

AL, NDI to work closely in party dev programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Awami League (AL) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), an international organisation dedicated to strengthening and expanding democracy, have agreed to work closely in a 'Political Party Development Program' designed to strengthen and modernise the party.

AL President and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad, Sheikh Hasina, and the NDI President, Kenneth Wollack, announced this agreement in Washington on Thursday, an AL press release e-mailed from the US capital said yesterday.

Under the programme, NDI will work closely, and collaborate with the Awami League to address issues relating to organisational development, communications and political party finance.

NDI's program is designed to strengthen the ability and capacity of political parties to compete fairly and effectively in a democratic process.

Welcoming the agreement with NDI, former prime minister Sheikh Hasina said, "Modernisation and continual strengthening of the Awami League is a clear challenge and priority for us. Through this initiative, we will not only be giving ourselves a competitive edge as a vibrant and responsive party strongly in tune with the times, we will also be gearing and equipping ourselves to negotiate the demands of the future. This will, in addition, assist in strengthening and enriching the democratic process in Bangladesh."

"NDI has much to offer and contribute in this regard in terms of expertise, experience and resources," Hasina added.

Wollack referred to this co-operation and collaboration between the NDI and the Awami League as being "a very significant step forward in strengthening parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh and in helping political parties to enhance their capacities to meet the challenges of rapid political change and economic growth in Bangladesh."

NDI has been working in Bangladesh for the past 15 years, focusing on strengthening of parliament, observing elections, increasing the capacities of political parties and supporting civil society's efforts to bolster democratic institutions.

Hotel manager shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An armed robbery on a city hotel at the Nawabpur Road left its manager injured last night.

Shahidul Islam, 25, manager of Al-Razzak Hotel and Restaurant, was shot when a gang of robbers fired upon resistance.

Islam, a resident of Malitola, was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Hospital sources quoted witnesses as saying the gang also took away Tk 1 lakh and vandalised the hotel at 8:00pm. Ward Commissioner Hossain Mollah is the owner of the hotel, the sources added.

The duty officer of the Kotwali Police Station said last night that a police team went to the spot but did not report to the police station till 10:00pm.

In another incident, a cracker blast left a rag-collector named Lilly Begum, 32, injured at Dhupkhola

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One killed, 9 hurt as bus, tempo collide in Tangail

UNB, Tangail

A tempo passenger was killed and nine others were wounded in a road accident on Dhaka-Tangail highway in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Witnesses said the mishap took place in the afternoon when a Bashail-bound tempo collided head on with a bus, killing Nazrul Islam, 30, of village Kalyanpur in Bashail upazila on the spot.

Five of the wounded were admitted to Tangail General Hospital. Police seized the bus.

Yet another strike at Benazir, Sharif

Musharraf bans convicted absconders, loan defaulters from October polls



Benazir Bhutto

Perviz Musharraf

Nawaz Sharif

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's military ruler Perviz Musharraf has tightened the noose around his chief rivals, exiled former premiers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, by banning convicted absconders and loan defaulters from October elections.

Musharraf passed into law late Thursday one of his proposed constitutional amendments which bars convicted criminals from standing in the election. The law, however, carried with it new clauses, specifying that absconders and loan defaulters would be banned.

"It has also been clarified that any member who has been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for having absconded ... will

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Death threats stall sensational murder cases in Khulna

Complainants, witnesses scared

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Complainants and witnesses of some sensational murder cases are feeling insecure and have filed general diaries with police seeking security of life after receiving death threats from the accused, police sources said.

As the complainants are scared of going ahead with the cases, police face problem in investigation, which delays trial. "Finding no other alternative we have to record suo moto cases", said a senior police official.

This also creates the scope for damaging merits of cases, he said. Jubo League activist Hafizur

Rahman who was the main witness in Jubo League leader Panna murder case was gunned down on the night of July 13 inside hotel Castle Salam. Panna was shot dead on the night of March 25, 1999 at Royal Hotel.

Hafiz, also complainant of Shahidur Rahman murder case, was given death threat by the accused in the case, it was alleged. Shahidur was shot dead on the night of November 17 last year.

On July 26, Daud Molla, a member of Shukhali Union Parishad (UP) in Batiaghata upazila, who was the main prosecution witness in two murder cases, was shot allegedly by some of the FIR-named

accused in the cases. Daud was the main prosecution witness in Mostafa Habib murder case and BNP activist Razzak Golder murder case, both recorded with Batiaghata thana.

