

Grand alliance left

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The changing situation and implementation status of the party's electoral pledges. The AL Presidium and Central Working Committee have held only a few meetings since January.

Talking to The Daily Star on October 24, AL Presidium member Obaidul Quader however said the Presidium would sit soon after the prime minister's return from abroad to discuss the overall situation in the country.

"We will also sit with the grand alliance leaders to discuss the current political situation," he said.

The AL did not convene any meeting of its advisory council for suggestions on the country's political, economic and social affairs.

Even formation of the AL advisory council is yet to complete. According to the party constitution, the council is supposed to be formed with 41 members while it has only 20 now.

A number of senior AL leaders said the government alone is working to address the political situation, but the party, as a major political force, has been kept unused.

Meanwhile, politics in the country seems to have gone back to its old days of intolerance, unlawful activities by ruling party men, law observance of democratic practices within parties, and parliament boycott by the opposition.

The bomb attack on AL lawmaker Fazle Noor Taposh also triggered apprehension of

Babar

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Akan, also investigation officer of the case, said, "We are already getting vital information from him."

Speaking in return for anonymity, an ASP involved in the investigation said, "We have summoned retired special superintendent Ruhul Amin and retired ASPs Abdur Rashid and Munshi Atiqur Rahman to be at the CID office. We will question them in presence of Babar and Jomiah."

The three former officials face charges of misleading the August 21 investigation. In their factual probe, they had picked Jomiah as the fall guy. Besides, they had forced Abul Hashem alias Rana and Shafiqul Islam into admitting involvement in the August 21 carnage.

Ward Commissioner Mukhlesur Rahman, an AL leader who had been arrested for alleged links to the blasts, too would be asked to be available for interrogation.

Meanwhile, the officials assigned to probe the blasts afresh said they are trying to get to the sources of the grenades and know how those were smuggled in.

Babar was shown arrested in the grenade attack case on October 26.

Of the 22 charge-sheeted accused in the case, 21 belong to banned Islamist outfit Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami. The other one, Abdus Salam Pintu, is a former BNP state minister.

Of the accused, 13 including Pintu and Hujji boss Mufti Abdul Hannan are behind bars and the rest on the run.

CID pressed charges on June 11 last year.

Cancer hospital

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brisk business by renting their houses to patients for Tk 70 to Tk 200 on daily basis.

A group of brokers are also taking the advantage of seat crisis. They easily persuade the poor patients to get admitted to different private clinics.

Requesting anonymity a third-class employee said the patients are mainly taken to Quality Care Centre, Prescription Point, Support Centre and Life Line Medical Services at Mohakhali and Banani.

The hospital director acknowledged the fact of seat crisis and said, "The number of beds in the hospital rose to 150 in July from previous 50."

The poor cancer patients are also deprived of getting anti-cancer drug as the government has stopped supplying the drug for the last ten years compelling them to sell their properties and even the dwelling houses to continue the expensive treatment.

According to the annual report of the NICRH in 2005 monthly income of more than Tk 5000.

"We can supply only the painkillers and some supportive medicines," said Deputy Director of the hospital Abdul Awal to The Daily Star.

Since August the number of beds has increased to 150 from that of 50 but the number of staffs have remained the same

deterioration in law and order. Rashed Khan Menon said, "It is imperative that we [the alliance leaders] sit together to fix the strategy to overcome the prevailing situation as the reasons for forming the AL-led 14-party alliance and later the grand alliance still exist."

Stressing the need to strengthen the grand alliance's political activities to engage people with political issues, Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal said, "This is the only prescription to overcome the present situation."

A Jatiya Party Presidium member said the grand alliance leaders sat together only once following the BDR mutiny last February. "The Awami League should take immediate initiative to sit with the alliance leaders to fix the course of action to build a national consensus," he said.

AL leader Suranjit Sengupta said progressive political forces must assist the government in fighting evil forces like militancy and religious fundamentalism. People must also be engaged with the process, he added.

228 picked up

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against whom warrants have been issued.

Besides, they had recovered six bullets and six sharp weapons, the DMP officials said.

But DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque, expressing his dissatisfaction over the first day's move, said the recovery of illegal firearms and the number of listed criminals arrested were much less than the expectation.

