

Rebuilding Afghanistan Bangladesh offers technical-military assistance

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has offered technical assistance in different fields and military services in peacekeeping and de-mining as part of reconstruction of the war-ravaged Afghanistan.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan made the offer yesterday, addressing the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan being held in Tokyo.

He mentioned Bangladesh's experience in primary education, primary healthcare, micro-credits and women's empowerment and offered to share the experiences with Afghanistan.

A message received here said the foreign minister also referred to the country's widely acclaimed role in the UN peacekeeping and demining and offered to share its experience with Afghanistan.

Focusing on the scenario of war-wrecked Bangladesh after the 1971 liberation war, he said Bangladesh had faced a situation similar to that of Afghanistan.

Khan said that although Bangladesh had no development assistance programme of its own, it had contributed Tk 50 million as relief assistance in November last year.

Referring to the postwar reconstruction in Afghanistan, he said it is

a "gigantic task to carry a nation forward" and was confident that the Afghan interim authority under chairman Hamid Karzai would be equal to this task.

The two day conference was inaugurated by Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. It was addressed by, among others, four co-chairs Sadako Ogata of Japan, US Secretary of State Collin Powell, Saudi Finance Minister Ibrahim Al-Assaf and Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Nadal as current President of EU and Commissioner for External Relations of the EC Christopher Patten.

Around 53 countries and 17 international organisations are participating in the world meet to mobilise a synergy for rebuilding the post-Taliban Afghanistan.

The Bangladesh foreign minister met and exchanged greetings with some delegates, including Japanese FM Tanaka, US Secretary of State Collin Powell, the Saudi finance minister and leaders of Afghan delegation.

Ward commissiner

FROM PAGE 12

November last and of another person, Sujat, at a barbershop at Town Hall on January 9.

Police produced Setu before the CMM's court yesterday with a petition for one month's detention under the Special Powers Act.

BNP, AL conventions

FROM PAGE 12

The organisers have prepared nine theme papers to be discussed in the 2-day national convention, which would also present fact-sheets on violence, murder, rape, loot, arson, extortion and human displacement in the country since mid-July.

Besides, there would be video shows to project "political persecution and atrocities committed on religious minorities and violence against women and children."

The organisers selected four venues to hold the convention in nine sessions where more than 3000 eminent personalities would be invited from across the country. AL chief Sheikh Hasina will speak at the inaugural session.

The ruling coalition's planned convention would present video documentaries and fact-sheets on "AL-sponsored violence, murders, capture of government properties, repression on the Hindu minorities and government officials, and torture on opposition activists

during the five years of Awami League rule."

It has also planned to bring family members of the victims of violence by AL-men at the convention to "unveil the extent of human rights violation by the AL government."

Meanwhile, the government, which claims the number of opposition activists killed by AL men between 1996 and 2001 to be in their thousands, has directed district administrations to collect the names and addresses of those victims. One source however said the number of such families have not yet exceeded 300.

Organisers have also directed leaders and activists concerned to provide information in this regard as early as possible to be placed in the convention.

Earlier, both the AL and the ruling coalition locked in a war of words on the issue of white papers on misdeeds of the other, but the papers are as yet to be published.

3 generals retired

FROM PAGE 1

liant and qualified officers who were contemporaries or seniors". They were close to the then political quarters, the sources claimed.

There had been "considerable resentment" over promotion of some senior officers to higher ranks in the last few years. The Army Promotion Board headed by the Chief of Army Staff was sidelined in the case of promotion to the rank of Major General. There had been allegations that many promotions to the rank of Major General were given at the suggestion of the Prime Minister's Office instead of following the criteria of merit and ability.

Two other officers of the Bangladesh Army also went on retirement recently.

Brigadier General Shafayet Hussain who was serving as Military Secretary to the immediate past

prime minister opted for voluntary retirement.

Brigadier General Iqbal Hussain who served as Director of DGFI (Directorate General of Forces Intelligence) for long and later made DDG of DGFI was also given compulsory retirement. Hussain, a former Rakkhi Bahini officer, was in charge of political intelligence while he was in DGFI. He also served as DDG of Ansar and VDP prior to his retirement.

