

## WHO hesitates over declaring swine flu pandemic

AFP, Geneva

A month after the world was alerted to a potential flu pandemic, the WHO was caught Thursday between the spread of the new swine flu virus to 41 countries and doubts fostered by its mild symptoms. More than 11,000 cases and 85 deaths have been recorded since the outbreak of A(H1N1) influenza emerged in Mexico and the United States, and the world remains at flu alert level five, signalling an 'imminent pandemic'.

But World Health Organisation Director General Margaret Chan has stopped short of declaring a fully-fledged pandemic by moving to phase six, even though travellers have carried it to other continents.

The top level would indicate sustained community transmission in a second region outside the Americas.

On Thursday, Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso appealed for calm as a total of 281 swine flu cases were reported in the country, including the first in greater Tokyo, the world's largest urban area.

Antoine Flahaut, an epidemiologist and head of the School of Public Health (EHESP) in France, told AFP that the technical elements were in place to move into the pandemic phase.

"But the WHO senses that recommendations which go with that are not adapted to the situation," he explained, pointing to air travel restrictions or advice to wear surgical masks.

"Invoking phase six would be disproportionate with the current situation."

The doubts have grown because of the relatively mild symptoms of swine flu, which experts acknowledge is no worse than seasonal influenza now.

Many of the deaths have occurred among those who were suffering from other ailments, a common pattern for ordinary strains of flu.

During a meeting at the WHO's annual assembly Thursday, Chan listed the issue of swine flu's severity among other criteria that were prompting caution.



PHOTO: AFP  
Rahul Gandhi, (L), Congress Party General Secretary and son of Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi and his sister Priyanka (R), accompanied by her husband Robert Vadra (2R), pay tribute to their father during a memorial ceremony for slain former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his 18th death anniversary, in New Delhi yesterday. Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in 1991.

## Obama seeks control of Guantanamo debate

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama yesterday aimed to grab back the initiative in a riotous debate unleashed by his order to shut Guantanamo Bay, under political fire from critics and allies alike.

The president was scheduled to make a major national security speech amid reports that the US government will bring a top al-Qaeda suspect held at the detention center to trial in New York.

Ahmed Khalan Ghailani, a Tanzanian accused in 1998 US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, would be the first former detainee at the US naval base where some 240 terror suspects are held, to face trial in a civilian court in the United States.

As Obama makes his speech, ex-vice president Dick Cheney will deliver his own address, leading Republican charges that Obama's national security policies leave America vulnerable to terrorists.

The president chose the National Archives, which houses the US Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, to argue that his effort to reframe the legal

front in the battle against terror honors bedrock US values.

But he will step to centre stage just a day after his plan to close the "war on terror" camp suffered a rebuke in the Senate, and following a tough FBI warning not to bring detainees to US soil.

Obama's Democratic allies joined Republican critics in a vote that stripped \$80 million dollars he requested to shutter the facility from a \$91.3-billion-dollar war spending bill.

Still, the White House insists Obama will work with Congress to achieve his commitment to shut Guantanamo in January 2010, a year after taking office, as a cabinet-level committee works out how to fulfil the pledge.

The speech also follows revelations that a Pentagon report found that one in seven of the 534 prisoners who have been transferred abroad from Guantanamo Bay have returned to militant activity, a nearly 14 percent reoffending rate.

Obama aides decry the heavily fortified encampment as a recruiting tool for Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups and a stain on the US image abroad.

But working out how to close the facility, and either try inmates or send them to third countries, is proving a political headache. So far, only France and Britain have accepted Guantanamo detainees -- each taking just one.

Obama is under intense pressure to decide the fate of the detainees from 30 nations at the camp, many of whom have not been charged.

## Rahim brought to Dhaka

FROM PAGE 13 *and 21*  
However, it could not be confirmed whether any papers were seized.

Rahim was brought out of Chittagong jail around 10:00am and sent to Dhaka directly by road under police escort, said sources in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which is investigating the case.

Maj Gen (retd) Rezaqul Haider, the other detained ex-NSI chief accused in the case, will be taken to TFI cell in Dhaka later, said CID Chittagong divisional Special Superintendent of Police Mohammad Muslim.

Both the former NSI bosses were placed on a 6-day fresh remand each on Wednesday.

Sources said during the interrogation at TFI cell the investigators would focus on extracting information regarding the origin, destination, buyers and financers of the 10 truckloads of arms and ammunition hauled at the Jettie of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Company Ltd (CUFL) in the early hours of April 2, 2004.

They said after the latest arrest of four NSI men including the two former chiefs and CUFL managing director and general manager (admin) the number of accused in the case rose to 51, including one deceased. Investigators have so far interrogated 43 of them.

During interrogation on remand, they gave important information regarding the smuggling. Especially Rahim admitted to holding a meeting with officials of a foreign agency and ARY, a Dubai-based business group allegedly financing insurgent and terrorist groups.

