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AL hopes to unseat coalition by April

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League will unveil anti-government agitation programmes from a grand rally in Dhaka on January 10 aimed at forcing the BNP-led coalition from power.

The decision came from an eight-hour meeting of the 73-member AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) that continued until 10 last night in one of the longest recent sittings at the party's new Dhanmondi office with AL President Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The meeting, split into two sessions in the morning and evening, held elaborate discussions on the future movement, the 'third force' hype on the country's political stage and the overall political scenario.

The ALCWC, however, put on hold discussion on the probe report

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Jamal 'abductor' dies in police custody

Family accuses police of killing, probe ordered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An accused of the abduction of Chittagong magnate Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury died in police custody Wednesday night, six hours after he was remanded, raising questions about the circumstances surrounding his death.

Police said Amar Kanti Das, 32, died of a heart attack at the Detective Branch (DB) of Police office before he was grilled.

But his family dismissed the police claim and said he was tortured to death, adding to the outcry over the long line of custodial deaths.

Assistant Commissioner of DB Shafigue Uddin Chowdhury said: "Amar began complaining of heart pains at 10:30pm before we could

begin interrogation."

"As his condition deteriorated, we rushed him to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where he died at about 11:00pm."

Amar, a close associate of the prime accused of the case and local union parishad chairman Kashem and Shahid, was arrested two days ago and taken to the DB office for questioning on the seven-day remand at 5:00pm Wednesday.

His family said after the receipt of the autopsy report they would file a case against the police and the relatives of the abducted businessman.

Sulak Kumar Das, a cousin of Amar, said: "We will not only sue the police, but also the family of Jamal and Haji Monsur for the killing."

He accused Monsur, a local

businessman, of framing Amar in the abduction case and killing him with land-grabbing intent.

Monsur could not be contacted immediately for his comments.

Sulak alleged that the DB police tried to hand over Amar's body to his elder brother Samar Das on the night of his death in a hurry to cover up 'unspeakable torture' in custody.

But Samar declined to receive the body and did not show up at the DB office despite pressure, he added.

A three-member committee of DB Inspector Yusuf Ali, CID Inspector Md Iqbal and City Special Branch Inspector Jasim Uddin was formed to interrogate Amar under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner (DB) Md

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

ENVOY SAYS Faxes, e-mails prompted US embassy to issue security alert

BSS, Dhaka

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Harry K Thomas yesterday said untracked faxes and e-mails have prompted the US embassy in Dhaka to issue security alert to US citizens in Bangladesh.

"Untracked faxes and e-mails which carry credible evidence for possible threats against the US embassy and the citizens of my country have prompted us to alert our people," he said on the sidelines of a three-day conference on infectious diseases in the Asia Pacific Rim here.

The government of Bangladesh has organised the conference being sponsored by the US-Japan Cooperative Medical Science Programme at a city hotel. About 150

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3 more 'robbers' lynched in char areas in 2 days

A CORRESPONDENT, from Noakhali

The wave of mob lynching in the remote char areas of Noakhali spilled into the fifth day as two more alleged jungle robbers were beaten dead yesterday while another was killed late Wednesday by angry villagers.

The latest deaths in vigilante violence in the char areas have pushed the toll to 37 in five days. Eight robbers were killed on Sunday, 19 on Monday and four each on Tuesday and Wednesday by frenzied villagers, most of whom have long been subjected to looting, murder and rape by the robbers.

Villagers still roaming the jungles with lethal weapons caught and beat dead Hafez Jallad, 35, and Shahid, 32, said to be operatives of the infamous Bashar Majhi gang, in east

Char Bata early Thursday when they were fleeing their hideouts in the deep forest.

Thousands of vengeful villagers are joining the manhunts with the joint forces of paramilitary BDR, police and coastguards only to take the law into their own hands as the local administration apparently reluctant to save the suspected robbers from lynching.

During a visit to the areas Wednesday, the correspondent found almost no initiative on the part of the policemen to save the victims.

A mob caught 19 alleged robbers in Char Langalia and seven others in Bayar Char areas yesterday as they were fleeing their hideouts in the wake of the joint combing operation.

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Rejoinder

The Daily Star in a report published yesterday headlined "Pajero drags woman garment worker to death" inadvertently mentioned Pajero instead of Ford.

Rangs Limited in a rejoinder yesterday said the vehicle in question is a 4WD sports utility vehicle named Explorer and not Pajero.

It said the mention of Pajero has made a huge damage to the brand image of Pajero.

Phensidyl found in graveyard

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday seized 3,300 bottles of Phensidyl from a graveyard at Munshirtek in Sutrapur.

A joint team of Sutrapur and Demra police raided the area at 12:35pm and arrested Sentu alias

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STATE DEPT TERROR WARNING Dhaka ready to tackle threat to US interests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of a fresh extension of US State Department's warning to American citizens of potential threats to US interests in Bangladesh, the government feels it has taken sufficient measures to contain any such threat.

"We have taken sufficient measures to protect the US embassy and American citizens in Bangladesh," State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar told The Daily Star yesterday. "We are reviewing law and order and monitoring internal security arrangements. I believe it's (the threat) not a problem (for us to contain)," he added.

After the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US, the US State Department had been issuing travel alerts to American citizens from time to time and updating those. It had issued similar warnings about Bangladesh back in December last year and then renewed it in April and again in July.

