

Swine flu cases rise in Gulf states

AFP, Doha

Swine flu cases in Arab states in the Gulf, a high-traffic transit zone for millions of air travellers, rose to 33 yesterday after Qatar reported its first cases.

Three people arriving in Doha on international flights were diagnosed with A(H1N1) influenza, and Kuwait also reported that one of its citizens had the virus -- the first among the emirate's resident population.

Qatar's Health Minister Abdullah al-Qahtani said a two-year-old New Zealand child tested positive for the flu on arrival in Doha on Saturday from Austria after a stopover in Dubai.

And a two-year-old American-Bangladeshi boy transiting Doha on Sunday from New York to Bangladesh who showed flu symptoms was taken to the airport clinic where he was diagnosed with the disease, Qahtani was quoted by the official QNA news agency as saying.

An Iraqi arriving from the United States was also found to be infected with the virus, Qahtani told a news conference.

The Kuwaiti case was of a man who arrived in the emirate on a flight from the United States, the health ministry said on Tuesday. Last month 18 American soldiers tested positive for swine flu in Kuwait.

Saudi Arabia, home to some seven million foreign workers out of a 25.4-million-strong population, announced three new cases on Tuesday, taking its total to 17, the highest figure among the four Gulf states currently affected.

A Saudi student returning from Australia, a Mauritanian woman and a Malaysian nurse -- the last two had both been in contact with infected people -

Jubak scam

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filed with Dahanmondi Police Station.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the police station Shah Alam said they were informed that some deceived clients of Jubak confined her in a Chinese hotel in Kathalbagan area around 12:30am yesterday. They had earlier gathered there on information that some former officials of the organisation would hold a secret meeting at the hotel.

Police rushed to the spot and arrested Raushan Ara, the OC said.

She is accused in the misappropriation case, and went into hiding soon after it was filed.

Police produced her before a Dhaka court seeking a four-day remand, the OC said. He however did not say if she was remanded.

Meanwhile, Jubak allegedly used to take money from people on false promises of giving them high interest, flats or plots.

BNPPP hits

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considering any trial of Gen (ret'd) Moeen.

Talking to reporters in AL President Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi of the capital following a meeting of a party sub-committee formed to observe AL's 60th founding anniversary on June 23, Ashraf also hinted that the government could make Moeen the country's ambassador to somewhere abroad. But the government has not taken any decision yet, he added.

There will be no problem with the move, if made, as there is a custom of appointing retired army chiefs ambassadors to missions in foreign countries, he said adding that there is a tradition of that and it will also continue in the future.

Addressing the briefing in the parliament media centre, Opposition Chief Whip Zai ul Abdin Farroque alleged that Anti-corruption Commission Chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, Lt Gen Masud Uddin Chowdhury, Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin, Maj Gen (ret'd) ATM Amin, and Brig Gen Fazlul Bari collaborated with Gen (ret'd) Moeen in 'committing the misdeeds'.

He said Gen (ret'd) Moeen forced the immediate past president Iajuddin Ahmed, who was psychologically imbalanced, to promulgate ordinances, and to hold a parliamentary election according to a 'blue print'.

"He [Moeen] also committed an offence by extending his tenure as the army chief, with a signature from a psychologically imbalanced person," Farroque alleged adding, "He violated service rules and discipline, and directly used some army officers in an effort to form a new political party by splitting existing ones."

- were all diagnosed with the virus, the health ministry in Riyadh said.

On Monday the Gulf kingdom of Bahrain reported 11 new cases of swine flu among students returning from their studies in the United States, taking the total to 12.

The students, who had been among a group of 13 returning from Washington via Kuwait on the same flight as the infected Kuwaiti man, were quarantined in a Manama hospital, the health ministry said.

Bahrain reported its first case of swine flu in May, that of a 21-year-old Bahraini who had also returned from studying in the United States.

The United Arab Emirates, a federation of seven emirates in which foreigners make up more than 80 percent of the population, said in May a man arriving from Canada was its first confirmed swine flu case, but he recovered on treatment and the country is now free of the virus.

Oman has not reported any cases of the disease.

The influenza A (H1N1) virus, which was first detected in Mexico in April, has so far infected almost 36,000 people in 76 countries and claimed 163 lives, according to the latest World Health Organisation figures.

