

Swine flu-bird flu

FROM PAGE 16 The World Health Organisation reported two new human cases of bird flu on Wednesday. One patient is recovering in Egypt, while another died in Vietnam, a reminder that the H5N1 virus is far from gone.

"Do not drop the ball in monitoring H5N1," WHO Director-General Margaret Chan told a meeting of Asia's top health officials in Bangkok on Friday by video link. "We have no idea how H5N1 will behave under the pressure of a pandemic."

Experts have long feared that bird flu could mutate into a form that spreads easily among people. The past three flu pandemics—the 1918 Spanish flu, the 1957-58 Asian flu and the Hong Kong flu of 1968-69 were all linked to birds, though some scientists believe pigs also played a role in 1918.

Webster, who works at St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., said bird flu should be a worry now. Bird flu is endemic in parts of Asia and Africa, and cases of swine flu have already been confirmed in South Korea and Hong Kong.

"My great worry is that when this H1N1 virus gets into the epicentres for H5N1 in Indonesia, Egypt and China, we may have real problems," he told The Associated Press. "We have to watch what's going on very diligently now."

Spokesman Dave Daigle said he could not comment specifically on how concerned the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention is about the scenario Webster describes, or what it is doing to study such a possibility.

Malik Peiris, a flu expert at Hong Kong University, said the more immediate worry is that swine flu will mix with regular flu viruses, as flu season begins in the Southern Hemisphere. It is unclear what such a combination would produce.

But he said there are indications that scenario is possible. Peiris noted that the swine flu virus jumped from a farmworker in Canada and infected about 220 pigs. The worker and the pigs recovered, but the incident showed how easily the virus can leap to a different species.

"It will get passed back to pigs and then probably go from pigs to humans," Peiris said. "So there would be opportunities for further reassortments to occur with viruses in pigs."

He said so far bird flu hasn't established itself in pigs but that could change.

"H5N1 itself has not got established in pigs," he said. "If that were to happen and then these two viruses were both established in pigs in Asia, that would be quite a worrying scenario."

Michael Osterholm, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Minnesota who has advised the US government on flu preparations, said while flu experts are discussing the scenario, he has yet to see specific evidence causing him to think it will happen.

"Everything with influenza is a huge guessing game because Mother Nature holds all the rules, and we don't even know what they are, so anything's possible," he said. "We don't have any evidence that this particular reassortment is that much more likely to pick up H5N1 than any other reassortment out there."

"We don't have to put these things together," he added. "This is not chocolate and peanut butter running into each other in the dark

AL, BNP clash

FROM PAGE 16 left at least 16 people injured, said police.

The injured were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College, Lalpur Upazila Health Complex and Bagatipara Upazila Health Complex.

Injured Choyon succumbed to his injuries later in the night.

Police reinforcements have been deployed to keep the situation under control after tens of thousands in the area following the news of Choyon's death.

NSI man

FROM PAGE 16 on Wednesday.

The former NSI director (secretary) was arrested at a residence on Green Road in the capital on May 3 for his alleged involvement in arranging transport vehicles for the firearms and ammunition hauled at Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Company Ltd (CUFL) jetty in the early hours of April 02, 2004.

The arrest was made following a confession statement of former NSI field officer Akbar Hossain Khan on May 2. In his statement, Akbar mentioned Sabah Uddin as one having link with the transport of the smuggled arms and ammunition, said sources in CID.

Delwar

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But there is in fact discussion of putting them together in a high-security laboratory to see what a combination would look like, according to Webster. Similar tests have been done at the CDC mixing bird flu and seasonal human flu, resulting in a weak product, he said.

Daigle, the CDC spokesman, refused to comment on the prospect of any such experiment.

Webster has done groundbreaking work on both swine and bird flu in his 40-year career, and has followed the evolution of the current swine flu strain from a virus that sickened a handful of people who worked with North Carolina hogs into a bug that has spread from person to person around the world.

He is closely involved in the global effort to analyse what the virus might do next. It has killed 42 people in Mexico and two in Texas, but so far has not proven very deadly elsewhere, leading to some criticism that the World Health Organisation's warnings of a potential pandemic have been overblown.

Replies to a question, the BNP secretary general also claimed that the corruption allegations raised by ruling party's lawmakers against BNP leaders, including former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, were baseless.

He said, "The speaker does not have any jurisdiction to form a probe committee like the one he formed to investigate allegations against Sircar. Would you take it as graft if the parliament had given him money?"

Nobody raised questions before about the money given from the fund of parliament members," he added.

Landslide

FROM PAGE 1

and Matamuhuri are the life-line of Bandarban. Flowing from the hill, the Shanks falls into the Bay of Bengal through the Karnaphuli.

The Shanks and Matamuhuri were the only sources of livelihood for the people of this area three decades ago," said Mong Ching Thwaing Marna.

Over the years earth from nearby hills has almost filled the riverbed of the Shanks, creating large chars. Due to lack of dredging and maintenance the river that flows over 170km of land has also narrowed down at several places.

The river is now less than 25-foot wide at the place where the landslide occurred.

Felling of trees on the hills on both sides of the river has caused drying up of several fountains, which used to feed the Shanks.

Environmentalists say if the situation continues, silt will increase on the riverbed, reducing the navigability of the rivers of the area and causing erosion of cultivable land.

Buddha Purnima

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medical services of Square Hospital, said, "He is not yet out of danger. The members of the medical board, formed by the hospital authorities to treat the scientist, will be increased from six to around 14."

Besides, a number of ministers, lawmakers and senior Awami League leaders went to the hospital to see the ailing scientist yesterday while different socio-cultural organisations prayed for his early recovery.

Special prayers were offered at mosques after Jumma prayers yesterday for Wazed's early recovery.

