

BDB welcomes citizens' body recommendations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) welcomed the electoral and political reforms recommendations made by the Nagorik Committee 2006.

"Our views are identical with many of the recommendations the Nagorik Committee made. BDB since its formation two years ago has been pursuing a number of these ideas and pushing for qualitative changes," Ferroz M Hassan, joint secretary general of the party, said in a statement.

He said the recommendations come at a time when the BDB and other opposition political parties

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300 shanties razed in fire in Ctg

UNB, Chittagong

Over 300 shanties and eight shops were burned to ashes in a fire in slums at Pashchim Madarbari in the city yesterday.

Ten people, including a firefighter and two children, were also injured in the fire, official and local sources said.

Originating from a petrol shop near the slums at about 11:30am, the fire engulfed the adjoining shops and shanties.

"A drum of oil exploded when the fire broke out in the shop and soon the fire burned down the thatched and 50 semi-pucca houses in the slum," said one witness.

"The slum-dwellers managed to come out of the burning houses, but a few of them received burn injuries," he added.

On information, nine units of fire brigade drove in and doused the fire after two hours' frantic efforts.

A firefighter was injured while trying to save two children whose clothes caught fire.

The injured children were admitted to a local clinic.

Local Ward Commissioner office sources estimated the extent of loss to be up to Tk 60 lakh.

'Govt steps soon to implement RMG tripartite agreement'

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Labour and Employment Aman Ullah Aman yesterday said the government will soon take necessary steps to implement the recently signed tripartite agreement among the garment workers, owners and the authorities.

Stern measures will be taken against any conspiracy in the garment sector, he said and called upon the owners and workers to cooperate with the government in this regard.

Aman was speaking at a discussion on the occasion of 21st founding anniversary of Jatiya Garments Sramik Federation at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium.

Referring to the steps taken by the government for ensuring labour welfare, the state minister said labour welfare foundation, welfare fund and wage scale for the workers of water transports has been formed.

Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal President Abul Kashem, SKOP leader Shafiqur Rahman Majumder, BGMEA representative Lutfur Rahman Matin, BKMEA representative Abdul Baset and Jatiya Garment Sramik Federation General Secretary Amirul Haque Amin spoke on the occasion with Federation President Shahida Sarker in the chair.

**Correction**

In our story headlined "Saudis hint at \$400m deal for Rupali shares" published on July 21, it was mistakenly mentioned that the net profit of the foreign banks in Bangladesh in FY05 was \$352 million. The figure actually is \$65 million, after taxes and provisions.

We regret the inadvertent error.

Prayer Timing		
July 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-54	6-58
Esha	8-15	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Plan to form grand opposition alliance

AL keeping close contact with like-minded parties

HASAN JAHIID TUSHER

Main opposition Awami League (AL) has made a move to form a grand electoral alliance that AL high-ups think will draw widespread public support and isolate the ruling BNP-Jamaat alliance.

The AL high-ups are keeping close contacts with the Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad), Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB), Communist Party of Bangladesh, JP-Manju and BJP-Naziur, five left-leaning parties, and other political parties that support opposition 14-party combine's 23-point national minimum programme.

Some Islamic political parties who have antipathy to the Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ-Amini) are also in the welcome list of AL.

BDB Organising Secretary Mahi B Chowdhury and JP Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju have already said they would join the AL-led alliance in the next election to defeat BNP-Jamaat-led four party coalition.

At least five political parties have expressed their willingness to join the 14-party alliance right now to intensify the ongoing anti-government movement to compel the government to accept reforms in the caretaker government and the Election Commission, AL sources said.

Islamic parties including Zaker Party, Tariqat Federation, Jamia'tul Mudarresin and Islamic Shasantantra Andolan are trying to come under opposition combine's umbrella to upset the ruling Islamic components Jamaat-e-Islami and

Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) in the forth-coming general election, sources said.

A faction of IOJ is also keeping contact with the AL policy-makers.

But most of the components of the 14-party are not happy with the move to include some Islamic parties in the grand alliance.

It would contradict their 23-point common national minimum programmes that emphasises freeing the country from chauvinist communal forces and militants and removing such forces from all levels of the government and administration, said several senior leaders of the 14-party combine.

AL President Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury, however, said they will not allow any anti-Liberation War

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PHOTO: STAR

Jatiya Shilpa Rakkha Mukto Mancha brings out a procession from Muktangan in the capital yesterday to press for a minimum wage of Tk 3,000 for garment workers, among other demands.

Pro-Taliban militants extend truce in Pak tribal belt

AFP, Miranshah

Pro-Taliban militants yesterday extended a ceasefire with Pakistani troops for a month as part of the government's peace efforts in the restive region bordering Afghanistan.

The militants announced their decision when a 45-member tribal council backed by the government met their commanders at an Islamic seminary outside Miranshah, the main town in North Waziristan tribal district.

"They (militants) have extended the ceasefire" until August 25, a local security official who attended the meeting told AFP, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

The militants declared a unilateral ceasefire on June 25 for one month. The government reciprocated by releasing 32 tribesmen detained earlier this year when fierce clashes left nearly 200 militants and a dozen soldiers dead in the district.

They said the ceasefire was

meant to facilitate peace talks with the government through tribal mediators.

The ceasefire has ended months of deadly roadside bombings and firefight between troops and militants in the lawless region, inhabited by fiercely independent and deeply conservative ethnic Pashtun tribes.

The rebels have demanded the release of some 60 tribesmen still in government custody and removal of security checkpoints set up in Miranshah and surrounding towns in North Waziristan, the official said.

