

Swine flu

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on arrival when he was found to have a fever, the health ministry said in a statement.

He was being treated at an isolation unit and his current condition was described as "afebrile", meaning he was already free from symptoms of the virus that has caused concern around the world.

The Indian health ministry said the patient had changed planes in Dubai and that all passengers who flew on the same plane to India were being contacted.

Turkish Health Minister Recep Akgad said that his country's first case of swine flu was detected in an American man who had arrived at Istanbul airport, while news reports said later that his wife was also infected.

Akgad said the A(H1N1) virus had been confirmed in blood tests carried out after thermal cameras picked up the fact that the man was running a high fever.

The Iraqi-born US national arrived in Turkey on Thursday on a flight from the United States, which had made a stop-over in Amsterdam and was on his way to Iraq.

"He was admitted to hospital in Istanbul and placed in quarantine with the six members of his family. His condition is satisfactory," the minister said.

Akgad could not immediately confirm later that the man's wife had also caught the disease, but said it was "quite possible".

Japan confirmed its first three domestic infections Saturday and was testing at least 14 other suspected cases in two cities, officials said.

Health officials were testing five more teenagers from the same school in the western city of Kobe, while another nine students were considered suspected cases in nearby Osaka, officials said.

Prime Minister Taro Aso called on Japanese to stay level-headed and vowed to take steps to prevent a wider outbreak.

But former WHO senior official Shigeru Omi, now head of the government's special swine flu task force, warned: "We believe that the infection is beginning to spread in the region."

Japan had confirmed its first cases of A(H1N1) contracted

overseas on May 9, -- a school teacher and three students who flew to Tokyo from Canada via Detroit -- but immediately quarantined them and other passengers.

Another 48 passengers who sat near them on the plane were isolated in a hotel for a week.

But despite those measures Health Minister Yoichi Masuzoe said Saturday that the virus had slipped into Japan, being detected in a 17-year-old student.

Two of the student's school-mates, a boy and a girl, were also confirmed as positive for the virus.

Authorities in Kobe said they would temporarily close at least 75 schools and kindergartens and cancel festivals and other public events in some districts of the city, where fear of an outbreak was growing rapidly.

"It's totally beyond our imagination," said Seichi Sakurai, of the city's health and welfare bureau. "The virus entered the country undetected. I'm afraid the infection may have already spread further."

Sweden also confirmed its third case, detected like the first two in someone who had returned from the United States, authorities said.

At the European Conference on Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID) in Helsinki, health experts defended Mexico and the WHO in their handling of swine flu.

They said that even though the threat so far had turned out smaller than feared, their measures had placed the world on a stronger footing to combat the virus if it resurges in a more lethal form.

Bombing

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The identity of the victims was not immediately clear, the officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly to the media.

However, they said the school was being used as a training camp by Gul Bahadur, a prominent Taliban commander believed to be involved in fighting U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

Good chance

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Congress would like to see progress in Indo-Bangla relations.

He said the UPA's victory gives an opportunity for the two governments to take advantage of old ties and goodwill to improve regional and bilateral economic cooperation.

Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury, former foreign secretary and foreign affairs adviser to BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia, said the new blood in Congress leadership could provide a fresh approach to settle unresolved issues between Bangladesh and India.

Asked about the significance of UPA's victory for Bangladesh, he said, "It would largely depend on the new generation and whether they can have a positive approach to other South Asian nations and Bangladesh."

Shamsher outlined the unresolved issues of water-sharing, maritime boundary, gunfight between BDR and BSF and trade deficit that require a fresh approach and renewed commitment from the Indian government.

"This is a time for new outlook. This opportunity should be utilised to resolve these issues," he said.

Shamsher said a stable government without any pressure from alliance partners would allow the Congress to make bold decisions on free-market economic policies and foreign investment that could benefit Bangladesh.

However, he said the Awami League government has to be attuned to public reactions to the deals done with India.

The next months would reveal the nature of the new relationship between the two governments, he added.

Imtiaz Ahmed, professor of international relations department at Dhaka University, said the UPA's victory will give Bangladesh a chance to discuss unsettled issues like demarcation of maritime boundary, Tipaimukh Dam project, border fencing and regional cooperation with India.

"This is the first time India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have become close allies of the USA. So, there is likely to be stability in the region," said Imtiaz.

He said the UPA's victory is a good sign for regional cooperation on counter-terrorism as the UPA government had shown a positive approach in this regard since the Mumbai attacks last November.

