna Medical College and Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The police said the advocate called Afzal's wife, 28, to his house offering a job of house help and raped.

## ADB outlook 2006

FROM PAGE 1

the city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, ADB Country Director Hua Du said, "The national elections scheduled for early 2007 is likely to limit the major policy initiatives. Risks to medium prospects include external shocks and domestic political uncertainties".

However, Du admitted that if investments could be raised, the GDP growth rate may not slip.

FDI TORISE

The report forecasts that Bangladesh will see much higher FDI inflow, primarily because of FDI from India. "The latest data indicate that FDI inflows increased to \$776 million in FY2005," it noted, adding, "FDI is expected to maintain steady growth in FY2006 and FY2007, but can pick up significantly if ongoing negotiations over several large investment projects prove successful."

Flagship companies like Microsoft, Orascom and Singapore Telecom have recently begun to invest in the country. The government has also received a host of large FDI proposals from various business groups including Tata of India, Asia Energy of the UK, Dhabi Group of the UAE and Kingdom Group of Saudi Arabia.

The ADO notes, "The Board of Investment estimates that total foreign investment proposals are worth about \$10 billion, well in excess of historical levels."

TRADE ISSUES

The ADB outlook cautions that, though the country's garment sector has been expanding even after the MFA quota abolition, its competitiveness can not be understood clearly until 2008, when the temporary quotas for China expire.

In the quota-free world,

Bangladesh garment sector must enhance its competitiveness, the ADO 2006 observes and for that it suggests a number of steps to reduce the lead-time.

The report also advises the government to address three major "behind-the-border" trade barriers that affect the country's export competitiveness.

The first barrier, weakness in governance, includes corruption and a weak state of law and order, which vitiates the business environment and long-run growth, it says.

In this regard, the ADO adds, "Although the regulatory procedures involved in starting a business in Bangladesh compare favourably with other benchmark countries, the cost of transacting business in terms of per capita income is one of the highest. On other indicators too, Bangladesh lags behind comparator countries, particularly on the measures relating to regulatory quality."

Secondly, it names the poor physical infrastructure for power, gas, ports and telecommunications, which significantly increases the cost of production, impedes productivity growth and hampers export competitiveness.

"The third main barrier stems from high operating costs, partly due to steep bank borrowing charges, in turn grounded in long-standing structural and other problems, particularly among NCBs. Such high operating costs discourage investment and constrain the ability of local firms to integrate into global supply chains," the ADO concludes.

## 40 militants

FROM PAGE 20

area of North Waziristan.

The army said Wednesday that eight bodies had been recovered in that incident and that another eight were either buried or taken away by fleeing militants.

The tribal administration's statement said information gathered from the 19 people arrested indicated that around 150 militants had arrived in the area to launch attacks on security forces.

Pakistan has deployed 80,000 troops along the border to hunt down militants who sought refuge in the rugged tribal area after the Taliban regime in neighbouring Afghanistan was toppled in late 2001.

President Pervez Musharraf last month warned foreign insurgents to leave the tribal belt or be killed.

## Patients suffer

FROM PAGE 20

of the CMCH from tomorrow. The change was made on humanitarian grounds, they said.

Later, the IDA leaders met CMCH Acting Director Dr Nur Har Begum to demand a positive response to their demand from the authorities by 2:30 pm.

"No response to our demand within the given time forced us to declare the sit-in programme," said IDA Convener Dr Moniruzzaman Maruf. "If our demand is not met, we will have no option but to go for a tougher movement like paralysing the administrative activities of the hospital," he told this correspondent.

He said, "Considering the plight of emergency patients, we have also formed a 40-member team to attend to critical patients."

Doctors at the hospital said the strike by interns has also created tremendous pressure on them in providing treatment to patients.

Dr Abdur Rahman, assistant registrar of Surgery Ward-24 said with the 22 interns of the ward on strike, only five doctors were left to take care of around 150 patients in the ward yesterday.

He also feared that the situation might force them to cancel two operations scheduled for yesterday afternoon.

