

## 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 for 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.

"One of the things we're not seeing is the same spread in the southern hemisphere that we've seen in the first three countries," a WHO official added.

When the assembly opened on Monday, British Health Secretary Alan Johnson voiced doubts about phase six that had been growing behind the scenes after countries rushed to contain new cases of swine flu.

Those calls for caution and a more flexible system prompted nods of approval from other countries afterwards, including China, Japan and New Zealand.

"She has taken that on board," WHO spokesman Thomas Abraham said, underlining that most of the cases in Japan were largely confined to students or their close entourage.

Chan acknowledged this week that the WHO's pandemic response plan, introduced nearly four years ago, was largely designed around the more deadly and virulent, but less transmissible, H5N1 bird flu virus.

"This scale was based on geographical distribution, but the public belief is that pandemic means seriousness," said Sylvie Briand, acting director of the WHO's Global Influenza Program.

But the WHO is also looking ahead at the potential progress of the new virus, and fears of its impact in poor countries, where millions of people are already weakened by chronic illness.

"Whatever the member states might say, we are in phase five," Abraham remarked.

In studies released by the New England Journal of Medicine, scientists pointed out the similarities between the new A(H1N1) virus and ones behind pandemics that marked the 20th century.

Those pandemics in 1918-1919 -- which killed an estimated 50 million people -- in 1957-1963 and 1968-1970 started off as mild but went through waves that became more lethal at their peak, often the second season, and had different impacts in different regions.



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 Khalaf 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 1: 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 (ret'd) 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 financiers of the 10 truckloads of arms and ammunition hauled at the jetty 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.

Apart from the two ex-NSI chiefs and one former director, others are accused of helping transportation of the illegal consignment. So, they did not have any knowledge about the suppliers and buyers of the arms and ammunition.

But, being the then NSI chief, Rahim would surely be able to give details on everything and identify everyone involved in the smuggling, sources said.

Rahim and Rezaqul were arrested on May 16 at their residences in Dhaka following the confessional statement of former NSI director (security) Wing Commander (ret'd) Sahab Uddin made before a Chittagong court on May 15.

In his statement, Sahab implicated the former NSI chiefs.

The two were produced before a Chittagong court and taken on a three-day remand each on May 17.

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," Zakir 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 'DOMINNO'.

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 the river.

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.

Near the 'DOM INNO's' land another group of around 50 workers were filling up the river using boats. They could not be contacted and

identified as they were in the middle of the river and there were no signboards there either.

On the left, two signboards were erected in the water which read "The owners of the land are Rahima Binte Majibur Rahman and Abdullah Bin Majibur Rahman".

They have mentioned their CS (cadastral survey) number as 25 and 5 under the Vatulia Mouza in Uttara police station which used to be under Keraniganj during the British rule.

In the CS survey it was seen the land in ledger number 5 and 25 as not parallel. But they have shown that in parallel position which raises the question about accuracy of their documents.

Asked over phone, Md Noman, brother-in-law of Majibur 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 away 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 wheeler-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 Parsa Venkateshwar 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.

### MUMBAI ATTACK

## India sends DNA samples to Pakistan

AFP, New Delhi

India on Wednesday sent DNA samples from 10 gunmen blamed for last year's Mumbai attacks to Pakistan, officials said.

"The Ministry of External Affairs today handed over to the Pakistani high commission additional information and details relating to the Mumbai terror attack sought by Pakistan," the foreign ministry said.

The ministry said the information included DNA samples from 10 gunmen who New Delhi says belonged to the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group.

India accuses the Islamist guerrilla force of sending the gunmen to Mumbai where they laid siege to the city for three days, killing 166 people and injuring over 300. All but one of the gunmen also died.

In February, Pakistan admitted for the first time that the strikes were partly planned on its soil.

The lone surviving gunman is currently facing trial in a Mumbai court.

The assault on India's financial capital raised tensions between nuclear rivals India and Pakistan, who have been to war three times since independence in 1947.

## 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.

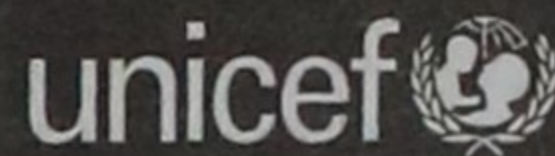
The attempted infiltration in Kalam indicated militants are feeling pinched by the army and are seeking new shelter, while the rare local resistance Wednesday suggested growing public confidence in an anti-Taliban operation supported by the United States. Deputy Mayor Shamsah Haqqi told The Associated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

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● Having Knowledge of Protocol work.  
● Must be capable of corresponding independently with principle.

**Qualification and Experiences:**  
● Minimum 5 years experience in similar field  
● Graduation degree in any discipline  
● Good command on MS - Office applications.  
● Language proficiency in Bengali & English is essential.  
● Age should not exceed 35 years.

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**JOB LOCATION : DHAKA**

**Job Description**  
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● Having knowledge of Protocol work.  
● Must be capable of corresponding independently with principle.

**Qualification and Experiences:**  
● Graduation degree in any discipline.  
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● Minimum 15 years of hands-on experience on HR and Admin jobs in highly reputed or medium size organizations.  
● Candidates holding a position of AGM or below need not to apply.  
● (N/A for multinational company)  
● Sound Knowledge on ISO standard and Quality Management System.  
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● Highly motivated, self-starter and values oriented.  
● Good command on MS-Office applications.  
● Language Proficiency in Bengali & English is essential.  
● Age should not exceed 50 years.

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**DEPARTMENT : PROCUREMENT & COMMERCIAL**  
**JOB LOCATION : DHAKA**

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This is a senior management position for taking up the responsibility of Head of procurement Division of the Group. The incumbent shall be responsible for conduct and final negotiations of price, payment, quality and other relevant aspects. Should review and implement relevant procurement policy & QA processes etc. To manage a team of buyers to ensure sourcing, purchasing, record keeping and acquisition of goods and services as and when requisitioned or required by marketing, logistics, HR & Admin division etc. Must be conversant with local / overseas purchase / procurement.

**Qualification and Experiences:**  
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● Candidates holding a position of AGM or below need not to apply.  
● (N/A for multinational company)  
● Good command on MS-Office applications.  
● Language proficiency in Bengali & English is essential.  
● Age should not exceed 50 years.

**POSITION : GENERAL MANAGER**  
**DEPARTMENT : AUDIT & INSPECTION**  
**JOB LOCATION : DHAKA**

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**Qualification and Experiences:**  
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● Candidates holding a position of AGM or below need not to apply.  
● (N/A for multinational company)  
● Good command on MS-Office applications.  
● Language proficiency in Bengali & English is essential.  
● Age should not exceed 45 years.

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