

'Political will a must for strong local govt'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Political commitment and bureaucratic willingness are imperative to strengthen grassroots level local government through devolution of concentrated power. Although successive governments made pledges to empower different tiers of the local government, the issue still remains confined to public discourse. This was viewed by the speakers at a daylong seminar on 'Devolution: Key to Strengthening

the Local Government' organised by Khan Foundation in the city yesterday. "The politicians do not want the grassroots level public representatives exercising enhanced decision making power for fear of losing their grip on concentrated authority while the bureaucrats too are reluctant to let the thing happen because of their snobbery," Dhaka Divisional Commissioner AHM Abul Kashem said. He identified the local level resource generation for relatively

independent developmental activities as one of the foremost means of strengthening the local government. "Capacity-building orientation is a must for an empowered local government which is the foundation of democracy," Dhaka University Professor Nazmunnesa Mahtab said. Minister for Science and Information and Communication Technology Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan underscored the need for both administrative decentralisa-

tion and devolution of central executive power to strengthen different tiers of local government. Highlighting the time-tested indispensability of union parishad (UP) as the lowest tier of grassroots level governance, he pointed out that it had existed for around 125 years. "A strong central government is uncertain unless a strong local government is brought in place," Dr Moyeen Khan said.

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Birth anniversary of MAG Osmani today

Today is the 85th birth anniversary of General MAG Osmani, the commander-in-chief during the War of Liberation. The Sylhet Division Development Council has drawn up elaborate programmes to mark the day. A discussion on 'War strategy of Bangladesh: Freedom in nine months' will be held at the Liberation War Museum at 4.00pm today. **Death anniversary** The 27th death anniversary of former Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Muhammad Khademul Bashar, Bir Ut tam, will be observed today, says a press release. He died in a tragic accident of a BAF aircraft in 1976. The Bangladesh Air Force has arranged a milad mahfil at the BAF central mosque at Kurmitola after Asr prayers. Fateha will also be offered at his grave in Dhaka.

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