

World battles killer flu

MEXICO CITY: World health authorities battled last night to contain a new killer swine flu blamed for dozens of deaths in Mexico amid fears it could mutate into a more deadly strain and spread around the globe.

Within hours yesterday, officials learned of new cases across the US and in Canada, for a total of 26, in addition to more than 1,300 suspected cases in Mexico.

President Barack Obama is monitoring the swine flu outbreak closely and has ordered a "very active, aggressive, and coordinated response," said White House homeland security advisor John Brennan.

In the first suspected case in the Middle East, officials said a 26-year-old Israeli man has been admitted to hospital in Netanya on returning from Mexico.

Scottish health secretary Nicola Sturgeon said two people had been admitted to hospi-

tal in Scotland after experiencing "mild flu-like symptoms" following their return from Mexico this week.

France reported four suspected cases of swine flu among travellers returning from Mexico while three Spanish nationals have been placed in isolation after showing flu symptoms following a recent visit.

World Health Organisation (WHO) officials said the new strain, apparently born when human and avian flu viruses infected pigs and became mixed, could further mutate.

WHO director-general Margaret Chan called the outbreak a public health emergency of "pandemic potential" because the virus can pass from human to human.

Russia was among some countries that stepped up their screening of pigs and pork imports from the Americas or banned them outright.

LTTE truce 'is a joke'

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels have declared a unilateral ceasefire - but the country's top defence official has rejected it as "a joke".

Gotabaya Rajapaksa's comments came as top UN humanitarian official John Holmes pleaded for the safety of more than 50,000 civilians still trapped in the war zone.

The UN believes up to 50,000 non-combatants are trapped in a strip of jungle where Sri Lankan soldiers have surrounded the remnants of the once powerful LTTE.

"We need a new humanitarian pause to get aid and aid workers into the combat zone," Holmes said in a statement.

As foreign pressure mounted on Sri Lanka to halt its onslaught, the British government announced that the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Sweden will visit Colombo for talks with local authorities.

"Foreign Secretary David Miliband, together with his French counterpart Bernard Kouchner and Swedish counterpart Carl Bildt, will visit (Sri Lanka) on Wednesday," said a statement from Prime Minister Gordon Brown's office.

Tiger rebels are surrounded in a tiny area of on the northeast coast of the island, along with the civilians.



Internally displaced civilians gather around a truck to receive food at a camp for the displaced in Manic Farm in Vavuniya.

A statement from the Tamil Tigers said they called a ceasefire "in response to the calls made by the UN, EU, the governments of India and others" over humanitarian conditions.

But Rajapaksa said: "They were not fighting with us, they were running from us."

"There is no need of a ceasefire. They must surrender. That is it."

Rajapaksa said the Tiger rebels must release all civilians immediately.

Sky's Asia correspondent Alex Crawford said calls for the halt to fighting were unusual for the rebel militants. She said: "The Tamil Tigers are

not prone to giving up - and certainly not without a really big last-ditch fight.

Crawford also said a number of refugee reports alleged the rebel fighters had forced children to take up arms against government forces.

A UN document has said more than 6,500 civilians had been killed and 14,000 wounded during the last three months of conflict.

The statement by Brown's office said he had spoken to President Mahinda Rajapaksa and repeated calls for a ceasefire.

Minister for International Development Mike Foster will also travel to Sri Lanka today to assess the humanitarian situation.

Holmes held talks with Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe who said they discussed the plight of civilians and a joint appeal to raise \$100 million for urgent relief operations.

Clinton pledges to back Lebanon

BEIRUT: US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton reassured the Lebanese people yesterday that Washington supports "voices of moderation" and will never make a deal with Syria that undermines the country's interests. She spoke during visit to Beirut ahead of a June 7 elections.

Ebadi visit 'blocked'

TEHRAN: Iran's Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi has agreed to help defend a US-born journalist jailed for spying but prison officials refused to let a member of her team see Roxana Saberi yesterday, an Ebadi aide said.

Lawyer Abdolfattah Soltani, a member of Ebadi's defence group, could not visit Saberi for a first meeting in Tehran's Evin

jail even though a court had given its permission, said a spokeswoman.

Rare tombs unveiled

ILLAHUN, Egypt: Egyptian archaeologists yesterday unveiled mummies and dozens of ancient tombs carved into a rocky hill on a sandy plateau overlooking farming fields in the village Illahun, located in the Fayoum oasis about 80km southwest of capital Cairo.

We'll kill hostage!

CAIRO: Al Qaeda in North Africa says it will kill a British hostage held by the group since late January if the British government does not release imprisoned radical preacher Abu Qatada is not freed in 20 days.

Bin Hindi managers

A Bin Hindi Group gave excellence awards to four of its general managers for their remarkable performance during the last year.

Chairman Abdullah Ahmed Bin Hindi presented the awards to the winners at a ceremony

held at the group's headquarters in Manama.

Also present at the ceremony were members of the top management including A A Bin Hindi Group vice president Khalid Bin Hindi, chief operations manager Nawaf Bin

Hindi and Bin Hindi Informatics general manager Abdul Aziz Bin Hindi.

"Reward and recognition essentially implies providing recognition to the top performers in acknowledging their contributions to the growth of the company. We truly acknowledge their great contributions to the company," said group president and chief executive Ahmed Abdulla Bin Hindi, speaking at the event.

"These awards serve as a sincere token of our appreciation to the managers and we take pride in felicitating them."

At the ceremony, Kia Motors general manager and group chief marketing officer Mohammed Bin Hindi, after

Great advice for work and life

Internationally renowned human development guru Steve Ritchie will speak at two one-day master classes that will be held in Bahrain next month.

Mr Ritchie, a coach and facilitator accredited to the Institute of Human Development and the managing director of IHD Cyprus, will conduct the Pathfinder and The Energy of Business master classes.

Pathfinder aims to bring clarity to the point of action.

Every single member of an organisation has something to achieve.

Therefore, they can, and must, start to think of themselves as achievers in both work and life.

"Pathfinder adds huge value to the individual, the team, and the organisation as a whole," said Mr Ritchie.

"Pathfinder helps participants make sense of any issue, problem or challenge - large or small - and transform it into a simple framework that makes anything and everything achievable."

Pathfinder is driven by the need to achieve results - for people because they want to achieve, because anxiety and fear are removed from the team,

because people want to be the best they can be - and because they learn to trust that they will be supported along the way.

The second master-class, The Energy of Business, looks to maximise performance with minimum stress.

"My approach to stress management comes from my own practical experience in business and as a holistic practitioner," said Mr Ritchie.

"Every single member of an organisation can enhance their own success and that of the business without driving themselves into the ground in the process."

While the workshops are aimed at a corporate audience, they are equally applicable to individuals.

"These seminars are suitable for anyone," added Mr Ritchie.

"While they are particularly powerful in business, the content can be applied by anyone, male or female, in any walk of life."

Contact the Ernst & Young Training Centre on 17585323 or e-mail Steve at info@ihdcyprus.com for more details on either of the master classes.



Mr Ritchie

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Steve Ritchie

In conjunction with Ernst & Young's Business Community Training, Steve Ritchie, the Managing Director of IHD Cyprus, will be hosting two master-classes in Bahrain:

Master-class 1:

Pathfinder

Saturday 9 May 2009 9 AM - 5 PM

Master-class 2:

The Energy of Business

Sunday 10 May 2009 9 AM - 5 PM

More details: please contact 17585323 or email jennath.iqbal@bh.ey.com