Two serving major generals are ambassadors now. They are Major General Hasan Mashud Chowdhury (in UAE) and Major General Anwar Hossain (in Morocco). Two retired major generals are now serving as envoys. They are Major General (Retd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury (in Oman) and Major General (Retd) Azizur Rahman (in Bahrain). The latter is expected to be called back home, the sources said.

West Bank town

FROM PAGE 1

(East Jerusalem) as its capital. By God I see it coming, martyred or alive," he told the group during a solidarity visit. "May God give me the honour of martyrdom in my steadfastness for Jerusalem."

Arafat said Israel had "crossed all red lines" when it sent its tanks and troops into the Palestinian-ruled city of Tulikarem.

"This is a very dangerous thing. This is an implementation of the Israeli plan of aggression on the Palestinian National Authority," he told reporters.

At about 3 am local time yesterday, dozens of Israeli tanks and armored personnel carriers, backed by helicopter gunships, rolled into Tulikarem. Palestinian gunmen shot at Israeli troops, drawing return fire. The heaviest fighting came in the adjacent Tulikarem refugee camp, where many gunmen had fled after Israeli troops took over the town.

A 19-year-old gunman was killed and a 42-year-old civilian was critically wounded, Palestinian doctors said. Seven more people were also wounded by gunfire.

Izzeddine Sharif, urged residents over mosque loudspeakers to defy the curfew and resist Israeli troops.

Troops took over eight buildings, including a local college and the villa of the mayor, sandbagging rooftops and hoisting Israeli flags there.

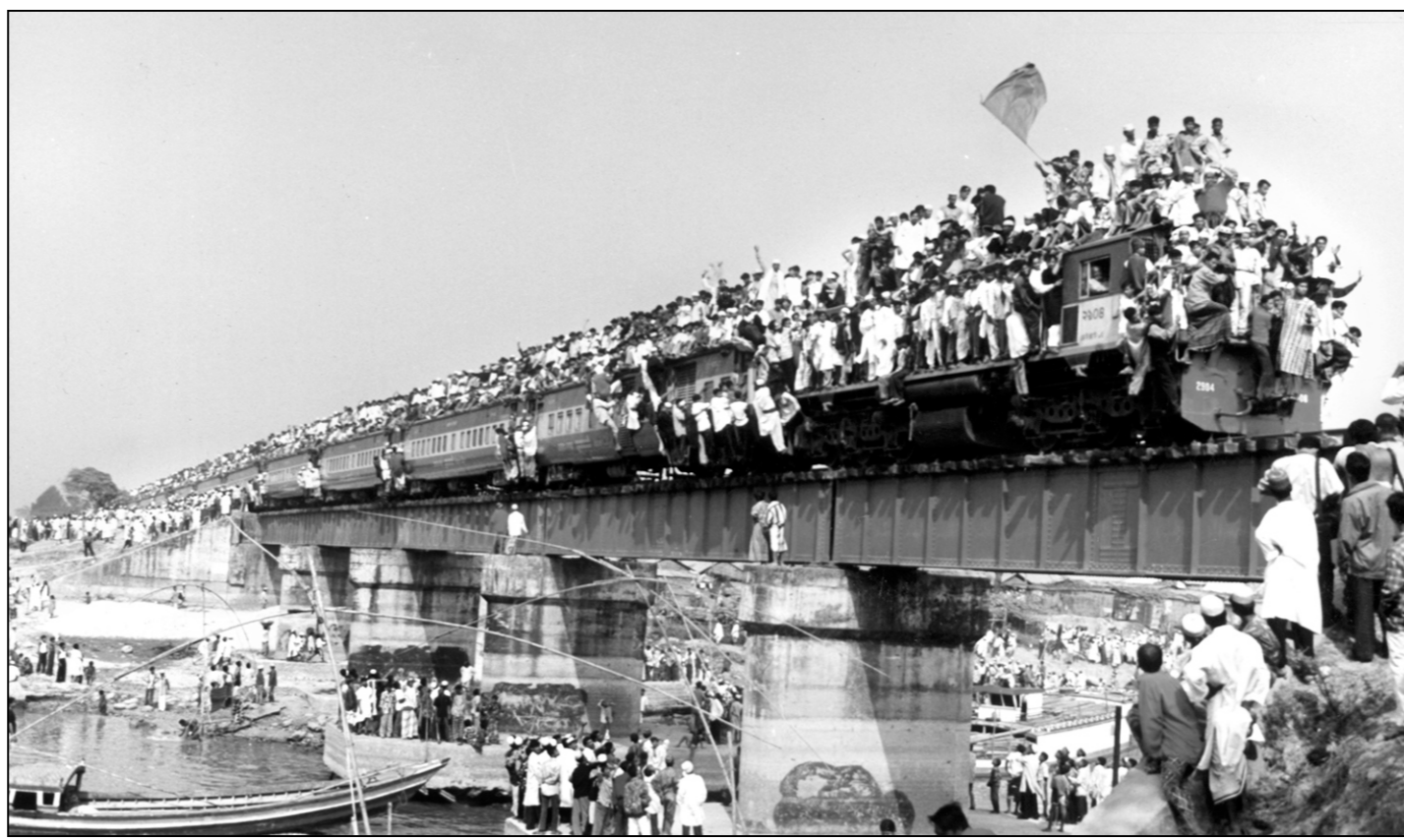
Soldiers also commandeered the police operations room and detained two Palestinian policemen, witnesses said. The main government compound in Tulikarem, which also contained the police headquarters, was razed last week in an Israeli air strike, in response to the banquet hall attack.