Imtiaz also hoped that Trinamool Congress would increase its secular image despite having past links with the BJP.

Former foreign secretary CM Shaif Sami said the Congress leadership would help strengthen the ties between Bangladesh and India to utilise their economic potentials properly, particularly for the people of the adjoining areas of the two countries.

"Both the countries can hopefully make concrete decisions over the unsettled issues between them," he said.

Historically, Awami League always had good relations with India and it will be strengthened in the future, said Shaif Sami, also former adviser to a caretaker government.

He, however, said both the countries should consider the issues on economic merits and there should not be any undue intervention.

Political scientist Prof Emajuddin Ahmed said the Congress party's victory in Indian polls is surely a very positive sign for stability in South Asia because of the party's secular political philosophy.

On regional front, its prime goal should be fighting terrorism. India can take a lead role in multilateral framework in fighting militancy, he said.

The relations between Bangladesh and India are supposed to be strengthened further because of the non-communal stance of the leaderships of both the countries, Emajuddin, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, told The Daily Star.

There is every possibility that the unsettled issues between the two neighbouring nations will be settled but Bangladesh has to insist on those, he said.

Former ambassador Muhammad Zamir said the UPA's victory will be positive for Bangladesh but the country's policy makers have to push for reaching acceptable solutions to the unresolved issues between the two countries.

Replied to a query, the speaker said the seating arrangement of the House will be fixed before the next session of parliament and that the BNP may get some more seats in the front row.

2 ex-NSI chiefs held

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6:00pm Friday, CID launched a massive search for those he named.

After primary interrogation at the CID office in Dhaka, the ex-NSI chiefs were taken to Chittagong last night.

Rahim was director general of NSI and Rezaqul director (counter-intelligence bureau) of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence when the police and the coastguard seized the arms at the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Ltd (CUFL) on April 2, 2004.

Rezaqul later succeeded Rahim as the NSI boss and continued until his removal from the post after January 11 changeover in 2007. Soon, he was forced into retirement from the army as well.

Our Chittagong office adds: Investigators may produce the former NSI DGs before a court here today and pray for the two to be placed on remand, said CID officials in charge of the case investigation.

In a 16-page confessional statement, ex-NSI director Sahab Uddin said Brig Gen Rahim was monitoring things regarding transport of the arms.

Before arrival of the consignment, Rahim, Rezaqul and a few other government officials met at a Dhanmoldi residence to discuss how to ensure its safe passage.

Paresh Barua, chief of ULFA's operational wing, and two nationals of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were in attendance. Barua disguised himself as one Ahmed, said sources quoting Sahab Uddin's statement.

The deadly shipment came from China and was bound for ULFA (United Liberation Front of Asom)--an insurgent group in the northeastern Indian state of Assam.

Sahab Uddin was arrested in Dhaka on May 3 after NSI field officer Akbar Hossain Khan in a statement confessed that he hired seven trucks and a crane for offloading and transporting the weapons on instructions from the former NSI director (security).

Sources said NSI and DGFI officials' involvement came up also in the March 2 confessional statement of Hafizur Rahman, a prime accused in the two cases filed with the Karnaphuli Police Station after the arms haul.

After quizzing several of those accused, the investigators got convinced that it was indeed Akbar who arranged for vehicles to carry the arms cache from the CUFL jetty.

CID arrested him on April 19 and took him on a two-day remand after Habibur Rahman and Taslim Mallick--owner and manager of Greenways Transport in the port city--identified him as the one who hired the trucks from them for "carrying salt to Sylhet from Patiya".

Akbar was first quizzed in a two-day remand on April 20-21 at CID divisional headquarters in Chittagong and later in a seven-day remand beginning on April 27 at Taskforce Intelligence cell in Dhaka.

Meanwhile, sources said CID has launched a hunt for Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation's (BCIC) former chairman Brig Gen (ret'd) Imamuzzaman and former NSI director Fuad Hossain.

The ex-BCIC chairman's name cropped up in the confessional statement of former CUFL managing director Mohsin Talukder.

Genocide in 1971

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Moni earlier this week asked Islamabad to apologize for its 1971 atrocities as Pakistani High Commissioner in Dhaka Alamgir Bashir Khan Babar called on her after office.

Dipu Moni also said that Pakistan should settle the lingering disputes between the two countries over sharing of resources and taking back millions of Pakistanis stranded in this country.

The former Pakistani president General Pervez Musharraf during a trip to Dhaka in 2002 regretted "developments in 1971".

