

Scientists find key to drought resistant crops

ANI, Washington

Scientists have determined precisely how the plant hormone abscisic acid (ABA) works at the molecular level to help plants respond to environmental stresses such as drought and cold, which could lead to the development of drought resistant crops in the future.

VARI (Van Andel Institute) scientists have determined the structure of the receptors that plants use to sense ABA, a hormone that keeps seeds dormant and keeps buds from sprouting until the climate is right.

Locating these receptors and understanding how they work is a key finding - one that has eluded researchers for nearly a half-century.



This Television grab taken from the Central Television of China (CCTV) channel news yesterday shows one of seven defendants (R) next to security officers during a trial over July's ethnic unrest at the Urumqi court, in northwest China's Xinjiang region. The court in restive Xinjiang sentenced three more people to death on Friday for their roles in July ethnic violence, state media said, raising the total number of people condemned to death or executed to 17.

PHOTO: AFP

EU to begin Myanmar political dialogue

Top court agrees to hear Suu Kyi appeal

AFP, Yangon

looking forward," Lipman said of the 30-minute meeting.

"I think the government would like to engage with the European Union. They are already engaging with the United States," he said.

Meanwhile, Myanmar's Supreme Court agreed yesterday to hear an appeal against the extended house arrest of democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi, as the European Union said it wanted sustained dialogue with the ruling junta.

Nobel laureate Suu Kyi, 64, was ordered to spend another 18 months in detention in August after being convicted over an incident in which a US man swam to her house. A lower court rejected an initial appeal in October.

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tracks -- general humanitarian assistance, the giving of financial aid through non-government organisations, and now political discussion.

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Putin praises achievements of Stalin

ANI, Moscow

regime.

But hopes of a breakthrough are low, given the North's missile and nuclear tests earlier this year and the US preoccupation with other foreign policy challenges such as Afghanistan and Iran.

"I don't expect much from the first visit to the North," Bosworth himself was quoted as telling South Korea's Yonhap news agency in London Thursday. Analysts agree.

"At best, the North might announce its return to the nuclear talks, but I wouldn't count on it," said Peter Beck, a North Korea specialist at Stanford University's Asia-Pacific research centre.

India for revival of Lankan political process

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

India Friday said it wanted a revival of the peace process in Sri Lanka and has been assured by Colombo that all people displaced by the two-decade-long civil war would be resettled by the end of January 2010.

"Government is keen to see the revival of political process in Sri Lanka which will meet the legitimate interests and aspirations of all communities, including Tamils and Muslims, within the framework of a united Sri Lanka," Minister of External Affairs SM Krishna said in the Rajya Sabha.

"Revival of such political process and an inclusive dialogue would help bring the

Russia, China closer to okaying Iran sanctions

AFP, Paris

A bid by one of Osama bin Laden's sons to visit Britain was rejected by an immigration tribunal on Thursday amid questions about his proposed marriage to a British woman and his attitude to his father.

Omar bin Laden, 28, lost his appeal against Britain's refusal in April 2008 to allow him to move here with British-born Zainab Alsaabah, 54, who he claimed to have married in his homeland of Saudi Arabia in 2007.

The deputy president of the

asylum and immigration

tribunal, Mark Ockelton, said their union "was not to be regarded as valid in English law", partly because they were both married to other people at the time.

But experts in Moscow and Beijing warn their governments remain unwilling to support the kind of severe financial embargoes and targeted trade restrictions favoured in Washington, Paris, London and Berlin.

In 2009 the Iranians weren't able to

find positions that might divide the

Group of Six," said one analyst, speaking

on condition of anonymity and referring to Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States.

According to the Paris-based official, this contact group of world powers set up to negotiate with Tehran is "all agreed that Iran should not get a nuclear weapon" while some "are actively drawing up new sanctions".

Iran's regime, now under pressure at home from a newly vocal domestic opposition movement, has refused a UN-mediated offer to send its uranium stockpile to Russia and France to be refined for use in a medical reactor.

This refusal -- which increased international fears that Tehran's true intent is to create weapons grade fuel -- led last week to members of the UN watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) voting to censure Iran.

Russia, usually an ally of Iran, co-sponsored the censure motion and

China, traditionally a staunch defender of national sovereignty over international oversight, voted to support it.

