

SUSPECTED CASES OF SWINE FLU IN INDIA

# Northern border wide open, authorities not wide awake

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

No visible steps have been taken yet in the bordering northern districts against swine flu although there was a false alarm of detecting the deadly virus in the neighbouring country.

District administration officials in Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Joypurhat and Naogaon claimed that two persons have been trained for each district to detect the infected people. They are supposed to discharge duties in the port areas including Hili in Dinajpur, Sonamosjid in Chapainawabganj, Burimari in Lalmonirhat and Banglabandha in Panchagarh.

However, terming it inadequate, some district administration officials said there is no preparation to deal with the flu threat effectively as they neither have sufficient stock of Tamiflu (the only known drug found to be effective against the virus) nor any standardised laboratory for diagnosis of such cases.

So the blood samples of suspected swine flu patients have to be sent to Dhaka for tests which would take at least 24 hours for diagnosis. "Such a long procedure may prove fatal for patients who is already at final stage," said a doctor.

Besides, anti-swine flu drug oseltamivir, the generic version of Tamiflu, is still not sufficiently available in the market, sources



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Health department has deployed a team at the check post of Benapole land port in the southwestern region of the country in the wake of swine flu spreading over 20 countries across the globe.

at Dinajpur Civil Surgeon's office said.

Contradicting, Dr Wahedul Haque, a medical officer said that anti-viral drug SKF Flu is available in the local market to treat the disease.

Contacted, Deputy Commissioner of Dinajpur Abdul Jalil said they held a

meeting on Thursday last to discuss overall situation. The meeting decided to monitor the vulnerable areas closely, procure medicine and launch awareness programme for the people in the border districts.

Twenty-two people have died from swine flu, detected

first in Mexico about a week ago. WHO estimates there are now nearly 900 cases in 20 countries. All but one of the deaths has been in Mexico.

India quarantined at least seven people in the last two days suspecting swine flu infection but later released all of them.

# Construction of two hospitals in Bogra in limbo

Funds may have to be returned

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Construction works for proposed asthma centre and diabetic hospital in Bogra could not start two years after issuance of the work orders as the Ministry of Health is yet to hand over the land to Public Works Department (PWD).

Following health ministry's allocation of Tk 15.07 crore for construction of the two 100-bed hospitals in Nisindara and Banani areas, the PWD Bogra Division issued work orders in 2007.

But the ministry is yet to hand over the land for the purpose or allow start of the construction works, said PWD Bogra Division Executive Engineer Md Zoynul Abedin and Bogra Civil Surgeon Dr Nurun Nahar.

Due to non-utilisation of fund the PWD has already refunded Tk 1.10 crore, Abedin said.

PWD Bogra Division invited tender for the construction work of 100-bed asthma centre under the Ministry of Health on the premises of chest diseases hospital at Nisindara of Bogra town in December 2006.

The authority issued a Tk 11.07 crore work order in March 2007 in favour of joint venture construction firm Toma Construction Company Ltd and Kabir Traders to start the work but the ministry is yet to hand over the land or allow starting the construction.

Meanwhile, the contractor has submitted letters claiming Tk 18 lakh as compensation.

"To ensure proper treatment of asthma patients in Bogra and a few other northern districts the health ministry took an initiative to estab-

lish the hospital under Health Nutrition Population Sector Programme but the work is yet to start," said Bogra Civil Surgeon Dr Nurun Nahar.

The PWD invited another tender to build a multi-storied building for 100-bed diabetic hospital on the premises of Electro-medical Workshop at Banani of Shahjahanpur upazila, adjacent to Bogra town and issued a Tk 4.01 crore work order on October 9 2007 in favour of MKS Joint Venture Construction Associates. Now the contractor has submitted letters to the PWD authorities claiming Tk 26.33 lakh as compensation.

"During the last three years, we have sent several letters to the health ministry requesting approval of land handover to the PWD authority but we are yet to receive any reply," said Abedin.

When contacted, health ministry Secretary Sheikh Altaf Ali said he does not know anything about the present situation regarding construction of the two proposed hospitals in Bogra.

Additional Secretary Abul Kalam Azad of the same department and Joint Chief Abdul Mannan also expressed their ignorance about the matter.

The projects approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) will be closed when the current fiscal year ends in next June and the total amount allocated for construction of the two hospitals will have to be refunded, PWD sources said.

At least 39,487 asthma patients had taken treatment from several health centres in Bogra district in 2007, says a survey report of Bogra Civil Surgeon's office.

## SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

### Intruder held with arms

A CORRESPONDENT, Meherpur

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday arrested an Indian national and recovered a pistol, four bullets, two shot guns, 20 cartridges and three kilograms of bomb making explosives from a bordering village in Gangni upazila. The arrested intruder was identified as Nazrul Islam, 32, son of Chandu Mian of village Tentulbaria under Krimpur Police Station of Nadia district in West Bengal. Only a week ago, Rab arrested a woman with gun powder and other explosives from the same area.

### Fire at Rangamati kills one

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A devastating fire at Reserve Bazar in the hill town yesterday morning killed one Ramzan Ali, 50, when he was trying to extinguish the fire and injured Rubel Dey of the locality. Shaheed Abdul Ali Academy, a junior high school and four shops were gutted in the fire. Most of the furniture of the academy was destroyed. The fire originated from an oven of a tea stall. Fire fighters rushed to the spot and doused the fire after fighting for one and a half hours.