Hasina barred

FROM PAGE 1

tion leader took the crowded Mohakhali road to reach the Ijtema venue.

Condemning the incident, AL general secretary in a statement yesterday said, "By blocking the way of the opposition leader to the prayers, the fascist government has not only tried to prevent Sheikh Hasina from attending to her religious duties but also degraded the spirit of Islam."



Devotees returning from the Biswa Ijtema at Tongi yesterday, risking life and limb.

PHOTO: STAR

Dacoits loot cash, ornaments from bridal party

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

A gang of dacoits looted about Tk 3 lakh and 10 tolas of gold ornaments from a bridal party at a village in Sirajganj district in the early hours of yesterday, leaving at least 15 people injured.

The incident took place at the house of one Khepa Karmokar at Gram Pangashi Bazar under Royganj thana.

Of the injured, four including the bride and the bridegroom were admitted to Royganj health complex.

Police said, about 15 armed dacoits swooped on the house at about 2:30am when most of the people were asleep. They also looted valuables from three other adjacent houses.

A case has been filed with Royganj thana but none could be arrested.

Polybag

FROM PAGE 12

despite inconvenience, people of all walks of life have welcomed the ban. Alternatives have started coming to the city markets but the supply should be increased immediately to meet the demand. The meeting was told that about one crore polybags were used per day in the city before the ban.

The meeting noted that supply of crores of alternative bags per day will be needed from March 1 and the private sector should come forward and start massive production of such bags.

Speaking at the meeting Sabihuddin Ahmed said the government is determined to enforce the ban on production, marketing and use of polythene shopping bags in the country from March 1.

For this, alternatives to polybags should be easily available and cheap.

Meanwhile, a number of vigilance teams in cooperation with the law enforcing agencies continued raiding city markets and shopping malls to seize polybags, supplied by some dishonest manufacturers in violation of the ban.

Officials said the government has decided to go for stern action against those who would violate the ban. Necessary laws will be framed soon to enforce the countrywide ban from March 1, they said.

DCC in dilemma

FROM PAGE 12

But over the years as population grew, residents not only connected their kitchen waste lines but also their sewerage lines with the surface drains, maintained by the DCC.

Many of the residents on the lakeside even built their own drain lines for disposal of wastes into the lake directly. "To relocate more than 100 surface drains, we need proper planning and funds, which we do not have at the moment," said a DCC official. "Till the relocation is done, the lake will have to bear with the pollution and we cannot do anything about it."

Local residents said unless the government comes forward to implement the proposed project to develop the lake and lakeside areas, the problem cannot be solved.

Sources in the Ministry of Housing and Public Works said the lake development project might be launched soon as the minister, Mirza Abbas, has asked experts concerned to conduct a survey to demarcate the lake area and identify sources of pollution. A consultant has also been engaged in this regard, they said.

Goma blast

FROM PAGE 12

streetfronts intact above the lava line.

