

China grapples with fresh bird flu, foot and mouth disease

REUTERS, Beijing

A strain of bird flu deadly to humans has killed five times the number of migratory birds in China initially reported, an agriculture official said yesterday, as scientists in the west warned of a possible global pandemic.

China was also grappling with foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks in cattle in three new areas, but said they had been brought under control and posed no risk to humans.

Jia Youling, director general of the veterinary bureau of the Agriculture Ministry, said more than 1,000 wild birds in the far-flung northwest province of Qinghai had died from the H5N1 strain of the disease.

State media earlier this week put the number of dead birds at 178 as China sealed off nature reserves and rushed more than 3 million doses of bird flu vaccine to Qinghai.

"What we have been doing is preventing domestic fowl and people from having contact with wild migratory birds," Jia said.

H5N1 first surfaced in poultry in Hong Kong and China eight years ago and has killed at least 37 people in Vietnam, 12 in Thailand and four in Cambodia.

Scientists fear that avian flu, which is infectious in birds but does not spread easily among humans, could mutate into a form better able to pass from animals to people, possibly triggering a global flu pandemic.

Scientists say such a pandemic would likely start in Asia and could kill millions and result in devastating economic losses.

None of the 2.18 million domestic birds in Qinghai had been found to be infected, Jia said. He dismissed rumours any humans had been

Hot spell

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will continue for a few more days until the arrival of the monsoon rains, met office sources said, adding that it may spread in more areas of Khulna, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Chittagong and Barisal divisions.

"We hope the heatwave will start decreasing within a day or two. But it will persist for a few more days," said the on-duty forecasting officer at the met office.

Yesterday the highest temperature recorded in Rajshahi was 38.3 degrees Celsius while the lowest temperature recorded in Mymensingh was 21.6 degrees.

In the capital the temperature was 35.6 degrees Celsius yesterday, while the humidity was 72 percent in the morning and 50 percent in the evening, making the city life miserable.

BDNEWS reports: Three people died due to the heat wave in Pabna.

China successfully curbed an outbreak in the same region last year, burning about 145,000 culled birds.

It has also killed and incinerated more than 800 head of cattle to control the outbreak of the Asia type 1 foot-and-mouth disease, in Beijing, the neighbouring province of Hebei and the western region of Xinjiang, Jia said.

"All the sick cows and cows living in the same area have been culled. The disease has been put under effective control and has not spread," he said, adding no pigs had been found to be infected and there was no threat to public health.

From April to May, more than 4,000 head of cattle were culled, Jia said.

Foot-and-mouth disease causes severe weight loss in cloven-hoofed animals. It does not affect humans and outbreaks are relatively easy to control.

China has kept outbreaks of the disease hidden in the past, but has already reported the disease in cattle in the provinces of Shandong and Jiangsu.

Despite scant reporting on the disease in state media, Jia said there had been no coverup of the outbreak, though he added he could not guarantee that local governments were being completely forthcoming.

Ahab blames

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stage. The BNP, on the other hand, gained political profit from the arrest," said Abdul Latif, Ahab 'muballig' (promoter).

"Jamaat and Shibir are capturing the fields where our men used to dominate, while BNP got instant relief from foreign pressure for action against militants," he explained.

Galib maintained relations with a number of Jamaat leaders cherishing Ahle Hadith ideology to convert them to Ahab, the meet was told.

"I witnessed several times Dr Galib having talks with Saidee Sir (Jamaat lawmaker Delwar Hossain Saidee) over cellphone," said Muzaffar, office secretary of Ahle Hadith Juba Sangha (AHJS), youth wing of Ahab.

Asked about the statements of Shafiqullah and Selim, arrested in Bogra and Gopalganj, that pointed to Ahab activities for Jihad and its attack on NGOs, the leaders said they are 'bogus'.

Ahab-run monthly At Tahreek Editor Muhammad Shakhwat Hossain, AHJS President Aminul Islam, among others, addressed the conference.

Meantime, a four-member interrogation cell yesterday questioned Galib and his three associates, now on a three-day remand in Sirajganj, in connection with Ullapara Grameen Bank blast, reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

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Referring to some of the books

including the two written by Kamal Siddique, he said these are suitable only for university students.

Books like 'Banking Sangskar o Byabasthapona' by Pubali Bank Managing Director Khondokar Ibrahim Khaled on banking research and management and 'Antoriti, Bazar Unnayon o Rajniti' by Sonali Bank Chairman Dr Mahbubullah on open market economy are on the list. But these are comprehensible only to scholars and experts in the fields.

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