But, they tactfully avoided information about their involvement in the incident.

Shady project in river

FROM PAGE 1  
"This is not a river. This is our land. We have documents that we bought it from the locals," Zaki claimed.

He however could not say how much land they have 'bought' and how much they are going to fill up.

"It depends on the locals," he tried to argue but eventually gave in and left giving the phone number of the office manager of DOM INNO.

The office manager identified himself as Subrata over phone and said, "We have 100 percent clear papers. We did not fill up the river. Even we left out 10 feet from our land."

But he could not immediately say anything about the documents; he rather offered the correspondent to visit the spot with him so that he could 'prove' they were not filling up their documents.

The width of the river here is not more than 30 to 45 feet as they have fenced a part of the river, put polythene in the waters and are filling up the river with dredger.

Asked over phone, Md Noman, brother-in-law of Majibul Rahman, said they have 100 decimals of land by the Turag.

He could not say how they 'bought' a single patch of land with two ledger numbers far a way from one another according to the original documents.

"I don't know how, but we have land there," Noman claimed.

## India's 'odd couple' take up another term

AFP, New Delhi

When India's enigmatic Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi first nominated the studious Manmohan Singh as premier in 2004, observers had their antennae tuned for signs of the first rift.

But five years on, the elegant Italian-born widow and the 76-year-old turbaned Sikh, dubbed the "odd couple" by India's media, are heading into another term of office after Congress's huge re-election victory.

And they would appear -- outwardly, at least -- to still be on good terms.

After the results rolled in last weekend showing Congress sweeping to its biggest win in 18 years, Gandhi beamed as she ushered the septuagenarian to a podium outside her home and declared he would again be her choice for premier.

There have been whispers of clashes but Sonia has said she and Singh have always worked in harmony.

"I adore the prime minister for the manner in which he handles the government," the widow of former premier Rajiv Gandhi and daughter-in-law of former prime minister Indira Gandhi -- both of whom were assassinated -- said in 2007.

"We work very closely in an atmosphere of frankness," said Gandhi, who arrived in India as a bride in her early 20s and has transformed herself into a sari-clad Indian who speaks Hindi fluently, albeit with an accent.

In 2004, in a blitzkrieg campaign courting India's poor masses, she led the centre-left Congress to a surprise poll triumph after years in the wilderness.

She gave up the chance to be premier,

instead nominating the softly spoken Singh, an esteemed economist who has earned the reputation of being the "Mr Clean's Mr Clean" in India's murky politics.

"I must admire her political sagacity," Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee said this week for the way she has managed to silence opposition taunts that she was a power-hungry "foreign doll."

Pundits reckon however Gandhi still calls the shots in the partnership, taking on India's bruising political wheeling-dealing while Singh administers the nation's affairs.

"It's a very convenient division of labour -- he's good on policy and she looks after the politics. They also have a certain innate mutual respect," said columnist Partha Venkateswar Rao.

Sonia is seen as carefully managing the eventual rise to the premiership of her son Rahul Gandhi, 38, whom she thrust into a central role in the latest campaign.

Rahul "has earned his political legitimacy in this election," said veteran commentator MJ Akbar. "It is highly likely at some point there may even be a transition in government with Singh making way for Rahul."

Many in Congress cannot conceive of a future without a Gandhi in charge, but Sonia has insisted Rahul must prove himself if he wants to become premier.

"If you have a family whose earlier generations have been in politics it gives you a head start," she said.

"But India is a democracy. You may have an advantage at the beginning but you have to work hard to prove yourself," she added knowingly.

## Swat dwellers fend off Taliban

AP, Islamabad

Armed residents confronted a group of Taliban fighters and foiled their attempt to sneak into a town in Pakistan's Swat Valley, the focus of a major military offensive against the insurgency, an official said yesterday.

The attempted infiltration in Kalam indicated militants are feeling pinched by the army and are seeking new shelter, while the rare local resistance Wednesday suggested growing public confidence in an anti-Taliban operation supported by the United States. Deputy Mayor Shamshad Haqqai told The Associated Press about 50 Taliban fighters tried to enter Kalam, but that armed residents quickly gathered to fight them off.

## CONSULTANCY ASSIGNMENT WITH UNICEF

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POSITION : MANAGER  
DEPARTMENT : PROCUREMENT  
JOB LOCATION : DHAKA

Job Description  
● Sound knowledge in supply chain management.  
● Should be a problem solver and have the ability to prioritize his/her task to meet the dead line.  
● Strong organization ability to make things happen effectively.

POSITION : MANAGER  
DEPARTMENT : SHIPPING  
JOB LOCATION : DHAKA

Job Description  
● Must be Capable / Handle Mother Vessel / Lighter Vessel.  
● Having Knowledge or Protocol work.  
● Must be capable of corresponding independently with principle.

POSITION : EXECUTIVE  
DEPARTMENT : SHIPPING  
JOB LOCATION : DHAKA

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