

Arrange training for workers to resist move to rig polls

Hasina asks AL Rajshahi leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed her party's grassroots level leaders of Rajshahi district to arrange 'electoral trainings' for the AL activists to resist the BNP-Jamaat coalition government's 'attempt at stealing votes and election engineering'.

"The party chief directed us to arrange training for the local workers so that the party can get trained polling agents in the next general elections. These agents will understand alliance governments move to rig polls," Advocate Abdus Salam, AL president of Mohanpur upazila unit of Rajshahi, told The Daily Star.

"She [Hasina] directed us to make the grassroots level leaders and workers ready for the upcoming election," Salam added.

The six-hour-long views-exchange meeting of Rajshahi's grassroots leaders with Hasina was held at the Dhanmondi party office of the AL in the capital.

Hasina told the grassroots leaders, "You [grassroots party leaders] must resist their move."

"If votes are protected then the rights of the people will be protected," Hasina said reiterating that they would not participate in any

elections before reforms in the caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC) are implemented.

Grassroots leaders told Hasina to go for more vigorous movements to compel the government to accept the electoral reforms.

Urging the party leaders to work together and forget internal feuds to ensure victory in the upcoming elections, Hasina warned leaders of stern organisational actions against them if they did not work in favour of the chosen candidates.

In response, the local leaders urged Hasina to take stern action against the rebel candidates ahead of the election.

Pointing out the internal feuds in some constituencies, they also urged Hasina to take effective measures to quell internal feud of the party and declare candidates as soon as possible to ensure a better chance of AL candidates at the polls.

In reply, Hasina assured them of taking appropriate measures to deal with the problems and nominate candidates after examining the grassroots leaders' views of the nomination aspirants.

The AL chief said though the prime minister (PM) pledged to hike government contribution of the

basic salary of teachers up to 100 percent in her electoral manifesto before the 2001 election, the PM did not fulfil that pledge.

The prime minister has hardly extended any facilities to the teachers leaving them no other way but to take to the streets and go for hunger strikes during the last four and a half years.

"The government has fired over 2000 teachers on political grounds," the AL president said adding that the teachers who build the nation have been harassed, tortured and even implicated in false cases by the government.

Hasina said though teachers of non-government primary and secondary schools, madrasas and colleges have been demonstrating for better wages and nationalisation of their jobs for the last six months, the government did not pay any heed to the teachers' demands. The opposition leader urged the government to accept the teachers' demands.

Hasina said the alliance government assumed power through vote rigging in the 2001 elections and has put the country on the verge of ruin through wide scale corruption, politicisation in all the sectors and mismanagement.



Mahbub Anam's fifth death anniversary today

Today is the fifth death anniversary of eminent journalist and author Mahbub Anam, former editor of the now-defunct Bangladesh Times, says a press release.

In a distinguished career as a journalist, he also served as a senior executive of the then Pakistan Observer, senior vice-president of Bangladesh Editors' Council and was actively involved with Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad, Bangladesh Press Council and Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha Porichalona Board.

For his contribution to journalism, he received Swadhinata Padak, Sher-e-Bangla Gold Medal, Maulana Akram Khan Gold Medal, Kaloddhani Padak and Tribhuj Gold Medal.

Besides, during his long and successful professional career, Mahbub Anam also served as the general manager of Jamuna Oil Company and director of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation.

He was actively involved in politics from his student life. In addition to being the general secretary of Salimullah Muslim Hall of Dhaka University in 1954-55, he was appointed acting publication secretary of the Jukta Front on behalf of the Awami League in 1954.

Mahbub Anam actively took part in the Language Movement in 1952. He was jailed several times for his role in the movement as general secretary of Tamaddun Majlish, Mymensingh unit, joint secretary of Rashtrobhasha Sangram Parishad and general secretary of Salimullah Muslim Hall.

In recognition of his contribution to the Language Movement, he was awarded 'Bhasha Andoloner Bir Sainik Padak' by President Ziaur Rahman and Matribhasha Padak (posthumously) by Tamaddun Majlish.