The DMP decided to launch the drives following a rise in criminal activities in the capital leading to the deterioration of law and order.

Recent incidents including the bomb attack on Taposh, threats to blow up the Indian High Commission and National Board of Revenue buildings and death threats against the Indian high commissioner and the attorney general also prompted the DMP move.

Green belt

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department and directorate of environment.

Jhau trees have very small economic value and the tourists also have difficulties to enjoy the sea view from their hotels, he added.

Instead of Jhau trees, if environment-friendly trees like coconut, date and palm can be planted with the participation of local people on the 100 kilometre stretch of the sea beach from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf it would prevent erosion, he hoped.

Sources said the work of the under-construction 84-kilometre marine drive from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf would be completed by the year 2012.

Executive Director of environmentalist group "Green Cox's Bazar" Fazlul Quader Chowdhury said though tidal surges destroy Jhau trees on the beach the coconut trees can survive the onslaught.

He said at least 30,000 people in Kutubdia saved their lives clinging to the coconut trees when a devastating cyclone hit the area on April 29, 1991.

Indian PM hosts 'great friend' Bush

AFP, New Delhi

India's premier hosted a lunch on Friday for former US President George W. Bush and called him a "great friend" who played a key role in ending the South Asian country's long nuclear isolation.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who enjoyed a strong rapport with Bush during his White House tenure, threw the lunch in the former president's honour in the Indian capital New Delhi.

Ruling Congress party president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi, who is a member of parliament and seen as a potential Indian premier, attended the lunch along with other leading Indian political figures.

Singh also held a one-on-one meeting with Bush to discuss global issues, the Press Trust of India reported.

Speaking the same day at a leadership conference, the Indian leader also hailed Bush for his pivotal role in pushing through a pact which reversed a US ban on civilian nuclear trade with India.

"Former president George W. Bush is a great friend of our country," Singh told the forum, where Bush was slated to speak on Saturday.

"We in India recognise the important role he played in the fruition of the civil nuclear cooperation initiative," said Singh, who last year told Bush that the "people of India deeply love you".

Ukraine closes all schools, cinemas over swine flu

AFP, Kiev

Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko yesterday ordered a three-week closure of Ukraine's schools and cinemas in the toughest measures adopted yet to combat the swine flu virus in Europe.

"From today, all the school establishments in Ukraine -- be they private or public -- will be put on three weeks of holiday," she told her cabinet in comments carried on Ukrainian television.

Tymoshenko said the government would also be banning "all public gatherings, every concert and every cinema showing for three weeks."

The government will also introduce "special regimes" to limit the movement of Ukraine's citizens from one region to another for non-urgent purposes, she said. Ukraine has borders with four EU countries.

The prime minister's tough actions came as Ukraine confirmed its first deaths from the (A/H1N1) virus, amid a growing panic over several dozen unexplained deaths in the west of the country.

Four people in Ukraine are now confirmed to have died from the virus, the secretary of the country's national security council Raisa Bogatyriova said, according to the Ukrainian presidency.

BDR trial

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Road residence yesterday afternoon.

He said the BDR mutiny trial will begin next week with the formation of six separate courts across the country by the border force authorities. "The BDR director general will be the head of the courts," he said, adding everything for the trial has been finalised.

The meeting was convened to discuss and finalise the draft.

The law minister also said trial of serious offences like killings will start after the Criminal Investigation Department submits its probe report. "We hope the report will be submitted by November."

Home Minister Sahara Khatun, State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder, Law Secretary Kazi Habibul Awal and Deputy Director General of BDR Brig Gen Obaidul Haque were present in the meeting.

The home minister said trial of killings and other serious crimes will be held in the Speedy Trial Tribunal.

"As per the law, trial in the tribunal must be completed in 135 working days once hearing into the trial starts," she added.

Earlier, the BDR headquarters requested the home ministry to issue a gazette notification before the trial process of the mutineers starts.

Colombia deal gives US access to military bases

AFP, Bogota

Colombia granted the United States access to seven military bases yesterday for anti-drug operations, signing a deal that has angered South American countries wary of any US deployment in the region.