The fresh demand for Pakistani apology came as preparations are underway for trial of local collaborators of Pakistani troops.

State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Capt (ret'd) ABM Tajul Islam said last month that Bangladesh has planned to seek International Criminal Court (ICC) help for trying Pakistani soldiers responsible for committing war crimes in 1971.

"We will take the matter to the ICC and seek trial of the members of the Pakistani occupation forces who committed crimes against humanity," he said.

Of the 43 accused in the arms haul cases, only two--Hafizur Rahman and Din Mohammad--were behind bars, 33 on bail and eight on the run before a Chittagong court on February 12 last year ordered further investigation.

ASP Ismail Hossain Khan of Gazipur CID, the fourth IO of the cases, was tasked with conducting investigation afresh, but failed to submit report by the scheduled date of January 18.

He was replaced by ASP Moniruzzaman of Chittagong CID.

CID took charge of the probe on April 26, 2004 after the first IO, Ahadur Rahman, the then officer-in-charge (OC) of Karnaphuli Police Station, was dropped for a flawed and controversial investigation.

Kabir Uddin Ahmed, ASP of Chittagong CID, was the second IO and ASP Nawsher Ali of CID Sylhet Zone the third IO of the twin cases.

Rocket hits Afghan mosque, 5 killed

AFP, Khost/Kandahar

Five people died when an Afghan mosque was hit by rockets fired from Pakistan by insurgents targeting a US military camp near the border, police and the US military said Saturday.

The attack happened late Friday on the outskirts of the eastern town of Khost, which was struck by a series of Taliban suicide blasts last week, which together killed 15 Afghans and 12 militants.

"Three rockets were fired, aimed at the coalition forces' base," Khost province police chief Abdul Qayyum Bakizoi told AFP.

"Two landed in a field and one of them hit a mosque in a nearby village and killed five civilians and wounded six others," he said.

The men were struck as they were leaving the mosque, he said.

The US military confirmed the attack and said it was launched from Pakistan, which is less than 20 kilometres (12 miles) from Khost.

The rockets struck outside the compound and caused no damage or casualties to the troops, it said in a statement. According to its information, at least three Afghan civilians were killed and four wounded, it said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but the Islamist Taliban are waging an insurgency against the Afghan government that has spiked in recent years, despite the roughly 70,000 international troops deployed to the war-torn country.

An untold number of Taliban fighters fled across the porous border into Pakistan following their 2001 ousting from power in the US-led invasion of Afghanistan.

Police raid

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picked up them for their suspicious movement and after scrutinising their identities they would decide on their next course of action.

A huge contingent of police, during the overnight raid, recovered a huge number of sticks, iron rods and hockey sticks in presence of the university authorities. The raid started Friday midnight and continued till 5.30am yesterday.

CU Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Dr Abu Yousuf Alam said the raid was carried out to maintain academic atmosphere on the campus.

CU Assistant Proctor Chandan Kumar Poddar told The Daily Star that the raids were carried out following a directive from the high-ups of the government.

"Education ministry in a circular on Friday asked the CU authorities to show zero tolerance to check violence on the campus," Chandan said.

CU unit Shibir president Zakir Hossain confirmed that 10 of their activists were detained.

Earlier, CU authorities suspended classes and postponed examinations until May 21 following a series of clashes between BCL and Shibir activists Thursday night that left 30 students of both the organisations injured.

The clash erupted at 10:30pm on Thursday at Shahid Abdur Rab Hall when BCL activists protested meetings and organisational activities of Shibir in a varsity mosque.

After the clash the CU authorities formed two separate committees to investigate Thursday's incident and to arrange a dialogue among leaders of both organisations for their peaceful co-existence on the campus.

4 lakh rickshaws

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a decision to make Kuril-Sayedabad thoroughfare off limits to rickshaws and other non-motorised vehicles but law enforcers allow rickshaws with valid papers to ply the road. After a certain period of time the road will be made off-limits to all non-motorised vehicles.

If the illegal rickshaws are removed from the city, it will cause public sufferings too, he said, adding, "The people of lower middle class, which form a large portion of the total population of the capital, use the non-motorised means of transport as the fare is generally within their reach."

He said registrations of around 90,000 rickshaws were issued in 1986 by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and since then no registration has been issued even though the number of rickshaws has increased rapidly.

He said the authorities concerned should make the illegal ones legal by registering them.