Mahbub Anam authored a number of books on the cultural and political identity of Bangladesh, including 'Amra Bangladeshi Amra Bangali' and 'Tihasher Shikriti Banam Bikriti'. He also served as the president of Nattyamancha Bangladesh and Bangladesh Sahitya Sangskriti Kendro and was actively involved with Bangladesh Film Censor Board and Bangladesh Public Library Special Committee.

He was the second son of eminent litterateur, journalist and politician late Abul Mansur Ahmad and elder brother of Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star and publisher of the Prothom Alo.

On the occasion of his death anniversary, fateha will be offered at his grave at Banani and Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will be held at his Dhanmondi residence in the city.

14-party stages countrywide protest today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) led 14-party opposition combine will stage countrywide demonstration in the city today, protesting police atrocities, killing of one of its leaders during the July 4 countrywide shutdown and demanding electoral reforms.

The city unit of the combine at a meeting yesterday decided to observe the day as "Countrywide Demonstration Day", protesting the killing of Sweschasebak League leader Golam Mostafa Milan.

The meeting was held at the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) office with Mir Hossain Akter in the chair. Akter urged the countrymen to make the day a success.

AL Presidium Member Abdur Razzak, Syed Zafor Sazzad, Moinuddin Khan Badal, Hazi Selim, Mukul Chowdhury, Engineer Kashem and Qamrul Ahsan were also present at the meeting.

FOBA confce on anti-terrorism November 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US-based organisation Federation of Bangladeshi Associations Overseas (FOBA) is going to hold a South Asian conference on anti-terrorism on November 16 in Bangladesh.

High officials of the US government and Home Land Security, political leaders of the ruling and opposition parties of the USA will participate in the conference titled 'Let the world terrorism be uprooted', said Foba President Din M Rana at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

Leaders of ruling and opposition parties and high officials and academicians of different sectors of the Saarc countries will also be present at the conference, said Rana. Foba has already contacted the leaders and high officials, he added.

Explaining the background of the conference, Rana said since 9/11, the Muslims in the world and their religion became a subject of criticism. On the other hand, Bangladeshis living overseas are also being criticised following some terrorist activities in Bangladesh.

"We want to tell the world that Islam is a religion of peace, and Bangladesh does not shelter the terrorists," he added.



Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan speaks at a dialogue on 'Bimstec-Japan Comprehensive Economic Cooperation: Bangladesh Perspective' organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies at the BISS auditorium in the city yesterday.

ACID VIOLENCE CASES

'Set up monitoring cell for speedy execution of verdict'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legal experts yesterday called for establishing an active monitoring cell to ensure speedy execution of judgements in acid violence cases, so that the cases do not remain pending in the High Court.

The rate of conviction for acid violence is only 10 to 15 percent of the total number of cases in the lower courts and there is no indication when the cases are going to be settled, they said.

They were speaking at a press briefing following a dialogue titled 'Justice delayed is justice denied: Role of state in reducing acid violence' organised by Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) at the IDB Bhaban in the city.

Presenting the keynote paper titled 'Fate of acid throwing cases: Studies of appeal in the higher court' at the dialogue, Advocate

Fawzia Karim Firoze, consultant and team leader of the Institute for Law and Development, suggested setting up a monitoring cell to follow up the progress of pending cases.

This will help identify obstacles to the proceedings of a case, Fawzia added.

According to an ASF survey, a total of 1601 incidents of acid attack took place during the period from 2000 to 2005, but only 282 culprits involved in 166 attacks were convicted by the trial courts.

To check the status of pending cases in the High Court, the ASF commissioned a study in December 2005 that reveals that out of 23 death reference cases, only three cases were confirmed and two cases rejected.

The legal experts said the monitoring cell should be formed in consultation with the authorities, including the law ministry, chief

justice and attorney general's office.

They also called for forming a separate bench for the trial of acid violence cases.

They also underscored the need for training and adequate manpower in the lower courts to deal with acid violence cases.

Speaking at the press briefing, ASF Executive Director Monira Rahman suggested inclusion of the acid violence issue in textbooks to raise awareness about it.

She urged the National Acid Control Council and District Acid Control Committee to play an active role and ensure transparency in their activities.

Advocate Khandker Mahbub Hossain of the Supreme Court called on the media not to prejudice the outcome of any acid violence case.