"Russia supports the idea of sanctions against Iran," said Fyodor Lukianov, editor of the Russian foreign policy journal Russia in Global Affairs.

"The real question will be 'what kind of sanctions'? There will be deep disagreement, and Russia will not support very tough sanctions like those sought by the United States," he warned.

In the West, Russia's vote was nevertheless seen as a breakthrough that could clear the path for tougher United Nations economic sanctions against Iran in the New Year.

"The real break with Russia came in September when Washington, Paris and London revealed Iran was building a secret new enrichment plant," said one Western diplomat, pointing to new tensions between Tehran and Moscow.



PHOTO: AFP

Relatives of one of the slain journalists mourn over the coffin during the funeral in General Santos City, south Cotabato yesterday. Eight of the thirty slain journalists were buried as Philippine troops wearing body armour and carrying assault rifles stormed a compound containing the homes of a powerful clan linked to the election-linked massacre that left 57 people dead.

US envoy set for North Korea talks

No breakthrough likely

AFP, Seoul

US President Barack Obama will use his trademark direct diplomacy next week on a problem, which plagued his predecessors for two decades - North Korea's dogged drive for nuclear weaponry.

Special envoy on North Korea Stephen Bosworth, set to arrive Tuesday in Pyongyang, will try to persuade the isolated country to return to the six-nation nuclear disarmament talks it angrily quit in April.

The trip will mark the first direct talks between the Obama administration and the hardline communist

India, Nepal resume security talks

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Kathmandu

India and Nepal resume talks in security cooperation in Kathmandu Friday to review the progress of the high-level commitments made between the two governments during Nepali Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal's official visit to India in August.

The three-day talks, delayed Friday due to the widespread excitement about the Nepal cabinet's historic meeting at the foot of Mt Everest, are led by Satish

Mehta, joint secretary at India's external affairs ministry, and his Nepali counterpart Kaganath Adhikari.

Officials from the ministries of defence, home affairs and foreign affairs as well as security forces and Nepal's National Intelligence Department are participating in the talks that will focus on sharing information to combat cross-border terrorism more effectively.

The two sides will also discuss providing training to Nepal Army in India as well as non-lethal military hardware.

Israel illegally annexing east Jerusalem: EU

AFP, Jerusalem

includes expanding Jewish settlements and demolishing Palestinian homes in east Jerusalem.

"Developments in east Jerusalem in 2009 were marked by the continued expansion of Israeli settlements and a considerable number of Palestinian house demolitions and eviction orders," said the report, published first by Israel's liberal Haaretz daily.

Israel occupied and

annexed east Jerusalem in 1967 and considers it its "eternal indivisible capital" in a move never recognised by the international community.

"Israel is, by practical means, actively pursuing its illegal annexation of east Jerusalem by weakening the Palestinian community in the city, impeding Palestinian urban developments and ultimately separating east Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank."

UN to probe climate change cover-up

AFP, London

change fears were posted online.

Hackers penetrated the centre's network and posted online thousands of emails from researchers, including Jones, a head of the Copenhagen summit, which stands Monday.

The CRU at the university in Norwich, eastern England, is a world-leader in the field.

Pachauri, head of the Nobel Prize-winning UN panel since 2002, told BBC radio: "We will certainly go into the whole lot and then we will take a position on it."

"We certainly don't want to brush anything under the carpet. This is a serious issue and we will look into it in detail," he added.

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Nurul Islam's family

FROM PAGE 16

residence of Nurul Islam at Lalmoni on December 3 in 2008, killing his son Tamohar Islam, 35, on the spot. Nurul Islam who was seriously injured in the fire died 36 hours later.

"Had the CID given more attention to the investigation, the case would have progressed. But they did not do it though they have the capability," said lawmaker Rubi Rahman, wife of Nurul Islam.

Primary investigation by fire service and civil defence concluded that the fire broke out from the electric short circuit. But Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC) in its report on December 22, 2008 ruled out any possibility of the fire originating from electric short circuit, as the circuit breakers were intact, said Moutushi Islam, daughter of Nurul Islam.

Moutushi said before the fire incident her father talking to electronic media had said that he and his son were being threatened by unidentified persons for long.

Her father also mentioned the involvement of fundamentalists behind the incident at that time, she alleged.

Responding to a question, Rubi Rahman said the present government seems to have taken the issue seriously and they hoped that the government would do proper investigation and ensure punishment of the culprits.

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