Goma's lava flows continued to smoke and bubble with small explosions late Sunday and the air was thick with foul-smelling gas.

The UN has set up two camps near Gisenyi to feed and shelter the 300,000 people affected by the eruption.

Maijbandari

FROM PAGE 1

devotees at home and abroad.

With the spread of the death news, hundreds of disciples and devotees from both the city and other parts of the district thronged the Holy Crescent Hospital to have the last glimpse of their pir.

The dead body was scheduled to be taken from the hospital late last night and kept at the Darbar Sharif where his disciples would pay homage to their pir.

He will be laid to rest at the Darbar Sharif after his Namaz-e-Janaza tomorrow.

Golam Azam

FROM PAGE 1

cian Prof Golam Azam will inaugurate the council at 10:00 am.

Chairman of the minority-welfare association SN Goswami and secretary general Gobinda Chandra Pramanik have invited all concerned to attend the function.

Sources in the office of the former Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, Prof Azam, confirmed that their leader would inaugurate the minority convention.

100-day programme Hasina plans to address nation over radio, TV Jan 26

UNB, Dhaka

Former prime minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina plans to address the nation on January 26 to give her opinion on the 100-day lead-in programme of the BNP-led alliance government.

On behalf of Sheikh Hasina, her political secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury has sent letters to the Bangladesh Betar and Television requesting steps to broadcast her speech live.

Saber Chowdhury, who was a deputy minister in the Hasina government, has also requested private TV channels -- ETV, Channel 1 and ATN Bangla to take necessary measures to cover the speech.

When contacted, Saber Chowdhury told the news agency that "definitely" Sheikh Hasina has something to tell the nation about the overall socioeconomic and political situation of the country.

"There are many things to say about the activities of the present government" which has taken a 100-day programme after assuming power.

Graft cases

FROM PAGE 1

Tk 1,27,570 from public funds, spent on providing televisions and satellite antenna to residents of his own village in 1994.

MAkhter Hamid Bhuiyan, officer of the Anti-Corruption, filed the case with Cantonment Police Station on October 15 in 1998 against Altaf Hossain, the former air force chief.

In the second case, the accused was charged with misuse of his official position. He flew to his village by helicopter in 1995, which cost the government Tk 16,46,899.

Mohammad Akhteruzzaman, officer of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption, filed the case with Cantonment Police Station against Altaf Hossain on October 15, 1998.

In the third case, the accused was charged with embezzlement of Tk 51,701, spent on his wife's treatment in Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre in Singapore in March, 1995.

Mohammad Akhteruzzaman filed the case with Cantonment Police Station against the former air force chief on October 15, 1998.

Meanwhile, the High Court stayed the proceedings of another graft case against Altaf Hossain for four months. The court passed the order following a criminal revision seeking stay order by the defence lawyers.

In the case, the accused was charged with misuse of his official position. He flew to his village by helicopter in 1994, which cost the government Tk 12,54,822.

Bangabandhu Murder Case

FROM PAGE 1

tal punishment of 12 of the 15 convicts. Only four of the 12 are in jail now.

The four filed leave petition for appeal against the HC verdict. However, hearing of the petition could not take place till date.

Meanwhile, the government repeatedly sought shifting of hearing of the leave petition. When the government once again sought a fresh date for hearing, Chief Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury on Saturday said: "I do not understand why all governments want to shoot keeping their guns on the court's shoulder?"

The chief justice had requested the government to restructure the Appellate Division last October. He made this comment as the government delayed restructuring of the Appellate Division.

Earlier this month, Justice Golam Rabbani had expressed embarrassment to hear the leave petition before his retirement and appointment of a new judge was necessary.

But as the recently appointed Justice KM Hasan is a close relative of two of the convicts -- Col. Faruk and Col. Rashid -- the three-member bench could not be formed

once again, according to the chief justice.

As hearing of the case at the High Court took place before a two-member bench, it was customary for the Appellate Division to have a minimum three-member bench for the hearing. But as the Appellate Division did not have more than two judges for the bench, the chief justice in October last requested the government to appoint another judge-- Justice Nurul Islam-- on an ad-hoc basis.