Slow moving wheelers and fast moving motorised vehicles cannot run on the highways as it causes frequent accidents and severe traffic congestions, he said. Rickshaws can run on special lanes on city streets, he added.

He urged rickshaw owners' leaders to be more professional and not to use their political identity. He said it is rather common of ruling party men to take control of trade unions and put pressure on the administration hampering the smooth functioning of the administration.

Joint Commissioner (Traffic) Mohammad Jasim Uddin presided over the meeting.

Govt pledges

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said the government would investigate the extrajudicial killings. "If anyone is found guilty of such killing, proper action will be taken against him or her."

About BDR restructuring, he said the government would take the final decision within a week about it on the basis of recommendations put forward by subcommittees.

"They are likely to submit their recommendations to the coordination committee of BDR carnage probe bodies within a week and it will (coordination committee) securitise the recommendations," he said.

Once the scrutiny is done, Faruk said, a complete report would be submitted to the government for the final decision.

On the activities of parliamentary standing bodies, he said the government is taking their recommendations positively and it will try to implement those.

"If the government fails to implement any recommendation, it will come up with due explanation," the minister added.

3 drown

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passengers, including Rekha's brother Mannan, managed to swim ashore.

According to police sources, the Munshiganj-bound engine-boat from Fatullah with seven passengers on board capsized after a sand-laden barge dashed it.

Local divers launched a full-scale rescue operation to retrieve the bodies.

JMB

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arms, explosives and explosive substances from two houses that Mizan hired.

A team of Rab intelligence unit led by Lt Moyeen, which had spotted and captured Mizan from Taltola on Thursday evening, later raided his house at Uttar Pireerbagh, and arrested his wife. Sensing Rab presence, she had blasted a bomb injuring herself and her two children.

Four Rab officials including Maj Momtajur Rahman, Maj Azam and Lt Mohiuddin entered Mizan's house around 2:00am on Friday to arrest his wife Sharmin.

Rab also seized two grenades, two bombs and a pistol.

Acting on information from Mizan, Rab busted a den at East Monipur, used for training in explosives.

The elite force recovered 35 kinds of bomb-making materials, detonators and grenade cages from the house. Some books on jihad were also seized.

Earlier on Friday night, three cases were filed with Mirpur Police Station in connection with the recovery of arms and explosives, and attack on Rab members on Friday and Thursday.

Meanwhile, Mizan's injured wife Sharmin and her two children were shifted to Orthopaedic Hospital in the city from Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Congress triumphs

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minister," Sonia told reporters when asked about the role of Rahul in the new government.

"It is for the prime minister to decide on Rahul Gandhi's role in the new government," she said when asked whether her son will join the cabinet.

Manmohan and Sonia appeared before the media at her 10 Janpath residence as he came for a meeting with her with a bouquet in his hand to greet her on the good showing by Congress and UPA.

Both leaders thanked the people for reposing faith in Congress and UPA and for giving them a fresh mandate.

When pressed again on the issue of Rahul joining the cabinet, Manmohan said he had tried in the past and will again try to persuade Rahul to join the cabinet. In his brief remark, Manmohan said the people of India spoke and they spoke with 'great clarity'.

"They have expressed faith in Congress, in the visionary leadership of Sonia Gandhi and the sustained hard work by youth leader Rahul," he added.

He said UPA is committed to provide a stable, strong government which is committed to secular values. He appealed to all political parties to join hands with the government and show the world that 'they stand as one nation'.

At the time of filing his report in the first hour of today the website of the Election Commission was not accessible any more due to a crash, and until then official results for 300 seats were declared, 112 of which were won by Congress, and the alliance led by it was ahead in 148 more constituencies, setting UPA up with the need for only 12 more seats to reach an absolute majority of 272.

UPA's principal challenger Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) officially won 73 seats and its National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was projected to win a total of 161 seats out of which BJP was projected to get 116 seats, 22 less than in the polls of 2004.

The projections left Congress and its alliance with a cakewalk to the majority of 272 seats in Lok Sabha given UPA's emphatic lead over BJP-led NDA.

As an icing on the cake, Congress also renewed its hold in the key southern state of Andhra Pradesh, where elections to legislature were held along with parliamentary polls, for another five years.

Manmohan will be the first Congress politician outside the Nehru-Gandhi clan to be the prime minister for a second time. The only other person from outside India's first political family was PV Narasimha Rao who headed a minority Congress government from 1991 to 1996 after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by an LITE suicide bomber.