Dr Nur Har Begum declined to talk to newsmen who waited for about two hours in front of her office yesterday.

Intern doctors enforced the strike as they were being deprived of the increased allowance of TK 6,500 each as per the prime minister's announcement that went to effect from July 1 last year in all other government hospitals in the country.

## Murder case

FROM PAGE 20

when it came under fire, they added.

As the police returned fire, Guddu was bullet-hit in 'crossfire' when he tried to run away, claimed a police press release.

Sub-inspector Azizul Haq and constables Nurul Islam and Alamgir Hossain suffered bullet wounds and were admitted to Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital, the release added.

Guddu was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) around 2:50am where doctors declared him dead.

Police said they recovered two firearms and three bullets.

Bina's wife Sarika Sarkar, commissioner of Ward 72 of Dhaka City Corporation, alleged Guddu was a member of the gang that killed her husband on May 22, 2002.

Dreaded criminal Dakat Shaheed is the prime accused in the murder case.

## JCD leader

FROM PAGE 20

Mandol, Nasrin Sultana Jhara, Rimi, Chandra Roy Tumpa, Nijhum, Akhin, Fancy, Happy, Kona, Afsana Koli, Trina, Babli, Tania, Akhin, Rabu, Polly, Mishu, Reshma and some unidentified students of the college.

On March 29, a guardian of an Eden College student filed a case of attempted murder against ruling BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, former principal of the college Prof Feroza Begum, the chief of college hostel supers Julekha Khatun and 11 JCD leaders in connection with the incident of March 14.

In her complaint, Rehena stated that the accused, some of whom are leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League and Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, along with outsiders, launched a movement on the campus in a pre-planned way for fulfilling their whimsical demands.

They also did not comply with the college authorities' direction to vacate the hostels on March 13 and kept occupying the Hasna Begum Hostel.

The complainant alleged that Shamima Akter instigated the demonstrators further by patting them while she was passing by their procession.

On March 14, the demonstrators assaulted Julekha Khatun, chief of college hostel supers, and attacked her without any provocation in a bid to kill her, the complainant added.

## NY-flight reroutes

FROM PAGE 20

"This would save Biman Tk 2 crore a year in ground handling charges," he added without giving details.

In a recent interview, Mahmoodur Rahman hoped rerouting of the NY-flight would enable Biman to halve its loss in this prestigious cross-Atlantic route.

Biman used to operate an ageing DC-10 twice a week on Dhaka-New York route and incurred a loss of Tk 35 lakh per flight. Due to an acute shortage of aircraft, it cut the flight frequency to once a week from March 13.

The national airlines is unlikely to raise the number of flight on this route to twice a week until it leases two more wide-bodied aircraft. Its tender for two-year lease of two aircraft was closed yesterday with three companies making offers, official sources said.

Biman's New York flight is considered the costliest but most prestigious of all its international flights. But the flight appears to be an increasing burden on it as the state-run airlines is already struggling to buy fuel and new generation aircraft because of financial constraints.

Fakhrul Islam, who took over after the axing of Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin in November last year, is learnt to have given Biman management two months' time to avert the record loss in its New York flight.

During the previous Awami League rule, the New York flight used to operate on Dhaka-Delhi-Brussels-New York route incurring a

## Khaleda

FROM PAGE 20

the Awami League for appointing its own men to the Election Commission during its rule, Khaleda said her government appointed neutral people to the EC, as she said the BNP believes in free and fair polls.

The prime minister said people want to see the BNP in power as democracy remains safe, people live in peace and all religious communities freely under their religious activities perform their (BNP) rule.

She said the opposition does not want economic development and progress as it creates chaos through hartal and carries out 'false campaign' against Bangladesh.

She urged people to vote for the BNP-led alliance in the next general elections.

Khaleda said her government has curbed terrorism by forming some special forces and taking drastic actions against the terrorists.

Criticising the AL for patronising godfathers during its rule, the prime minister urged people to remain alert so that the godfathers, who left the country, could not return during the next caretaker government.

Presided over by local BNP MP Mohammad Shajahan, the meeting was also addressed, among others, by Health Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury and MA Hashem MP.

