

## 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 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 schoolmates, 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 Seiji 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.

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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

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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

## 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.

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## Tamil Tigers

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The Tigers are "preparing for a mass suicide after being effectively cut-off of escape routes, both land and sea, and now encircled in a mere 3.5 square kilometres (1.3 square miles) of land," the defence ministry said.

It said their "only way out is to surrender to the security forces or to be crushed in the military advance," and added that it believed veteran rebel leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran, 53, was still holed up in the area.

"The fighting has come to the last stage of defeating terrorism. We expect the good news of ending the fighting very soon," defence spokesman Lakshman Hulugalle told AFP.

Government forces have

kept up their blistering assault

despite international calls for a ceasefire to save the lives of thousands of trapped civilians.

In the latest appeal to Sri

Lankan authorities, European

Union foreign ministers urged

that "the fighting must stop now" and said they were "appalled by continuing reports of

high numbers of civilian casualties."

UN Secretary General Ban

Ki-moon's chief of staff, Vijay

Nambiar, was heading to the

island in a fresh effort to stop the carnage, and was expected to

reach Colombo on Saturday -- by which time the battle is

likely to be all but over.

The International Com-

mittee of the Red Cross, the

only neutral organisation work-

ing in the northeast, said earlier

in the week that its staff were

"witnessing an unimaginable

humanitarian catastrophe."

The UN's human rights

office has said an independent

probe into possible war crimes

in Sri Lanka was vital. The

island's government, however,

has barred diplomats, inde-

pendent journalists and most

aid workers from the conflict

area.

But government troops

pressed on Saturday, with two

divisions that have been

advancing along the coastline

from the south and north link-

ing up and denying the rebels a

chance of escaping by boat.

President Mahinda

Rajapakse, who is currently

visiting Jordan, said he expects

to capture the last remaining

patch of land from the Tigers by

Sunday morning.

He is due to return to

Colombo on Sunday, and an

official source said he is likely to

deliver an address to the nation

later in the day.

The Tigers controlled nearly

## 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.

Shamsheer Mobi n Chowdhury, former foreign secretary and foreign affairs adviser to BNP Chairperson Khaleda 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."

Shamsheer 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.

Shamsheer 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.

Intiaz 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 Intiaz.

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.

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

Former foreign secretary CM Shafiq 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 Shafiq 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 Md. 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.

Citing bad experiences of the past, the minister said some government agencies like Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) wanted to use a certain percent of jute sacks but Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation could not supply it. "We hope we can overcome such problems."

The minister said another problem the sector faces is shortage of quality jute seeds.

"There are projects for jute seeds in 100 upazilas. They produce only 300 tonnes but it is possible for them to produce 1,000 tonnes."

Against this backdrop, poor quality seeds are imported and sold, Latif Siddiqui said.

The jute policy being formulated will take into account all these issues.

Contacted, Bangladesh Jute Mills Association Secretary Abdul Barik Khan expressed the hope that government efforts would help revitalise jute industry.

He however said rescheduling of bank loans for the sick and closed mills is very important.

## 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 (CUFFL) 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.

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