Mostafa Habib, chairman of Shukhali Union Parishad, was gunned down in March 1991.

The two murder cases are under trial in the Session's Judge's court. Honorary Treasurer of Khulna University Sardar Abdur Razzak was shot dead near his residence at Roypara under Khulna thana in September last year. He was one of the prosecution witnesses in the case for murder of his nephew

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Ammunition stolen from Ghatail Cantt recovered

UNB, Dhaka

Ammunition stolen from an artillery unit of Ghatail Cantonment on April 29 this year were recovered in an abandoned condition from a nearby area of the Cantonment early yesterday.

"The army personnel started massive hunt after stealing of the ammunition. As a result, criminals involved in the incident were forced to leave the ammunition in such a state," said an ISPR press release.

A soldier and three civilians, arrested earlier on suspicion for their involvement in the incident, are now in the joint custody of army and CID police, the release added.

DOWN TO EARTH

Dhaka's dwindling burial grounds

ASM NURUNNABI

Dhaka City is quickly running out of its burial-grounds. This is due to the fast growing city population meaning a higher mortality rate and people's propensity to reserve or purchase burial space in advance in the graveyard. If the present trend continues -- there is every indication it will -- it is apprehended that in the near future, scarcity of burial space will figure as a very critical problem.

With the rapid increase in population, currently over 90 lakh, the death rate in the city has also increased. The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) reportedly has no plan for expansion of the existing graveyard facilities. Under the circumstances, the available space in the existing graveyards has come under extreme pressure.

At present, there are six graveyards under the management of DCC. They are, New Azimpur Graveyard, Old Azimpur Graveyard, Banani Graveyard, Mirpur Shaheed Buddhijibi Graveyard, Jurain Graveyard and the newly opened Uttara Graveyard.

The new graveyard at Azimpur is now practically closed, except for stray cases of burial in isolated spots where burial is possible on payment of the prescribed charges. The old graveyard at Azimpur and

the new one at Uttara are open for temporary graves only. In the Banani graveyard, no further plot is currently available for immediate burial, except for plots already reserved on payment of Tk 1,20,000.

Burial is allowed in purchased plots in some portions of Mirpur Buddhijibi and Jurain graveyards at Tk 25,000 per plot for immediate burial and Tk 35,000 for each reserved plot, but both cemeteries are rapidly running out of space.

Besides these DCC-managed graveyards, there are some private graveyards at Shahjahanpur, Mohammadpur, Mirpur Section 11 and Karatitola, East Rampura, and at least 15 other small graveyards in the city.

Even though the DCC attempts to discourage reservation or purchase of burial space, it has little effect as many prefer to reserve/purchase grave space for their parents and loved ones. Thus the trend for reservation/purchase of grave space cannot be checked.

Except Banani Graveyard, all other graveyards have a separate area earmarked for free burial. Graves in this area are dug up every two or three years to allow for new burials. Although pits in this general area are available for free, burial does involve some

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Kajol discloses during interrogation 300 cadres of other parties have arms in Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Over 300 cadres, none above 25, of different political parties in Bagerhat, are in possession of sophisticated arms.

The second-in-command in the 'political wing' of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), Khalilur Rahman Kajol, revealed it to police during interrogation yesterday.

Arrested in the Khulna city, Kajol admitted to his involvement in as many as 11 murders committed over the last six years in Khulna and Bagerhat districts, police said.

Kajol told interrogators that a well-organised syndicate in

Bagerhat is involved in murder, rape, robbery, extortion, drug-trafficking and illegal occupation of land and fish farms. Political godfathers, many of the mainstream parties, shelter the cadres, police quoted Kajol as saying.

Besides, underground extremists are strengthening their grip on the southwestern zone of the country.

Sources said over 100 people were killed in the last one year over internal conflict.

An underground party circulated leaflets, calling upon its cadres and supporters to join the armed struggle against their class enemies.

The PBCP, the Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) and the New Biplobi Communist Party (NBPC) have reinforced their network in all ten southwestern districts.

Meanwhile, the PBCP armed cadres who believe in Maoist politics divided over the concept of class enemies.