But instead, the government sought different hearing dates from the Appellate Division. The latest hearing date has been set on February 15 on condition that it could no more be rescheduled, the chief justice decided.

Meanwhile, the government through gazette notification on Thursday restructured the Appellate Division by increasing the number of judges from five to seven. The appointment may take place next week, sources said.

The sources also said the two new judges are likely to be those who were earlier superseded by two junior judges last year. The supersession triggered a movement by BNP-leaning lawyers.

Former law minister and AL leader Abdul Matin Khasru told The Daily Star yesterday: "The government is deliberately taking time as regards the case. It did not appoint a judge on an ad-hoc basis although the chief justice had asked for it. The chief justice himself had said appointment of a judge on an ad-hoc basis was only a matter of two minutes."

Khasru continued, "Barrister Moudud had said Bangabandhu murder case would follow its own course, but we don't see this." Moudud denied Khasru's allegations and said as the Appellate Division would soon be restructured with seven judges, it is not necessary to appoint a judge on an ad-hoc basis.

Loan defaulters

FROM PAGE 1

credits, the bankers again felt the necessity of law to curb corruption.

As the bankers sought special incentive package for agricultural and other small credits, the governor stressed the need for review of existing facilities.

"If necessary, it would be considered later," said the governor of the central bank.

Kashmir massacre

FROM PAGE 12

the attack. The militants are known to target Muslim civilians only when they are suspected of being police or army informers.

Meanwhile, the prime minister of the Pakistani-controlled part of Kashmir urged Pakistan yesterday to not to hand over any Kashmiri militants fighting the Indian army and called them "freedom fighters."

"I will protest if Pakistan turns over Kashmiri mujahedeen (holy warriors) to India," Sadar Sikandar Hayat Khan told The Associated Press. "I'll discuss the issue with President (Pervez) Musharraf and urge him not to hand over any Kashmiri to India."

India has given Pakistan a list of 20 alleged terrorists sought in the Dec. 13 attack on the Indian parliament and for insurgent activity in the Indian-controlled part of Kashmir. Musharraf has ruled out handing over any Pakistani citizens, but most of the people on the list are Indian nationals. Instead, Pakistan has presented its own list of alleged criminals it says are now in India but are sought by Islamabad.

In New Delhi yesterday, Indian officials said they were ready to extradite any Pakistani crime suspect sought by Islamabad in return for the 20 suspects.

JUTA polls tomorrow

JU CORRESPONDENT

With the long-feuding factions of both pro-AL and pro-BNP teachers now reconciled, a newly polarised faculty of Jahangirnagar University goes to polls tomorrow to elect office-bearers of the JU Teachers' Association (JUTA).

A total of 273 JU teachers are likely to cast their votes in the election scheduled to be held at the University Club from 9:00am to 1:00pm tomorrow.

Thirty candidates, 15 from one panel of pro-AL teachers and 15 from another panel of pro-BNP and pro-Jamaat teachers, will be vying for the 15 posts of JUTA executive committee.

Prof. MA Matin heads the pro-AL panel, which also includes Prof. Abul Khayer (vice president), Ahmed Reza (general secretary), Ayub Khan (joint secretary) and Prof. Abdul Hossain (treasurer).

The pro-BNP panel introduces Prof. Amin Muhammad Ali (president), Prof. Mojibor Rahman (vice president), Shamsul Alam Selim (general secretary), Mostafa Nazmul Mansoor (joint secretary) and Prof. Abdul Hye (treasurer).

In the previous two JUTA elections, a faction of pro-BNP teachers led by Prof. Mustahidur Rahman joined a faction of pro-AL teachers led by Prof. Sharif Enamul Kabir to form a joint panel, while another pro-BNP faction led by Profs. Imamuddin and Abu Sayeed Khan joined the pro-AL faction led by Prof. Abdul Bayes.

After three long years, the feuding factions of both the pro-AL and pro-BNP teachers have now been reconciled, forming two distinct groups of pro-AL and pro-BNP

teachers who have been campaigning day and night to see their candidates elected in the upcoming JUTA election.

The upcoming election bears special significance, as it is the first election of any JU body after the new government took charge, and also because elections of the next VC, dean and senate will also be reflective of the JUTA election results, many senior teachers opined.