He said the army would continue to strictly monitor the border with Afghanistan, where the Taliban are resurgent, and would not allow militants to use Pakistani soil for attacks in the neighbouring country.

Key US ally Pakistan has deployed some 80,000 troops to hunt down Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters who sneaked into the tribal belt after the fall of the Taliban regime in neighbouring Afghanistan in late 2001.



PHOTO: STAR

As dengue spreads in the capital, Dhaka City Corporation starts an anti-mosquito drive spraying insecticides. Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka inaugurated the campaign at Madhubagh yesterday.

DENGUE MENACE

DCC wakes up, but areas yet to see spray men

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has finally woken up to the dengue menace and started an anti-mosquito campaign yesterday.

Residents of three of the eight wards however told The Daily Star a completely different story.

Many residents of DCC Ward-43 [Adabar-Shekhertek], Ward-49 [Dhanmondi] and Ward-62 [Azimpur] said they had not seen a single DCC employee spraying

pesticides in their areas in the last week. The section concerned of the DCC had however assigned 10 employees to each of the high-risk wards to destroy mosquito larvae. Many criticised the DCC for its indifference in handling the issue.

"I did not see any DCC employee spraying pesticide in our area in the last week," said Nesar Ahmed, caretaker of a house on Road-4 in Baitul Aman Housing Society at Adabor. He said sometimes they see people spraying insecticides but the spraying never

rid the area of mosquitoes.

Joyanal Abedin, a police constable posted at the house of a judge, said "I have been posted at many places but I have never had so many mosquito stings as I have here."

Jashim Uddin, a driver by profession from Shekhertek area, said, "mosquitoes enter our mouths even when we talk to others at night."

He said low-income people like him are used to mosquito bites, as

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Pakistan rejects Indian demand to extradite Dawood, Salahuddin

PTI, Islamabad

Rejecting India's demand for deportation of underworld don Dawood Ibrahim and Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin, Pakistan claimed there was nothing to warrant pointing finger at it in the Mumbai train blasts.

A strongly-worded statement by Pakistan Foreign Ministry said the fact that after 10 days of the blasts India had little to say other than to mention Ibrahim and Salahuddin "demonstrates that there was nothing to warrant the irresponsible act of finger-pointing at Pakistan immediately after the

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Karnaphuli Bridge design finalised

Says project director

BSS, Dhaka

Project Director of the 3rd Karnaphuli Bridge project yesterday said the design of the bridge has been finalised taking into account the geographical uniqueness, particularly the possible impacts like siltation in the Chittagong Port channel.

"The bridge neither could be called exclusively of concrete pillars or a suspension one as it is designed as per opinion of the reputed experts taking into consideration the possible navigability threat in the port channel as well as danger from natural disasters like cyclone," Engineer Abdul Moktadir told BSS.

Moktadir, who is also a superin-

tendent engineer of the Roads and Highways Department (RHD), said the bridge would be of "cable-stayed pattern extra-douse type" with minimum number of pillars.

He said the feasibility study report on the project under the supervision of BUET experts mentioned that siltation in the port channel would be less than one percent as the bridge would be supported by minimum number of concrete pillars.

The feasibility report was supervised and necessary model test carried out by Dr MA Bari, head of the Water Resource Department and Prof MA Matin of the same department of Bangladesh University of Engineering and

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Indian 'criminal' held at Benapole check-post

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Bangladesh Rifles arrested a suspected Indian 'criminal' at Benapole check-post on Friday evening.

The arrestee, Provat Singh, 35, son of Bindeshwar Singh hailing from Bihar, who tried to enter Bangladesh with Indian passport, is being interrogated at Benapole Land Port Police Station.

Benapole and Bhomra (Sathkira) landports have been put on high alert following the incident.

Moderate quake in China kills 19

AFP, Beijing

At least 19 people died and 106 were injured in an earthquake, which caused 1,400 houses to collapse in a mountainous region of southwestern China, state media reported yesterday.

Xinhua news agency said another 38,000 buildings were damaged by the quake measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale, which shook Yanjin county in Yunnan province at 9:10 am (0110 GMT).

Most of the victims were crushed by collapsing buildings or falling rocks, officials said.

"Some were crushed inside their homes, others were killed by rocks falling from the mountains," a Yanjin county earthquake administration official told AFP by telephone.

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Twin suicide blasts kill 8 in Afghan city

AFP, Kandahar

Six Afghan civilians and two coalition soldiers were killed in two suicide blasts in Afghanistan's southern city of Kandahar yesterday, officials said.

The first attack ripped through a vehicle of the US-led coalition based in the volatile city at around 5:45 pm, the force said.

A high-ranking Afghan military official said on condition of anonymity that at least two coalition soldier was killed and four wounded.

The second blast struck about an hour later, about 100 metres (yards) from the first, an AFP reporter at the scene said.

The reporter saw six bodies. "It was a suicide attack by an individual," a police officer at the scene said, confirming five people were dead.

The area had been sealed off after the first blast as medical helicopters quickly arrived and carried away the injured on stretchers.

There have been several suicide attacks in Kandahar, many of them involving Canadian forces who were deployed to Kandahar province this year, as well as other cities in the country.

Most are claimed by the Taliban movement, which says it has hundreds of men prepared to sacrifice their lives to kill "invading" forces.

The extremist Taliban were toppled from government in late 2001 in an attack by a US-led coalition that was launched weeks after the September 11 suicide strikes blamed on al-Qaeda leaders being sheltered by Afghanistan.



PHOTO: STAR

Locals at Alikadam in Bandarban chop down trees illegally and sell those at local markets causing environmental damage to the hilly area.