## PDB incurs

FROM PAGE 20

Rupantarita Praktirik Gas Company Limited, said the cost of the CNG-driven vehicles is one-fourth of what people spend for other fuel.

"Using compressed natural gas [CNG] helps the country save Tk 81 crore a month in foreign currency," he explained.

loss of Tk 50 lakh per flight. Mir Nasir rerouted the flight through Dubai instead of Delhi and as a result Biman's operational loss on this route came down to Tk 22 lakh per flight but increases in the price of jet fuel raised the loss to Tk 35 lakh now.

Asked about the rationale for operating such a loss-making flight, a top Biman official said, "Stopping flights on a particular route that causes loss is too easy but it is always tough to regain slots, particularly to North American destinations. Biman's Dhaka-New York flights cater to two million ethnic citizens living in the East Coast of US and in Canada."

Three-decade old DC-10s in Biman's 13-strong fleet, which usually operate on Dhaka-New York route, have been grounded at least thrice in the last six months in Brussels and New York for various mechanical faults. Late last year, the US federal aviation did not allow a Biman aircraft to depart John F Kennedy Airport without fixing 17 faults they found in it.

## Iran, US talks on Iraq likely next week

AFP, Tehran

Talks between Iran and the United States on the situation in Iraq will probably take place in Baghdad next week, the state news agency IRNA quoted an unnamed official as saying yesterday.

"The negotiations are likely to start next week in Baghdad," the source at Tehran's embassy in Baghdad said, denying Iranian press reports that the talks were due to start in two days' time.

"The negotiations must be open and transparent with the Iraqi government representative's participation. Iran's condition is that Iraqi people be informed of the results," he added.

Press reports said the Iranian delegation is likely to be headed by top Supreme National Security Council official Ali Hosseini-Tash, who was appointed to nuclear talks with Moscow in February over a compromise deal to enrich Iran's uranium on Russian soil.

Any direct meeting would mark a break in a near three-decade pause in direct contacts between US and Iranian officials following the country's 1979 Islamic revolution, despite heightened tensions due to the standoff over Iran's nuclear programme.

## India to skip

FROM PAGE 20  
access to Bangladeshi goods, India says it has already given concessions on import of many of the items from the neighbouring country. India cannot give across-the-board concessions, they said.

India argues giving across-the-board concessions could have an adverse impact on domestic industry in certain sectors. Besides, the facility can be misused with some other countries routing their products under this garb.

The sources said this issue was being addressed under the South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta).

## Kansat stained

FROM PAGE 1

announced to hold a stick-procession at Shibganj yesterday afternoon to press its several demands including uninterrupted electricity supply home and then to hand over a memorandum to the upazila nirbahi officer.

On the other hand, Shibganj BNP called a meeting at the upazila headquarters, also in yesterday afternoon, to protest a hartal enforced by PBUSP at the upazila and obstruction of BNP people from going to Rajshahi to attend a meeting of the prime minister on March 29.

Witnesses said BNP activists, expressly to foil the PBUSP procession, took position at some key points and on rooftops of roadside buildings with brickbats and bombs even as far as 10km off the BNP meeting venue.

The PBUSP activists also armed themselves with brickbats and bombs and arrows to resist the anticipated BNP attack. Children and women headed the long procession of some 30,000 people, some of them riding on trucks and in other vehicles including bullock carts.

When the procession reached the Paily crossroads, the BNP men waiting on rooftops hurled bombs one after another at it. The PBUSP activists retaliated by throwing bricks and arrows, said witnesses including some photojournalists.

The blasts of some 50 bombs scattered the procession, with people running for life to take cover, while police watched the fierce battle impassively, they added. Some PBUSP activists, however, chased and caught two bombers. Witnesses said the two held with bombs were lynched on the spot.

Police let the skirmishes continue up to 8:00pm and only then moved in to take control of the situation.

Additional police have been deployed in the area, where a tense situation was prevailing as on filing of this report at 10 last night.