### Robber beaten to death

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

A robber was beaten to death and three others were injured by a mob when they were trying to flee away after committing a robbery in Bejpara area in the town. Three policemen were also injured as the robbers hurled bombs at them. Police said, at about 4 am 10 to 12 robbers broke into Sajib Store, a grocery shop at Bejpara. As a police patrol van rushed to the spot, the robbers threw four bombs at them to flee away. Police and local people chased and caught four robbers while others managed to flee. Robber Oliur died in hospital after mob beating. Police recovered two bombs, four sharp weapons, masks and some bomb making material from the robbers.

### Pond water poisoned

A CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

Miscreants poisoned water of a pond belonging to one Abul Kashem and killed fish worth Tk 15 lakh at village Syedpur under Sadar upazila yesterday morning. Kashem leased a one acre pond and started fish cultivation a few months ago. But hired criminals poisoned the fish due to previous enmity. The victim filed a case accusing three people of his village.

### Khulna jute workers agitate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Workers of state-owned Aleem Jute Mills in Atra industrial belt put up a barricade for two hours on Khulna-Jessore highway to press their demands including allocation of fund for purchasing raw jute and payment of arrears. Production in the mills remained suspended as over a thousand workers and members of their families took part in the agitation. The barricade also disrupted transport services between Khulna and Jessore for two hours. Later, a rally was held in front of mill gate where speakers asked the BJMC authorities to meet their demands by May 20 or face a tougher agitation thereafter.

### Shaheb Bazar normal

RU CORRESPONDENT

Cloth traders and jewellers reopened their shops and resumed normal business activities at Rajshahi Shaheb Bazar yesterday. On Sunday, cloth traders at the market observed hartal protesting Saturday's attack allegedly by jewellers while jewellers kept their business shut fearing reprisal. A violent clash between cloth traders and jewellers on Saturday left at least 50 people, including traders, policemen and journalist, injured. Witnesses said the clash erupted when two cloth traders assaulted a jeweler at his shop over selling a gold chain. The news prompted the jewellers to retaliate and they ransacked 30 cloth shops and damaged furniture and other properties. The cloth traders at a meeting yesterday demanded compensation for the damaged goods and punishment to the jewellers responsible for ransacking their shops.

# Power, water crises grip Sylhet city

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Power outage and scarcity of water have turned serious in Sylhet city for the last few days, causing immense sufferings to the people.

Currently, the city is getting only 50MW power against the total demand for 100MW, said sources at Power Development Board, Sylhet.

The city corporation is supplying only one-third of the demand of water to the residents of limited areas.

For the last few days, the greater Sylhet region is getting only 130 to 150 MW of electricity a day against the demand for 250 to 270 MW, PDB officials said. The residents outside city areas are worse sufferers.

Work in the tea processing plants in the region is also being hampered due to severe power outage and erratic power supply, said sources at different tea gardens.

In Sylhet city, Shahjalal Upashahar, South Surma, Taltala, Subid Bazar,

Ambarkhana, Mendibagh, Shibganj and Akhalia areas are worst sufferers due to frequent load shedding and water crisis.

The situation paralyses life of city people amid the sweltering summer heat, a number of residents said.

Sylhet City Corporation officials said water cannot be lifted regularly from the pumps as they remain inoperative most of the time due to load shedding and voltage fluctuation.

Patients at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital suffer a lot due to scarcity of drinking water and erratic power supply.

"Three of the five tube-wells of the hospital remain inoperative due to decline in the groundwater level," said a physician.

During a visit to the hospital recently, this correspondent saw attendants of patients crowding two tube-wells to collect drinking water.

Hospital officials said they are facing difficulty in operating medical equip-

ment including MRI machine and radiotherapy machine due to power outage.

The lone power generator of the hospital remains inoperative for long for reasons unknown, said a hospital insider.

The city corporation's age-old water pumps remain inoperative most of the time due to frequent load shedding. The corporation is now supplying some 22,500 gallons of water against the demand of about 65,000 gallons, corporation sources said.

Sylhet city Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran told The Daily Star that the existing water crisis will be solved to some extent when three newly installed deep tube-wells will be put on operation after a few months.

A revised Tk 80 crore project for water supply and sanitation programme in Sylhet city is awaiting approval from the higher authority, he said.

Under the project, two water treatment plants and new water distribution lines will be installed in the city areas.

## WAR CRIMES IN '71

# 8 sued in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

A petition case was filed with Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court, Magura, yesterday against eight alleged collaborators of Pakistani occupation forces for killing a freedom fighter in Sadar upazila in 1971.

Freedom fighter Kazi Fakhruzaman of Pukhuria village filed the case, accusing the eight of killing his brother Baku Kazi, also a freedom fighter, during Liberation War in 1971.

The accused are Lulu Molla, 64, and Abdur Razzak, 65, of Pukhuria village, Golam Rasul, 70, of Alokdia village, Golam Rabbani, 60, of Sreerampur village, Golam Sarwar, 68, and

Neyamat, 64, of Baharbagh village, and Akbar, 62, and Nendu Mia, 67, of Grihogram in Magura Sadar upazila.

In the case statement, the complainant said the accused stormed into their house at Pukhuria village in the early hours of August 21, 1971 and picked up Baku at gunpoint when he came to see his ailing wife.

He further said the 'rajaks' took Baku to the adjacent village, Boro, and shot him dead.

Senior Judicial magistrate Md Manjurul Imam asked the officer-in-charge of Magura Sadar Police Station to accept the petition case as an FIR (first information report) and submit a report before the court after proper investigation.

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