Colombian Foreign Minister Jaime Bermudez and the US ambassador to Colombia, William Brownfield, signed the accord during a brief closed-door ceremony in Bogota, a Colombian foreign ministry spokesman told AFP.

The exact text of the agreement, which Washington says is aimed at boosting cooperation in fighting guerrillas and tackling rampant drug trafficking, will be disclosed next week, Bermudez said.

Tensions have flared in Latin America since the deal emerged in July, with Venezuelan Hugo Chavez warning that "winds of war" were blowing across the continent.

Several countries in the region -- notably Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia -- have claimed the planned US military deployment is suspiciously large for its stated purpose.

The 10-year deal allows the US military to use seven bases in strategically located Colombia, which shares a border with Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil, Peru and Panama.

Some 800 US troops and 600 American civilians will be permitted on Colombian soil and will be granted total immunity, according to excerpts of the agreement leaked to local media.

The move comes as relief for Washington's efforts in the

region, after it closed its only remaining base in South America in September -- in the port city of Manta, Ecuador -- from where it had launched aerial surveillance operations targeting cocaine shipments.

Washington insists the deal only involves using Colombian bases -- three aerial, two naval and two army bases -- and will not lead to the building of US facilities on South American soil, as some critics of the plans fear.

One of the bases involved, at Palanquero, 110 miles (180 kilometers) west of Bogota, boasts a two-mile (3.5-km) runway adapted for large cargo planes, which critics say would allow the US to project itself far beyond Colombia's borders.

Colombian neighbors Venezuela and Ecuador in particular worry that intelligence and other operations could be carried out on their soil from Colombia, a charge Washington denies.

Bogota says the deal will extend cooperation with Washington already enshrined in "Plan Colombia," under which the country has received nearly 5.5 billion dollars in US aid since 2000 to combat drug trafficking and guerrillas.

Colombia's Council of State, which holds an advisory role, had argued that given its reach, the text should be submitted to congressional approval. But the government bypassed the recommendation.

During a regional summit on August 28, South American presidents attacked the plans, warning "foreign military forces" against threatening national sovereignty.

Team of EU

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The delegation will discuss with policy makers in Bangladesh as well as its international partners the overall impact of climate change especially on food security in the country.

A EU release said the climate change issue is of high importance to the European Union and it is committed to help the countries in the front row in the battle against climate change.

Nirj Deva in a statement said, "We are talking about real problems threatening real people. These people are alive today but may be gone tomorrow unless we do something now. What we need is funds and not only talks."

During the visit, the delegation will meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the speaker of the parliament, food and disaster management minister, foreign minister, chairpersons of the parliamentary committees on Ministry of Food and Disaster

Management, Ministry of Environment and Forest and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

The delegation will also hold meetings with country representatives of international organizations in Bangladesh and members of local civil society.

On November 2, it will visit two EU funded projects, Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) and Vulnerable Group Development for Ultra-Poor (VGDUP) Programme, in Sirajganj.

On November 3, the Delegation will address a press conference at Brac Centre at 4:30pm.

The Committee on Development is one of the 20 standing committees of the European Parliament. It is the parliament's main representative in promoting, implementing and monitoring the development and policy of the Union's Ministry of Environment and Forest Cooperation.

Attack on Taposh

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become preliminarily sure that it was a remote controlled bomb planted by the attackers. Bomb experts of the Detective Branch and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) helped us to ascertain that."

The IO said the bomb might have been planted by Freedom Party operatives trained in Libya between 1982 and '83 by party founder Lt Col (ret) Syed Faruqur Rahman who is also a condemned convict in Bangabandhu murder case and currently behind bars.

DB so far arrested six people in connection with the attack on Taposh, who are Mehnaz, jailed condemned convict in Bangabandhu murder case Lt Col (ret) Mohiuddin Ahmed's two sons Nazmul Hasan alias Sobel and Mahbulul Hasan, absconding condemned convict in the same case Maj (ret) Shariful Haque Dalim's brother Kamrul Haque Swapan, and Freedom Party leaders Abdur Rahim and Sheikh Shafiqul Sofu.

AC Akbar Hossain produced Mehnaz before the

Manmohan

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lead to irreparable damage to the ecology and said they have to move ahead with caution.