The topmost leader of the PBCP, Mufakkar Chowdhury, and its 'military wing' chief Abdur Rashid Tapan are in favour of killing class enemies. On the other hand, a faction headed

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PHOTO: STAR

The Dhaka University (DU) appears deserted yesterday, although police eased the restriction on entry to the campus. The police raid on the Shamsunnahar Hall in the early hours of July 24 set in motion a series of violent protests, which resulted in the resignation of DU vice-chancellor and proctor and left the campus under security siege over the last few days.

Why abused boys turn violent

Gene may also explain why females are less prone to crime

REUTERS, Washington

A single gene may explain why some boys abused in childhood -- but not all -- grow up to become violent or aggressive, researchers said on Thursday.

The gene variation seems to be activated only by mistreatment in childhood, but is found in a third of the men and young boys studied, the researchers said.

Writing in the journal Science, the international team of researchers said 85 percent of the boys who had a weakened version of the gene and who were abused turned to criminal or antisocial behaviour.

"These findings may partly explain why not all victims of maltreatment grow up to victimise others," Terri Moffitt of King's College London and the University of Wisconsin, who helped lead the study, said in a statement.

It could also help explain why females are less prone to crime and aggression than boys are, Moffitt said.

Her team studied 1,037 children born in 1972 in Dunedin, New Zealand. They included 442 boys. "The children were studied for 26 years, from birth

to adulthood," Moffitt said.

The team looked at the genetic makeup of the children, homing in on a gene that controls production of an enzyme called monoamine oxidase A.

MAOA breaks down key neurotransmitters, or message-carrying chemicals, linked with mood, aggression and pleasure and is the target of one group of antidepressant drugs. "It had already been linked to aggression in one Dutch family in the early 1990s," Moffitt said in a telephone interview.

Genes are strongly influenced by environment, so the team also tracked how the children were raised.

"By age 11, 36 percent of the subjects had been maltreated (8 percent severely), as defined by frequent changes in primary caregiver, rejection by the mother and physical or sexual abuse," Moffitt said.

If the abused boys had one version of the MAOA gene that caused their brains to produce too little of the enzyme, they were nine times more likely to become antisocial, the researchers said.

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World heading for warmest year yet

REUTERS, London

The first six months of the year have been the second-warmest ever and average global temperatures in 2002 could be the highest ever recorded, British weather experts said Thursday.

"Globally 2002 is likely to be warmer than 2001, and may even break the record set in 1998," said Briony Horton, the Meteorological Office's climate research scientist.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the body that advises governments on long-term climatic variations, blames global warming, caused by rising emissions of greenhouse gases that trap

heat in the atmosphere, for the rise in temperatures, a Met Office spokesman said.

"We agree with them," he told Reuters. "Since 1970 there has been a marked trend in the rise of global temperatures."

"The actual rise prior to 1970 was partly man-made and partly due to natural effects. But since 1970 scientists are in fairly general agreement that warming can be attributed to man's polluting activities."

The Met Office said global temperatures were 1.03 Fahrenheit higher than the long-term average

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Obituary

Moazzem Ahmed Chowdhury, a politician and social worker, died of old-age complications at 9:00pm yesterday at the age of 80, says a press release.

Son of late Khan Bahadur Abdur Rahim Chowdhury of Sylhet, Moazzem was a member of the erstwhile Pakistan National Assembly from 1965 to 1969.

He had been the general secretary of the All Bengal Muslim Students' Union till 1947.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at old DOHS mosque in the city today.

12 Maoists killed in Nepal

AP, Kathmandu

Security forces attacked a Maoist rebel camp and killed at least 12 guerrillas, the defence ministry said

Friday.

Ministry spokesman Bhupendra Poudel said the rebels were killed Thursday night after security forces identified a camp where they were hiding. There were no casualties on the government side, he said, refusing to give other details.

Guns, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the camp in the jungles near Rajkot village, about 500 kilometers (312 miles) west of the capital, Kathmandu.

Clashes between the government and rebels have intensified in recent months, with the army joining police in a campaign to root out rebel fighters from strongholds in remote mountainous areas.

More than 4,000 people have been killed since 1996, when the rebels began fighting in a bid to abolish Nepal's constitutional monarchy. The rebels draw their inspiration from the late Chinese revolutionary leader, Mao Zedong.