Candidates from both panels have been chosen very carefully, as the election would be a tough one, a senior teacher observed.

Though pro-Jamaat teachers have joined pro-BNP ones, left-leaning teachers, who are essentially anti-Jamaat, will also play an important role in shaping election results, he added.

Many teachers have been absent from class over the last few days as they are busy campaigning for the election.

Prof. Kalipada Kundu of Chemistry will conduct the election as chief election commissioner. Prof. Shamsul Alam (Geography and Environment) and Dr Nurul Absar (Chemistry) are the two other election commissioners.

Alleged mugger

FROM PAGE 12

local elders rescued the other two and handed them over to police. Police took them to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and sent the body of Jahangir to the same hospital for autopsy.

A case was filed with the Sabujbagh Police Station. Police however could not identify the man who was being robbed by the mugger.

Afghan factions fight

FROM PAGE 12

ment until he was named deputy defence minister.

The fighting in the north will raise fears that Afghanistan's rival ethnic factions could splinter and turn against each other following the collapse of their common enemy the Taliban.

In Washington, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said yesterday a comment by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf that wanted al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden most likely was dead was "speculation".

"I think it's speculation on his part," Powell said of Musharraf's statement that the Saudi-born militant, who has kidney problems, probably had died after being deprived of regular dialysis treatments to clean out his bloodstream.

"We do not know whether he is dead or alive," Powell told Fox News Sunday in an taped interview. "I have no way of making a judgement on that matter."

"The search continues. We will use all the means at our disposal to find him and bring him to justice," said Powell, who was in Tokyo attending an international conference on aid to Afghanistan.

"He will be brought to justice if he is alive. If he is not alive, he has been brought to justice... we will never find the remains, but we'll keep looking."

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld echoed Powell's skepticism. "I have no evidence of that," he said when asked about Musharraf's conjecture.

"He could be in Afghanistan. He could be somewhere else. We're looking for him," Rumsfeld said on NBC's Meet the Press.

"He had spent time previously in Sudan and Somalia. He has connections in Kashmir and in Chechnya. He came from southern Saudi Arabia on the Yemen border there. So there are any number of possibilities," Rumsfeld said.

Biswa Ijtema concludes

FROM PAGE 1

prayers to be up to four million.

Besides, a three-kilometre stretch of road from Cherag Ali Market to Abdullahpur on the highway were brought under PA coverage under government arrangement to facilitate the devotees to join the concluding rituals.

A large number of people attended the munajat from rooftops of different residential houses, markets and mills and factories, and even tree-tops.

Although presence of female devotees at the Ijtema dais is taboo, a large number of women from different areas took part in the munajat from the residences of their relatives and nearby roads.

The President arrived at the Ijtema dais at 11:15 am, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the Bata Factory dais at 11 am and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina reached Ashraf Textiles Mills at 10:02am.

The Prime Minister was accom-

panied by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Works Minister Mirza Abbas, State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar, Fazlul Haq Milon MP and local BNP leader Hassan Uddin Sarkar.

Besides, former chief advisor Justice Latifur Rahman, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Law Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Textiles Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharrar Hossain Shajhanj attended the concluding prayer session.

Awami League leader Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Matia Chowdhury, Abdul Matin Khasru and local MP Ahsan Ullah Master were with Sheikh Hasina.

Former foreign minister and veteran AL leader Abdus Samad Azad spent three days among the devotees on the main dais of Ijtema and attended the Akheri Munajat.

JCD frustrated

FROM PAGE 1

were flushed out of the campus. The Shibir men however did not give up hope and continued their clandestine activities.

But the Shibir changed its strategy and started consolidating its position on the campus after formation of the All Party Student Unity (APSU), comprising the JCD, the ICS and some small student bodies at the fag-end of the AL regime. Barring a few leaders, most JCD workers were against forging alliance with the ICS, but they could do little because of the BNP's mainstream political alliance with Jamaat.

Sources said after formation of the four-party alliance, Jamaat leaders started putting pressure on the BNP leaders, who are soft on them, to form APSU to intensify the anti-AL movement. But sources said Jamaat's ultimate goal was to rehabilitate Shibir on the campus.

After APSU was formed, some top JCD leaders patronised the ICS by taking part in its organisational activities including annual conference.