Recently, Congress General Secretary Rahul Gandhi had termed the interlinking of rivers a "disastrous idea".

"It is a disastrous idea that will be extremely dangerous to the environment of the country," Gandhi had told reporters in Chennai last month.

court yesterday morning seeking a 10-day remand, but Metropolitan Magistrate AKM Emdadul Haque of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court granted four days.

The remand petition said evidence and testimonies established that Mehnaz had links with bombing suspects both detained and free. Moreover, vital information on the 1975 killings of Bangabandhu and his family members were also elicited from her through interrogation, the petition added.

Barrister Taposh, also a prosecution lawyer in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman murder case, escaped the recent attack unharmed, but 14 others were injured.

Five teams including two additional deputy commissioners and 12 ACs were formed to deal with the case.

Taposh is son of Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni, nephew of Bangabandhu, who was also killed on August 15, 1975 along with Bangabandhu and his other family members.

Sylhet canals

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almost all the nine canals blocking the city's drainage system.

The SCC authorities took initiatives several times in the past to recover the canals but failed due to pressure from influential quarters with political clout.

"We will launch the drive to recover the canals after completion of the tender process so that the work can be completed before the end of the coming winter," an SCC official said.

Nine missing after US air collision

AFP, Los Angeles

Nine US military and Coast Guard personnel were missing Friday after a mid-air collision between a transport plane and helicopter over the Pacific Ocean, authorities said.

As dawn broke early Friday, an extensive search was under way for survivors of the crash near debris spotted in waters off the southern California city of San Diego, authorities said.

It followed the collision late Thursday between a Coast Guard transport plane and a United States Marine Corps light attack helicopter.

"We are always hopeful ... the assumption is always that they are alive," said US Coast Guard Captain Thomas Farris, noting a person could survive in the water for 19-20 hours, possibly longer, depending on body type and clothing.

Three Coast Guard cutters and a helicopter were scouring the area for survivors along with four US Navy vessels and several military helicopters.

Seven people were believed to be aboard the Coast Guard C-130, and two were in the Cobra attack helicopter, officials said.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known.

Farris said the Coast Guard plane had been searching for a missing person at the time of the accident. The subject of the initial search remains missing.

The missing Marine Corps aircraft, based at the sprawling Camp Pendleton base outside San Diego, was on a training exercise when the accident occurred.

It is the third accident involving a military helicopter in the region this year. On May 5, two Marines died when their Super Cobra helicopter crashed during a training flight while five crew died when a Navy HH-60H Seahawk helicopter crashed into the Pacific Ocean on May 19.

Delwar

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He said the government is continuously making up false stories against Khaleda Zia and her sons as part of its conspiracy.

"Awami League does not believe in democracy. When Ershad took power forcefully and imposed military rule then Sheikh Hasina said, 'I am not unhappy'. That means they supported autocracy whether that through Baksal or by supporting military rulers," the BNP leader said.

Replying to a question, he said despite the torture and repression they want to cooperate with the government as they are doing politics for the welfare of the people. But it is the government that has to create a congenial atmosphere, he said.

Delwar protested placing ex-state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar under police remand. He alleged that the government seems to have exerted influence on the court for sending him on remand. He said Babar would be forced to make false statements during the remand.

Criminal

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where he succumbed to his injuries at 2:00pm.

Police recovered four bullets, a machete and three knives from Hridoy.

"Hridoy was a listed criminal and a member of Shohor Ali group," said OC Zakir Hossain.

3rd ODI Today

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suffered during the second game. Zimbabwe's regular skipper Prosper Uteya though may be back in this match after he had to sit out the second game with an ankle injury.

State-run television channel BTV will telecast the match live from 2:30 pm.

Call to stop

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stop human-tiger conflict. In Bangladesh, such conflict is the main reason for killing of tigers.

The recommendations of the workshop will be carried forward to the ministerial meeting on tigers to be held in Thailand in January where nations will commit to work for tiger conservation.

The workshop also stressed strict protection of wild tigers by stopping poaching and their core breeding areas.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in a statement welcomed the Kathmandu recommendations and said, "without immediate, urgent and transformative actions, wild tigers will disappear forever."

EU agrees on

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unable to agree on how to share out the burden of helping poorer states reduce carbon dioxide emissions, just weeks ahead of the Copenhagen climate summit starting December 7.