While Congress, riding on tireless campaign by its chief Sonia Gandhi, her son also party General Secretary Rahul Gandhi, 38, and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, gained more seats than it had secured in the previous parliamentary elections in 2004 -- BJP's tally however went down.

Sonia Gandhi congratulated Manmohan Singh soon after it became quite clear that Congress was being swept back to power.

BJP conceded defeat almost five hours after counting began

across the country with the party spokesman Arun Jaitley telling the media that his party 'accepts the mandate of the people with full respect'.

"Something certainly did go wrong and something did go in favour of Congress," said Jaitley without elaborating.

The biggest loser in this election is the Third Front led by left parties which suffered a severe setback in West Bengal and Kerala against Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress and Congress respectively.

The left parties have been ruling Kerala and West Bengal, but received a major setback managing just five of the 20 seats in the southern state and 15 of the 42 seats in the eastern state.

Trinamool Congress, which had firmed up an alliance with Congress in West Bengal, secured 19 seats and Congress 6, leaving 15 for Left Front. BJP got one seat and others none.

A crestfallen CPI (M) General Secretary Prakash Karat told the media, "We have suffered a severe setback in West Bengal and Kerala," and that the left parties will sit in the opposition.

At the heart of Congress comeback to power was its surprisingly remarkable performance in the country's biggest state of Uttar Pradesh where it secured 20 out of the total 80 seats, a gain of 15 over 2004 results, justifying Rahul Gandhi's decision to go it alone in the state.

Congress exceedingly put a good show in Andhra Pradesh and the performance of the party and allies in Tamil Nadu in the face of anti-incumbency also contributed in a big way to the victory of the party headed by Sonia Gandhi.

Congress also did remarkably well in other North Indian states like Rajasthan ruled by the party, BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, where the grand old party swept all the four seats, and in Delhi, ruled by itself, where it captured all seven seats.

"It is a decisive vote for Congress," said party spokesman Abhishek Manu Singhvi as frenzied celebrations erupted in front of Congress offices across the country and the party headquarters at 24 Akbar Road here.

Party supporters danced on the streets to the drum beat holding portraits of Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh.

By stark contrast, the mood at BJP headquarters on 11 Ashoka Road was subdued as the results poured in.

"We got less seats than last time, although we had expected more," said Jaitley.

Congress' margin of victory against BJP was much higher than that predicted by exit polls which had suggested that only a handful of seats would separate the two main contenders for power.

The clear mandate vote for UPA will go some way to soothe concerns of those who had expected a tighter race that would have thrown up a fragile coalition and possible political instability.

Senior Leader of BJP LK Advani, who during the campaign repeatedly attacked Manmohan Singh calling him 'the weakest prime minister in the history of India', however picked up the phone yesterday to congratulate Singh. Advani also called Sonia Gandhi and congratulated her on the poll victory of her party and alliance.

Left's red fort

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India (Manist) [CPI (M)].

Prominent winners included senior Congress leader and External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee from Jangipur, Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee (Kolkata South), CPI (M)'s Basudeb Acharya (Bakura), and Trinamool's industrialist Dinesh Trivedi (Barrackpur).

Mukherjee told reporters that the alliance between Trinamool and Congress paid rich dividends to both parties in the elections.

His party colleague Pradip Bhattacharya said the result in West Bengal showed people craved for a change of government in the state.

Mamata demanded early assembly polls in the state, which are otherwise due in two years, alleging that the Lok Sabha election result showed people's no-confidence in CPI (M)-led Left Front.

The Left Front, which came to power for the first time in West Bengal in 1977, since then won largely because of ineffective and a divided opposition.

But the alliance between Trinamool and Congress showed the gains from unity in opposition ranks.

What was significant that Trinamool-Congress alliance succeeded in making inroads into the left's hold among rural voters.

Assam went against the national trend with Congress suffering significant losses in the state, but BJP and Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF), a Muslim outfit, making considerable gains.

The most significant loss for Congress, which had won nine of the 14 seats in the last Lok

Sabha polls in 2004, was the defeat of Federal Minister Santosh Mohan Dev from Silchar who finished a poor third behind BJP's Kabindra Punakayastha and AUDF president Badruddin Ajmal.

Another union minister Bijoy Krishna Handique retained the Jorhat seat for the sixth term defeating BJP's Kamakhya Prasad by 71,914 votes.

Another win for Congress was the Kaliabor seat where Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi's brother Dip Gogoi retained it for the third consecutive term defeating AGP's Gunin Hazarika by 1,50,442 votes.

Congress suffered a major blow when it lost