Leaders try to diffuse Canadian political standoff

AFP, Ottawa

Canada's Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper was to meet late last night with opposition Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff to try to overcome an impasse over an economic stimulus, and avoid snap elections.

Spokesmen for both camps confirmed the high-level talks aimed at diffusing political tensions in the dying days of the current parliamentary session.

But they offered few details. On Monday, Ignatieff rejected the ruling Conservatives' economic recovery plan as "just not good enough" and threatened to withdraw crucial support for measures aimed at stimulating a four economy.

The minority government's latest quarterly spending update provided too few details, he told a press conference, and he demanded more.

Shahidul Alam

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to see the barbed wire fencing, was kidnapped by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) jawans at about 6:30pm yesterday.

Confirming the incident, BDR Commanding Officer of Jamalpur Lt Col Mizanur Rahman said Dr Alam and two other journalists visited the border area to see the barbed wire fencing along the border raised by India.

BSF jawans of Shahpara outpost called Dr Alam to their side. As he crossed the border they kidnapped him. His two companions, whose identity could not be known immediately, quickly retreated and took shelter at a house in Charphulbari border village.

LT Col Mizan said they have started process of securing early release of Dr Alam.

BAF aircraft

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near the Karnaphuli estuary, they added.

Divers of Bangladesh Navy with the help of locals rescued the pilot from the estuary and rushed him to the nearby Naval Hospital, said Commander Anwar of Naval Academy at Patenga.

The pilot was not injured, he added.

A naval rescue team was searching for the wreckage at the "bravo point" of the outer anchorage of Chittagong Port, sources said.

"There was a bang, the plane became unstable in the air before it caught fire and crashed into the water," said Jasim and Hanif who along with three others rushed to the spot and rescued the pilot.

"Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman went to Chittagong by helicopter and inspected the place of accident and gave necessary instructions to all concerned with the rescue operation. A high-level investigation committee was formed in this regard," said the ISPR press release.

The air force chief also visited the pilot at the Navy Hospital.

RETURN OF FUND Parliament club opposes chief whip's proposal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The executive committee of the Parliament Members' Club yesterday strongly opposed Chief Whip Abdus Shahid's proposal for returning Tk one lakh he took from the club for medical treatment during the tenure of the last parliament.

The committee members said the club's constitution does not provide for anybody to return money, according to a press release signed by Saidur Rahman, public relations officer of Shahid.

Shahid, who was opposition chief whip in the last parliament, took Tk one lakh from the club for his treatment.

A sub-committee probing alleged corruption in Parliament Secretariat during the last parliament disclosed a list of lawmakers who took Tk 64 lakh out of Tk 68 lakh the club had earned. Former chief whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain and incumbent opposition chief whip Zainul Abdin Farroque among others took money.

On May 31, Chief Whip Shahid at a press briefing in his office in the parliament complex announced he would return the money to the MPs' Club.

At yesterday's meeting, Shahid proposed that he be allowed to return the money.

But the executive committee members said if he has to return the money then question would arise for returning money by all recipients, the press release said.

The committee however discussed amending the constitution of the club to limit the amount of donation. Shahid, who is the president of the club, pressed for the meeting.

CG system

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The statement came a day after AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta told parliament that the caretaker government system should be abolished and the next national polls should be held under an elected government.

The LGDR minister, also spokesperson of the ruling Awami League, was talking to reporters at party President Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi after a meeting of a sub-committee formed to observe the party's 60 years of founding anniversary on June 23.

Earlier, Law Minister barrister Shafique Ahmed said if the EC could function independently and actively, there would be no need for the caretaker government system, reports UNB.

"I think there is no need for caretaker government just for elections," he told reporters after a UNDP delegation met him at the ministry yesterday.

Shafique said it is up to the government to make decision on the provision of the caretaker government system.

On the meeting with the delegation, he said they came with a proposal for launching a long-term pilot project on how to settle cases speedily on the basis of alternative dispute resolution (ADR)-a form of formal arbitration outside law courts.

He agreed in principle with the UN agency and said such proposal should be implemented instead of just confining it to roundtable discussions or seminars.

The UNDP team put forward another proposal on improving court management and case management.

The law minister said the government would make the decision after studying a specific proposal from the UNDP in this regard. He thinks implementation of the proposed project would help dispose of cases quickly.

In reply to a question, he said the government would consider if the ADR could be introduced in criminal cases apart from civil suits.