The injured, mostly hit by splinters and arrows, were admitted to Chapainawabganj Sdara Hospital and Shibganj Upazila Health Complex.

When contacted, Rajshahi Range Deputy Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam could not confirm the deaths to The Daily Star.

## HC rule on edn secretary, Rajshahi Board chairman

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the education secretary and the chairman of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Rajshahi, to explain why the proceedings for contempt of court should not be drawn against them for violating its judgement.

A division bench comprising Justice MA Matin and Justice ATM Fazle Kabir issued the rule upon a contempt petition filed by a writ petitioner seeking remedy to non-compliance with the November 9, 2004 High Court judgement that directed the education secretary and chairman of the education board to grant permission to Matrai Model College in Joypradhat for admission of students to intermediate class for the 2005-06 session.

The rule is returnable in two weeks.

ANM Shawkat Habib Talukder, founder president of the college, set up in 1999, filed the contempt petition.

Advocate Shamsuddin Babul assisted by Kanailal Saha and Mukhlesur Rahman appeared for the petitioner.

## Opposition proposes

FROM PAGE 1

dialogue, the letter said, proposing the ruling BNP to nominate its leaders in the committee.

Bhuiyan said he will reply very soon after discussing the matter with the party high command. "We are hopeful to resolve all disputes through discussion," he told the reporters.

Under the circumstances, possibility of holding a dialogue between the BNP and AL is fading away due to complexities regarding formation of the committee.

Nevertheless, both sides are optimistic that problems will be resolved through discussion.

"We think we must sit as soon as possible ending talks over letters," Jalil wrote to Bhuiyan.

Earlier in the afternoon, a meeting of the liaison committee of the 14-party opposition at the AL central office approved the draft of the letter. The meeting decided that the opposition will not sit in the dialogue if there is any Jamaat leader or anti-Liberation War element from the government side.

Presided over by AL Presidium member Tofail Ahmed in absence of ailing 14-party Coordinator Abdul Jalil, the meeting also authorised the AL to represent the opposition side in the proposed dialogue.

Jalil signed the letter in his hospital bed before he was flown to Singapore for treatment.

The opposition reply came after six days of Bhuiyan's second letter to Jalil.

## BSF kills 1

FROM PAGE 20

hang Ataur on a tree and beat him to death while the rest managed to escape the scene.

Major Sheikh Asad of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) said that he has heard the news of one being critically injured, but he did not receive any information of anyone's death.

The BDR will take necessary steps after receiving confirmed information, he added.

## Held man

FROM PAGE 1

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Rajshahi said yesterday noon the man, Abu Bakkar Siddik of Ramkrishnapara of Daulatpur in Kushtia, was wrongly identified as Saifullah.

"He is completely a mentally disabled man and bears a little resemblance to JMB Shura member Khaled Saifullah," Major Faruk of Rab-5 told The Daily Star in Rajshahi at 2:00pm.

The media ran reports yesterday on Saifullah's arrest on the basis of confirmation by top officials of 6 Battalion BDR in Chapainawabganj.

BDR Commanding Officer Lt Col Lutfar Rahman had acknowledged Saifullah's arrest at 1:30am yesterday. Major Sarwar and Captain Nawroze also corroborated the information.

A BDR patrol team of Telkupi border outpost (BOP) led by Havildar Yakub arrested the man at a tea stall, 500 yards off the BOP, around 12:30am. A BDR source had earlier tipped the BOP officials off about Saifullah, who has a Tk 10 lakh bounty on his head, being seen nearby.

A Rab team rushed to Chapainawabganj BDR headquarters just after the arrest and took him to Rab office in Rajshahi around 3:00am.

After hours of interrogation and examining Saifullah's photograph, it became evident to the Rab officials the person was not the absconding JMB terror.

"Although he claimed himself to be Khaled Saifullah, we were suspicious of his real identity after massive quizzing," Major Faruk told reporters.

As the Rab brought Khaled

Saifullah's acquaintances to the office, they confirmed it was not him. Rab men eventually came to know from Kushtia police that he was Abu Bakkar Siddik, son of Mansur, and was missing for the last few days.