The State Department Tuesday issued a fresh warning from Washington and posted it on the department's official website. It cautioned travelling US citizens of possible dangers in Bangladesh.

A home ministry source said the recent seizure of arms from Kuril-Badda have worried the US embassy because of its proximity to the embassy.

"The US government has

recently received information about several possible threats on US embassy in Dhaka and other US interests in Bangladesh," the warning said.

"US citizens in Bangladesh should remain vigilant, particularly in public places frequented by foreigners, including but not limited to hotels, restaurants, shopping areas and places of worship. They also should avoid demonstrations and large crowds," it pointed out.

Citizens planning to travel to Bangladesh were advised to consult the department's consular information sheet for Bangladesh and register with the embassy in Dhaka.

The announcement is effective until March 9, 2004.

An official of the US embassy in Dhaka told The Daily Star the announcement was prepared on the basis of a report sent by the embassy.

Asked whether it was linked to series of suicide bombings in Istanbul and other Muslim countries and attacks on Ahmadiyyas in Bangladesh, the official seeking anonymity refused to comment.

"The public announcement is part of a regular evaluation of security of US interests worldwide and it was also circulated to some other countries," he said.

Asked if it would affect US investment in the country, he said it has nothing to do with investment.

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PHOTO: SHAKOOR MAJID

A light and sound extravaganza lights up Pari Bibi's Mazar in Lalbagh Fort Wednesday night during a cultural evening organised by the Institute of Architecture, Bangladesh in honour of architects from 17 countries.

Relic comes alive on light, sound

SOHEL ISLAM

It was a fast-track historical journey through light and sound back to ancient Dhaka, with Lalbagh Fort in the spotlight.

The 12-minute spectacle, part of a Wednesday evening carnival at the iconic Mughal-era fort, kicked off for 1,000 spectators with drifts of smoke billowing amid gliding soft light in the blacked-out compound.

Much wonder that the spotlight focussed on Pari Bibi's Mazar within the ramparts, with simultaneous narration on a hi-tech surround sound system, describing historical background of the shrine.

Organised by a group of architects, the show went on. The light streaked each building of the fort with brilliance -- every moment reliving the memories of the Mughal rule amid descriptions on speakers that transported the audience back to the half-forgotten.

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KURIL ARMS HAUL Govt's no to FBI intent to probe

STAR REPORT

The government has turned down a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) request to probe the huge Kuril-Badda arms and ammunition haul close to the US mission in Dhaka.

Rather, it said it would investigate the seizure and provide the US with information, according to home ministry sources.

Following the assurance, the ministry handed over the case to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which with the help of national security agencies has started work on the case.

CID Assistant Superintendent (ASP) Munshi Atiqur Rahman is leading the investigation, assisted by a team of officials of Special Branch, Detective Branch, NSI (National Security Intelligence) and army intelligence, according to

Sunday's decision by the home ministry.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar however said: "I don't know of any FBI request for probe."

Soon after the arms recovery, US embassy officials took pictures of those at the police office.

However, FBI involvement in cases is nothing new as the US crime-busting agency had investigated the recovery of a 76-kg bomb at Gopalganj where the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina was scheduled to hold a public meeting.

Some high police officials however are sceptic about the CID taking charge of the Kuril case and point out that the CID probes into the Bogra arms haul and a string of bomb blasts since 1999 fizzled out.

Police investigators claimed to have found leads to the cache in

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Salute the Champs!

ATDP congratulates and thanks the entrants and the judges who have made the first **Women's Agribusiness Plan Competition** a success. The competition's objective was to promote the practice of doing serious business planning and to generate new agribusiness ideas. The winning women agribusinesses will be honored on Saturday, December 13, 2003 at an awards ceremony (attendance by invitation only).

Leading and successful women entrepreneurs of the country will distribute prizes.

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2nd PRIZE --- 150,000 TAKA, 3rd PRIZE --- 100,000 TAKA

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Teenage girl, 4 others shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people including a teenage girl were shot and wounded in three incidents in the capital last night.

Three persons fronted bullets while walking down the road when two groups of hoodlums traded fire 10:00pm at Jucker Goli in Hatirpool, police said.

The injured are Shaidda Akhter, 14, a garment worker, Shamsur Rahman, 36, whose profession could not be known immediately, and Saifur Rahman 42, a garment trader. Condition of Shahida was stated to be critical.

At Pallabi, unidentified criminals shot Jamal Uddin, 40, in front of Harun Mollah Market in the evening.

Another businessman, Mizan, 35, was shot in the leg allegedly by operatives of 'Thandu Group' in front of the National Sports Council office at Motijheel. Angry locals caught two of the alleged goons, Akhshar and Sagar, and turned them over to police. No further details of the incidents were immediately available.

All the victims were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

world summit on the information society | Geneva 2003 - Turin 2005

Khaleda calls for special fund to promote IT

BSS, Geneva

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday made a proposal to the world community for creating a special fund to promote and disseminate information technology globally.

"I would like to strongly recommend that we create a digital solidarity fund," she said addressing the three-day World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) at Palexpo Conference Centre in Geneva in the morning.

The prime minister said the fund will facilitate technical and financial assistance towards national capacity building for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its use and transfer from the



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