Budget proposal

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The minister made it clear that they would submit investment proposal with expected employment creation in the first year while the government would examine after the three years whether the investors fulfilled the employment target. Then they would get the chance of getting their money whitened.

Replying to another question, Muhith said it is still premature to say whether the budgetary measures would be changed. Discussion on the budget in the parliament will start today and the changes, if required, would be decided after completion of the discussion.

Turning to IFC meeting, Muhith said they discussed how better Bangladesh could operationalise its institutions to improve the country's investment climate for facilitating the special economic zone and public-private partnership.

Buriganga drive

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structures, he continued. A final list of encroachers in the river Buriganga is also being prepared and the drive is expected to begin by the end of next week, he informed.

Meanwhile, BIWTA and Narayanganj district administration demolished portions of twelve structures of different categories illegally built on the river Shitalakhya on the seventh day of the ongoing eviction drive yesterday.

BIWTA Senior Deputy Director Md Abu Zafar Hawlader said the eviction drive had progressed well so far.

Yesterday's drive was delayed due to lack of fuel until 12:00 noon and started with partial demolition of New SM Flour Mills and other structures including flourmills and warehouses at Nitaiganj in Narayanganj.

The officials yesterday had to make fresh marks on the six-storey Chand Flour Mills, as the encroachment mark put earlier by them was altered to evade demolition.

Khair Uddin Mollah, owner of another six-storey residential building that encroached on the Shitalakhya, and owner of Chand Flour Mills earlier sought two days from authorities to pull down their structures themselves.

Today is the last day and let's see what they do and if they don't do it themselves we will carry it out," said on-duty Executive Magistrate Abul Kashem.

At the end of the day, however, the authorities did not pull down the Chand Flour Mills.

Executive Magistrate Abdul Hai, who took over the drive in the afternoon said, "We put marks of encroachment on the illegally-built portions of Chand Flour Mills on the basis of records."

"A walkway may be built as a demarcation line to protect the river from encroachers," said Hai.

The structures demolished partially yesterday include large-sized Birkampur Salt factory and M Wahab and Sons and warehouse parts of Popular Jute Mills, three-storey New SM Flour Mills and a tin-shed Pubali Salt.

A number of concrete and semi-concrete warehouses, two-storey Rafiq Traders and two residence-cum-warehouses were also torn down.

BIWTA Deputy Director Alamgir Kabir said 150 labour-

Russia to veto extension of UN mission in Georgia

AFP, United Nations

Russia Monday threatened to veto a 15-day extension of the UN mission in Georgia demanding that any reference to the name of "Georgia" be dropped, Russian envoy Vitaly Churkin said.

The draft put forward to extend the mission's mandate until the end of June was "unacceptable" because it refers to a previous resolution adopted last year which talks about UNOMIG or the UN Mission in Georgia, Churkin said.

UNOMIG's mandate, which is due to expire on Monday, extends only to the conflict between Georgia and the break-away enclave of Abkhazia.

Russia sent troops deep into Georgia in August 2008 to beat back a Georgian military attempt to retake South Ossetia, a territory which had received extensive backing from Moscow for years.

Russian forces later withdrew to within South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another rebel region, under a ceasefire brokered and monitored by the European Union.

After its brief, bloody war with Georgia, Russia went on to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent despite protests from the West and from Georgia itself. Most of the world still recognizes both regions as part of Georgia.

OC killed

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The OC was bullet-hit in the back and died on the spot.

He had joined Bianibazar Police Station just six months back.

Mujibur, the injured SI, and Rumon, the student, were admitted to Bianibazar health complex.

Rumon was later shifted to Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Police suspect that local gangster Moyezuddin fired on the policemen and the student. No one was arrested in this connection as of filing this report at 1:30am.

ers, two BIWTA tugboats and two trawlers were engaged in yesterday's drive.

The eviction team, meanwhile, completed demolition of parts of four multi-storey buildings including one seven-storey and two six-storey garment factories and one six-storey residential building.

The authorities with available logistics at their disposal were unable to remove any of the heavily built retaining walls and foundations of the buildings built illegally on the river.

And this will leave a prospect for the encroachers to come back again with makeshift structures at a later stage, sources pointed out.