EU drafters and legal experts worked overnight in a bid to overcome objections, mainly from poorer central and Eastern European nations.

According to the revised draft, which could yet change during the second day and final day of the summit, they agreed the baseline figure should "be met through a combination of (developing nations') own efforts, the international carbon market and international public finance".

Other figures were included in the draft text, including 22-50 billion euros by 2020, which the leaders believe will be required in international public funding as part of the overall 100 billion.

However when it came to the thorny issue of which European countries should fork out what amounts, the draft text was mute.

The 27-nation bloc prides itself in leading the fight against climate change, and has already agreed to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2020, but many fear its leadership role could be compromised without a burden-sharing deal.

Europe is keen to enter international climate talks in Copenhagen speaking with a unified voice to encourage others, particularly the United States and China, to commit to swinging emissions cuts.

The European Union has said it is willing to increase its own promised emissions cuts to 30 percent if the rest likewise.

But EU nations are split on how to fund their common

ambitions. Central and eastern European nations, led by Poland, are reluctant to give aid to other countries, such as Brazil and China, which they deem to be no poorer than the poorest in Europe.

Others, like Germany, feel it premature to go into too much detail before Europe knows what the rest of the world proposes at the international climate talks.

In an internal EU document, the leaders said "the contributions of EU member states should take account of their capacity of the less prosperous member states to contribute".

It added that "according to their respective economic and financial situation", the states would commit to financing the efforts of developing nations in the short term, from 2010-2013.

A previous draft said 5-7 billion euros in annual fast-track funding would be required, but the revised version stressed the figure "will be determined in the light of the outcome of the Copenhagen conference" rather than before it.

EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said figures could be agreed but kept private "as a tactic for the negotiations in Copenhagen".

Poland, heavily reliant on coal-fired power stations, and eight other new members from eastern Europe are above all anxious to ensure that the burden of funding is not allotted according to national CO2 emission levels but mainly on GDP levels.

The eastern European states also want the large amount of polluting rights, which they have not used up due to the collapse of industry since the break-up of the Soviet Union, taken into account.

Militants blow

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A Friday statement from the military also says that two Pakistani soldiers were killed during a militant mortar attack and three more were wounded in a bombing.

It says government forces now dominate the hills above the village of Sararogha, where Taliban leaders long have operated openly.

In mid-October, the Pakistani military launched a ground offensive in the tribally controlled region, where the Pakistani Taliban are based and are believed to shelter al-Qaida fighters.

Access to South Waziristan is restricted, so independently verifying death tolls from fighting is all but impossible.

Meanwhile, the death toll from one of Pakistan's worst bomb attacks rose to 118 on Friday as more bodies were

plucked from the debris of a devastated market in Peshawar, officials said.

Local administration chief Sahibzada Anis put the death toll at 118. It includes 31 women and 24 children, Anis said, adding that seven more bodies had been recovered from the debris since late Thursday.

City police chief Liaquat Ali confirmed the toll, saying the body of a child was retrieved from the rubble in the Meena market on Friday and six other bodies late Thursday.

Doctor Zafar Iqbal, registrar of the city's main Lady Reading Hospital, told AFP that six people who were critically wounded in Wednesday's attack had died.

"There are still 121 people receiving treatment in the hospital and 25 of them are in serious condition," he added.

Internet addresses

FROM PAGE 1
Seoul to allow domain names in Arabic, Chinese and other scripts.

More than half of the 1.6 billion people who use the internet speak languages with non-Latin scripts.

It is being described as the biggest change to the way the internet works since it was created 40 years ago.

The first Internationalised Domain Names (IDNs) could be in use next year.

Plans for IDNs were first approved at a meeting in June 2008, but testing of the system has been going on for two years.

The move paves the way for the internet's Domain Name System (DNS) to be changed so it can recognise and translate non-Latin characters.

The DNS acts like a phonebook, turning easily understood domain names into strings of computer-readable numbers, known as Internet Protocol (IP) addresses.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (Icann) said the "fantastically complicated technical feature" allowing IDNs would represent the "biggest change" to the coding that underlies the internet since it was invented four decades ago.</