

## Swine flu

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inbound passengers from only these 19 countries to report to the desk. Countries like Malaysia, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia are however not on this list," an on-duty health officer explained.

The banner on display inside the airport, however, says that all travellers suffering from fever or with runny noses, sneezes or coughs are to report to the Health Support Desk before immigration.

Experts warn that unless strict vigilance is kept at the entry points of the country, carriers of the virus could easily slip into the country without detection.

Prof Nazrul Islam of the department of virology at BSMMU said, "There is no guarantee that swine flu cases will never be detected in countries which don't have any reported cases today. They might discover a case tomorrow for example. Therefore it is vital that there is strict monitoring of all entering the country, especially those with flu-like symptoms."

On enquiry, the Assistant Airport Health Officer Nasrin Sultana said that the health support desk has been open since April 29 and is providing passengers with necessary information.

Immigration officers on duty at the airport, trained accordingly, are also helping out, she said, so that no passenger can leave the airport with any flu-like symptom without reporting it.

Immigration officers said they have not received any training yet. A special training session, however, has been scheduled for Saturday.

The Director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) Prof Mahmudur Rahman told the Daily Star yesterday that a strong role of all on duty at the airport is required to monitor the situation.

He said adequate training of immigration officers, in addition to health officials, is vital for management of the situation and also self-protection.

At a seminar at the Institute

RATZ STOHI

## Indian polls

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Another person was killed when paramilitary personnel opened fire to prevent a mob from capturing a polling booth at Olwara in Rajasthan's Sawai Madhopur.

Despite violence, West Bengal, where 17 constituencies went to the fourth phase polls, drew the highest voter turnout of 75 percent followed by Punjab (65 percent), Haryana (63 percent), Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (50 percent each).

Yesterday's polls decided the electoral fate of 1,315 candidates including political heavyweights External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, BJP President Rajnath Singh, Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav, Rashtriya Janata Dal President Lalu Prasad, Jammu and Kashmir's ruling National Conference Party head Farooq Abdullah and Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Ajit Singh, an ally of BJP.

Mukherjee is contesting from Jangipur constituency in Murshidabad district of West Bengal while Rajnath Singh is making electoral debut from Ghaziabad constituency close to Delhi. Lalu is in fray in Saran but is also hedging his bet by contesting from another constituency Pataliputra in Bihar. Yadav is fighting in Mainpuri in Uttar Pradesh and Abdullah is pitted against his sister Begum Khalida in Srinagar.

Among other key candidates in the fourth phase are young Congress leader Sachin Pilot, actor-cum-politician Sharughan Sinha of BJP who takes on Congress candidate-cum-television actor Shekhar Suman in Patna, former BJP leader Kalyan Singh in Etah in Uttar Pradesh where he is being backed by Samajwadi Party, senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal fighting in Chandni Chowk constituency in Delhi.

The polling in 17 of the 42 seats in West Bengal include Nandigram and Singur, the epicentre of a long-drawn agitation led by Trinamool Congress against the Left Front government's bid to acquire farmland for setting up industries.

The agitation, often marred by violence between rival groups, had made national and international headlines in 2007 and 2008. Nandigram and Singur are in two separate constituencies held by CPI(M).

Nandigram is in Tamluk

of Public Health (IPH) yesterday morning. Prof Mahmudur said epidemiological trends show that every 10 to 40 years a pandemic takes place.

He too emphasised vigilance at the entry points of the country.

"We hope to get at least 200 million dollars from the fund in addition to ADB's normal assistance. We will utilise this money for employment generation, expansion of safety net programme, investment on infrastructure and providing support to local industries," he said.

Muhi said the ADB has taken several steps to face the impact of recession. Notable among those is a \$3.4 billion fund.

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The ADB has two more funds, he said, climate fund and newly formed disaster mitigation fund. "We have expressed our interest in getting assistance from both the funds."

He also said in these two fields, "We can not only take, we can also give."

Muhi mentioned that in this region Bangladesh is a leading country in disaster mitigation and environment protection. So, it can provide technical assistance to other countries in this regard.

The minister also said, "We should come out of the frustrating comments made by the World Bank and IMF (mainly about GDP growth). We should build up an optimistic tone. My statement got support in the conference and all accepted it."

The ADB conference decided to increase the bank's capital about three times. As a result, it will be able to expand its assistance programme.

Muhi said he had bilateral discussions with representatives from a number of countries.

"During the discussion with Chinese delegation, we made some allegations. Conditions relating to some Chinese projects in Bangladesh are not good. We have asked the country to ease the conditions," he said.

In bilateral discussions with India, Bangladesh requested it to open new credit lines, the minister said. "Our trade gap with India is huge. We have asked India to increase facilities further."

Mentioning the experience of Indonesia, he said bad assets in both public and private sectors should be sold out. He however added only the cabinet can take such a decision.

ERD Secretary Musharraf Hossain was on the delegation led by the finance minister.

## Talks on change

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"We have just started discussing the bills. We will examine those in detail, and if necessary, ask for opinions from constitutional experts," Abdul Matin Khasru, chief of the committee, told The Daily Star.

After scrutiny, the committee will submit its report to the House, stating if the bills can be taken up for consideration.

"Parliament will then decide whether to pass those or not," added Khasru, also former law minister.

At its inaugural meeting yesterday, the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions decided to invite the two lawmakers to hear from them the rationale behind the bills.

While Imajuddin's bill proposes amending the constitution to ensure display of Bangabandhu's portrait, Aslamul's concerns both the subjects--display of the portrait and the president's assumption of the chief adviser's office.

In his bill, Aslamul also proposes amending the constitution to make provision for holding the parliamentary election strictly within 90 days since dissolution of parliament.

He said the ninth parliamentary election could not be held on time due to the then president Iajuddin Ahmed's taking the helm of the caretaker administration. Iajuddin's action also led to the state of emergency, he added in his statement for the bill.

"So, we'd better put an end to the provision allowing the president to play concurrently the chief adviser's role," observed Aslamul, MP from Dhaka-14.

The ninth parliamentary election was long delayed because the constitution had no time limit stipulated for the interim government to hold the election, he noted.

In 2001, parliament passed a private member's bill making mandatory the display of Bangabandhu's portrait at various offices.

But shortly after coming to power in October that year, the BNP-led four-party alliance government scrapped the Preservation and Display of the Nation's Portrait Act 2001.

As yesterday's meeting, members of the Committee on Private Members' Bills opined that parliament must ensure that no-one in future can overturn the proposed provision for preserving and displaying the portrait, said meeting sources.

As many as 12,048 villages and hamlets across the 85 parliamentary constituencies going to polls on Thursday have been identified by the Election Commission as "vulnerable" to threats and voter intimidation.

Nandigram is in Tamluk

## ADB pledges

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A three-member delegation from Bangladesh led by the finance minister participated in the conference and seminar.

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