The drive in Shitalakhya continues today for the eighth day.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Islamic regime likely to weather Iran 'turbulence': analysts

AFP, Paris

Iran's Islamic regime has hit heavy turbulence but the outpouring of anger sparked by the disputed presidential election is not, for now, threatening its foundations, experts said yesterday.

Analysts also said Western powers, aware any hint of foreign string-pulling would backfire against the Iranian opposition, have little bearing on the situation, however much they would welcome a change in Tehran.

"The regime is going through a period of strong turbulence, but I can't see it being shaken at its foundations," said Denis Bauchard of the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI).

He said there was "huge frustration" among backers of defeated presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi at losing to hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, "probably as a result of large-scale doctored of the result."

"A majority of the population feel they have been cheated," agreed Thierry Coville of the Institute of International and Strategic Relations (IRIS).

"But what is being contested is the election process, not the regime itself. This is not a clash between the regime and an outside opposition," Bauchard argued, stressing that Mousavi himself is "a conservative, an apparatus."

Coville believes the key question is whether Iran's reformists and moderates can build a sufficiently united front to claw back some power from the headline anti-Western leader Ahmadinejad.

Still popular among poor and rural voters, backed by the army and security forces and by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Bauchard said Ahmadinejad remained in a position of strength.

The anti-Western leader is further boosted by a shortage of serious alternatives inside Iran, whether from royalists or the People's Mujahadeen, Bauchard said.

While a fringe of Tehran's educated youth appear to yearn for a break with the rigid Islamic regime in favour of Western-style freedoms, they lack leaders or any formal structure to pursue their goals.

The limitations of Western pressure has already been highlighted by Iran's insistence on forging ahead with its nuclear programme Bauchard.

Biman share

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Mosharraf said Biman would be able to accumulate between Tk 1,500 crore and Tk 2,000 crore selling the shares to NRBS.

Biman was turned into a public limited company in July, 2007 to stop huge losses every year and start making profit.

Biman, however, could not attain the desired improvements in the last two years during which cent percent of its shares were in the government's possession.

Biman still cannot maintain flight schedules thanks to shortage of aircrafts. Taking advantage of the situation, foreign airlines are capturing Bangladesh Biman's market share.

The committee also proposed including five major NRB shareholders in the 10-member board of directors of Biman while the government should directly appoint the other five.

3 killed

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managed to come out of the factory during the fire, said Officer-in-Charge (OC) Jahurul Haque of Tongi police station while talking to The Daily Star.

On information, firefighters from Tongi fire station rushed to the spot. Five other fire units from Gazipur, Tejgaon and Kurmitola later joined with them and the fire came under control around 5:00am.

Country Director of Bidyut Blade Factory Prasanna Uta claimed that the fire caused a huge loss to them. During the fire, 30 people were working at the factory, which runs in three shifts, he said.

Local lawmaker Zahid Ahsan Russell, police super Nuruzzaman and Tongi Municipality Mayor Ajmat Ullah Khan visited the spot yesterday morning.

BDR mutiny

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three-day remand on completion of his first phase five-day interrogation.

The national probe committee on BDR carnage revealed Pintu's "involvement" in the BDR carnage mentioning that he helped the mutineers escape by arranging engine boats at Keraniganj ferry terminal to cross the Buriganga.

Pintu stand accused of instigating mutineers.

Another allegation against Pintu that emerged from the CID report submitted to the court says Pintu and his accomplices brought out processions inside Pilkhana to encourage the mutineers during the carnage.

Meanwhile, the home ministry on Monday formed a 10-member inter-ministerial taskforce headed by Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made by the national probe committee in its report.

The report was made public on May 27. It suggested eight short-term and 14 long-term measures for the government's consideration and initiative.

The short-term recommendations include immediate completion of trial of all crimes related to BDR killings under the army code and immediate formation of a permanent high-powered "National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) to counter national crises and immediate restoration of BDR command.

The long-term recommendations include reconstitution of BDR, redistribution of responsibilities and duties of all intelligence agencies and formation of a permanent Central Intelligence Coordination Committee (CICC) at highest level, formation of counter intelligence forces for all intelligence agencies and amendment and updating the laws and acts concerning BDR and other paramilitary forces.

Balu, Tongi

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First phase of the project was completed in 2005.

The main component of second phase of the project is development of a 40-km waterway through the Balu River and Tongi Khal.