Dr Wazed, suffering long from high blood pressure, renal failure, diabetes and asthma, has been kept under close observation at the Square Hospital.

Dr Wazed, former chief of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, has been undergoing treatment over the last one year. He had earlier received treatment in Delhi and Singapore.

He was flown to Singapore last March to take treatment at the National Heart Centre where he underwent angioplasty.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called upon the Buddhist community to work unitedly with other citizens irrespective of their faith for the country's welfare.

Sheikh Hasina in her message said great Buddha established the example of amity and love by preaching the message of non-violence and peace.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, in her message, also called upon the people to follow the path of truth and justice as shown by Gautama Buddha.

AL, BNP councils

FROM PAGE 16

Notice was sent for the second time to harass her politically. The chairperson already consulted senior leaders of the party after receiving the notice served by the Directorate of Military Lands and Cantonments, he said.

In Thursday's notice, Khaleda was asked to show cause as to why she should not be asked to return the estate, including the house, within the next 15 days. BNP did not disclose receiving of notice till midnight.

The cabinet cancelled the lease of the 2.72-acre mansion on April 8 on grounds that the leasing out process was faulty and she violated lease terms.

On April 20, Directorate of Military Lands and Cantonments served the first notice upon Khaleda to vacate the house.

After two High Court benches felt embarrassed to hear the BNP chief's appeal against the first notice, a third bench is supposed to hold a hearing on tomorrow.

Replies to a question, the BNP secretary general also claimed that the corruption allegations raised by ruling party's lawmakers against BNP leaders, including former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, were baseless.

He said, "The speaker does not have any jurisdiction to form a probe committee like the one he formed to investigate allegations against Sircar. Would you take it as graft if the parliament had given him money?"

The committee has finalised the draft amendments and declarations that will be placed at the next ALCWC meeting.

Still, sources said, the party may miss the EC deadline for holding the council as it would need more time to complete councils in districts.

Senior AL leaders may start touring different districts at the end of this month to prepare the organisational units for national council.

Obaidul Quader said they would be able to organise council by this year.

ACC probes

FROM PAGE 1

The ACC is examining everything starting from the tender process to the completion of the construction work of the terminal.

The investigation officer, who came to the port city from the capital for the investigation, also talked to former project director Sirajul Islam and a few existing officials of the project to know if there was any irregularity in giving the work order, how China Harbour raised the quoted price from Tk 331 crore to Tk 351 crore and also if there was any pressure from any quarter for sending the proposal for an additional Tk 20 crore to the shipping ministry.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) sources close to those in the NCT project said the magnitude and frequency of earthquakes in Chittagong and some other places of the country became higher during the construction of the terminal and that special earthquake resisting pillars with more strength were required for the construction. China Harbour

proposed importing such pillars from Malaysia while CPA suggested producing those locally.

But production of the pillars locally could have taken at least one and a half years, which would delay the construction of the terminal and deprive the country of an expected revenue of Tk 500 crore, the CPA sources said, quoting the NCT officials.

The shipping ministry later agreed to sanction the additional amount of Tk 20 crore, they said.

The ACC filed the case against Koko on March 17 under the money laundering law for siphoning off Tk 19,70,25,000 to Singapore.

As per the deposition of the case, a portion of the money deposited to Koko's account came from an account China Harbour opened in the USA. China Harbour was in Bangladesh during the transfer of that amount.

China Harbour started the construction of the terminal in March 2003 and completed it in December 2006.

BNP decisions

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already decided to dissolve all district committees and bring changes to all associated bodies without any consultation with the NEC.

BNP Joint Secretary General Goyeshwar Chandra Roy told The Daily Star that the NEC will sit before holding the party council.

"The decision of holding the council and other related issues will come from the executive committee meeting," he said.

Some BNP leaders said the 251-member NEC could not function effectively due to lack of a proper system within the party to run its activities.

"All activities were run centring the party chairperson and her family members. That's why no proper system was established in the party for running its activities," said a senior leader wishing anonymity.

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AL, BNP councils

FROM PAGE 16 BNP leaders said the party would hold its central council at "suitable time" after councils at upazila and district levels.

Meanwhile, BNP has decided to form convening committees to replace the district committees that are long past their tenure. The convening committees will first organise councils at upazila level and then those at district level.

BNP leaders said they would request the EC to extend the time limit.

The registration rules require a party to have its provisionally amended charter ratified by its council and submit it to the EC by July 25. There is however no legal provision for the EC to take action against a party for default on the rules.

Earlier on March 28, AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), highest decision-making body of the party, decided to hold council within the time limit. It also formed a high-powered committee to amend a party's charter in line with the RPO.

AL President Sheikh Hasina is chief of the committee that also has AL presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury as co-chairman and Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin as member-secretary.

The committee has finalised the draft amendments and declarations that will be placed at the next ALCWC meeting.

ALCWC members said they may miss the EC deadline for holding the council as it would need more time to complete councils in districts.

Senior AL leaders may start touring different districts at the end of this month to prepare the organisational units for national council.

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Security

FROM PAGE 1

deployment of additional forces, increased intelligence vigilance and setting up of police checkposts.

AKM Hafiz Akter, deputy commissioner (DC) of Gulshan zone, said, "Such threats are issued often and security measures are also beefed up. We are taking this seriously and police patrol in the area has also been increased."

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Gulshan Police Station Kamrul Alam Mollah said they have increased the number of police check posts to avert any subversive acts.

According to sources, the unknown criminals demanded \$100,000 for releasing their "German bomb engineer" detained in Malaysia. They also demanded that the embassies shut down their activities within seven days otherwise they would carry out attacks against them.

According to sources, the industrial zones consumes around 50 mmcfd gas. The zones are located in Savar, Manikganj, Narayanganj, Joydevpur north, Joydevpur south, Tongi and Gazipur.

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