The revised project includes construction of 34 lakh cubic metre-dykes, 34.73 lakh cubic metre-dredging, 13.35 lakh cubic metre-excavation, construction of three jetties, two terminal buildings, a landing stair and two landing stations, land development, construction of 16 berthing facilities, 4,200 square metre-protection embankment 2,100 square metre-road and 160 square metre-bridge.

The four other projects approved yesterday include Tk 1,140 crore export infrastructure development project, Tk 168 crore pulse and oil seed project, setting up of 60 police investigation centres involving Tk 97 crore and construction of a Tk 27 crore bridge on the Sangu River.

2 outlaws

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by the party that claimed responsibility for the killings.

Sources said security guards of Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall saw the bodies inside the dormitory in the morning and informed the IU police station about it. Police later recovered the bodies and sent those to Kushiya general hospital for autopsy.

Police said the murder might take place after midnight as the guards of the hall went to sleep around 12:30am.

IU Vice-Chancellor Prof M Alauddin and police officials of Kushiya and Jhenaidah visited the spot. Police increased their patrol after the killings that created panic on the campus.

Disasters killed 2.5 lakh people last year

AFP, Geneva

Natural and man-made disasters killed nearly a quarter of a million people in 2008 and warnings about looming disasters, particularly climate change, are not being heeded, the Red Cross said yesterday.

In 2008, disasters ranging from the Chinese earthquake to a devastating cyclone in Myanmar wrought the second most devastating annual toll of the past decade, 242,662 deaths, according to a report by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

It cautioned that only piecemeal progress had been made on prevention, early warning and mitigation measures to cope with floods, drought, storms and earthquakes, despite the growing risk of extreme weather with global warming.

The annual "World Disasters Report" highlighted climate change as "offering us the ultimate early warning."

"The rising dangers of climate change require a response from governments equivalent to the one made to address the global financial crisis," said Bekele Geleta, the federation's secretary general.

But he warned in the report that there was "much resistance to change" and the focus was still on emergency aid after the event rather than preparing for the worst.

"This seems to be a lesson that individuals, donors, countries and some of the 'humanitarian community' have yet to learn," Geleta said.

The number of natural or man-made 'catastrophes' in 2008, 585, was the lowest of the past decade.

The overwhelming majority of the deaths occurred in the

10 Rab men

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and asked the officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station to investigate the matter and submit a report by August 20.

Zinnah was a sixth-semester student of mechanical engineering and Mohsin a final semester student of electrical engineering at Dhaka Polytechnic Institute.

The news of their deaths brought an angry reaction from the students and teachers of the institute who demanded a neutral investigation into the incident they described as pre-planned murders by the law enforcers.

Tejgaon police sources said they found no cases or even a general diary filed against Zinnah and Mohsin.

Complainant Jasim Uddin told The Daily Star yesterday he had filed the case because he was sure that the Rab members killed his brother-in-law, and that he believes their family would get justice from the court.

He said Sajib was included as he went out with Zinnah, but on return he (Sajib) could not give a satisfactory answer about his roommate.

Indian PM warns

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to have conveyed India's "unhappiness" over Pakistani inaction against terrorism aimed at India.

New Delhi blames a Pakistan-based Islamic militant group, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), for planning and launching the November assault in which 10 gunmen targeted multiple locations in Mumbai during a three-day killings spree.

Singh also expressed disappointment over the release of the Jamat-ul-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Mohammad Saeed suspected by India of being among the masterminds of the Mumbai attacks, PTI said.

A Pakistan court earlier this month ordered the release of Hafiz, a founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba and whose Jamaat-ul-Dawa is a charity blacklisted in the West as a terror group.

Pakistan put Hafiz and three of his co-leaders under house arrest in early December and publicly shut offices of the charity.

Indian prosecutors say they have evidence that "undoubtedly and conclusively" links the Mumbai attacks to Pakistan.

The last high-level India-Pakistan meeting took place in September when Singh met Zardari on the sidelines of the United Nations General

Sichuan earthquake in China where 87,476 people died, and cyclone Nargis, which claimed 138,366 lives when it battered southwestern Myanmar.

Although not all the disasters were attributable to extreme weather, the Red Cross insisted that the trend of global-warming related events was rising.

The report likened the impact of global warming to rolling a dice: "We never know when a particular number will appear, but at some point every number comes up."