

Reforms possible

FROM PAGE 16 Introduction of 'no votes' in cases where a voter might have objections to a particular candidate, and of a provision for 'dual votes' allowing voters to vote for more than one person with serial numbers of preferences for avoiding by-elections.

They suggested decentralisation of administrative power and strengthening of local administrations as the power is very much concentrated in the capital now.

Speaking as a special guest Selina Hayat fvy called upon the people not to vote for black money holders and thugs. She also urged prospective candidates not to buy votes.

She pointed out that politicians often become hostages to bureaucrats. Although the bureaucrats run the administration, they are hardly ever blamed for corruption, she added.

She called upon the people to create resistance against black money holders, thugs and plunderers. By also urged the people to be united against anti-liberation forces.

Toimur Alam Khondoker said the people should raise the slogan that they will not elect corrupt people. The media can play a vital role through providing information about the backgrounds of candidates and about cases of corruption by any of them, he pointed out.

Khondoker said the people hope that honest and competent candidates will be elected.

Fazlul Haque criticised the EC for rejecting the European Commission offer of providing transparent ballot boxes, without considering its importance.

The civil society should come forward with more courage, and the concept that there is no final word in politics should be banished from the country, Haque said.

He also said the vision paper should be prepared in phases of different levels. It will not be effective.

Azal Hossain said we want a terror free parliament and a black money free society.

He urged political leaders to speak out in party meetings about the deliberations of the regional dialogues. He said the intruders in politics are the main culprits as real politicians work for the country and want development. He said the dialogues have been successful and hoped that such initiatives will also succeed in the future.

Prof Anisuzzaman said, "We want to see an effective parliament and progress in the country." He pointed out that a section of the people became rich suddenly through politics while many people went bankrupt in the political struggle.

"We want to see how much of the political parties' pledges have been implemented," he said adding that it requires accountability of the government.

Urging the politicians not to nominate black money holders in the election, Anisuzzaman further said, "We should also see whether the candidates played any negative role during the liberation war."

He said the discrepancies between men and women, poor and rich should be minimised. He asked citizens to exercise their rights and to create pressure on politicians for implementing their demands.

Major General (ret'd) Moimul Hossain Cwdhury urged the people to judge competent candidates on the basis of character and not on the basis of wealth or influence.

He said foreign diplomats often get involved in the country's domestic affairs, which is regrettable. He stressed the need for competent citizens as well as competent candidates.

The democratic practice will not be successful without removing corruption and terrorism from the society, he said adding that the political situation in the country is deteriorating day by day. "Now politics is a mix of democracy, thuggery and corruption."

Editor of the Prothom Alo Motiur Rahman expressed doubts that the next election might not be held at all as the conflict between the two major political fronts culminated to the worst level. "There is hardly a congenial atmosphere in the political arena for holding dialogues."

As a result the lack of confidence of the people on politicians is increasing. He urged politicians to fulfil the pledges and commitments they made to the people. He hoped for a balanced country. He said the people want to see the politicians beside them.

Rahman pointed out that political parties forget their commitments mentioned in party manifestos after going to power.

will continue and the outcome of 15 regional level dialogues will be placed before political leaders. He hoped that the political parties will incorporate the recommendations that came out of the dialogues in their election manifestos.

He said civil society leaders will sit down with leaders of major political parties and place the recommendations before them. Dedicated and competent trends in the political parties have been strengthened by the dialogues, he observed.

He categorically said civil society members have no intention to be candidates in the next election but they want to strengthen the democratic process in the country. Another objective of the dialogues is to restore respect for politicians in the public mind, he pointed out.

Advocate Khokon Shaha, general secretary of Narayanjan City Awami League, demanded electoral reforms before the next election. He pointed out that politics has been under the control of a few officials of the army since the 1975 coup.

He also demanded separation of the judiciary from the executive branch of the government and an independent anti corruption commission.

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Alliance, AL to lock horns over

FROM PAGE 1 Before declaring a series of agitation programmes at the upcoming rally, Hasina is keen to ask the government in parliament about the fate of the proposals, a senior AL leader, who had talked with the AL president about the issue recently, told The Daily Star.

Some senior lawmakers of the AL yesterday discussed what would be the party's tactics in parliament this time. They also met the party chief last night.

"We'll be busy with a daylong hartal today and join the session tomorrow. Obviously, we'll raise the issue of reforms," Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid told The Daily Star last night.

"The parliamentary party will soon sit to devise the party's strategy regarding the current session," Hamid also the former speaker, added.

If the ruling and opposition parties fail to reach a consensus on the reforms during the tenure of the current parliament, it will have to be left for the next caretaker government.

But the way things have been turning out in the politics lately

does not augur well for an amicable resolution of the conflict over the reform agenda during the tenure of the present government.

LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has already declared that the issue of reforms has got to be settled outside the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) first. "After discussion by the proposed committee, it might be placed in parliament, if need be," Bhuiyan, also BNP secretary general, told reporters on August 21, the day the president summoned the JS session.

Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed too has said on a number of occasions over the last few days that there is no possibility of piloting a bill to amend the constitution.

But the constitution must be amended if they (government) are to meet the opposition's demands for reforms, particularly the one that calls for the defence to be placed under the caretaker government instead of the president.

When the JS will be in session this afternoon, the opposition alliance will be in the street to observe the daylong hartal in protest.

Shab-e-Barat

FROM PAGE 1 She also attended a milad organised by Jatiyatobad Olama Dal in front of the grave. Family members of the prime minister, including her eldest son and BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman attended the milad.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) held a discussion meeting and milad mehfil at its central office in the afternoon.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Vice-President Shahjahan Siraj, Jubo Dal President Barkat Ullah Bulu and other party leaders attended the milad.

Main opposition Awami League (AL) also held a doa and milad mehfil at its Bangabandhu Avenue office.

AL Acting General Secretary Obaidul Kader, Joint General Secretary Abdul Mannan, Organising Secretary Mukul Bose and other leaders were present.

Besides, different socio-cultural and religious organisations held Qurankhawni, milad and discussions on the occasion.

Bangladesh Television (BTV), Bangladesh Betar and private TV channels aired special programmes, highlighting the significance of the Shab-e-Barat.

UPDF

FROM PAGE 16 Not a single political party, including the Awami League (AL), BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami or Jatiya Party, is sincere about realising the rights of the hill tracts people, the press release signed by the UPDF central committee leader Samir Chakma said.

These parties have repeatedly shown discriminatory and communal attitudes to the hill tracts people, it further said, adding that those who were elected from the constituencies earlier did not take any initiative to solve the problems of the region.

The incumbents of the three constituencies are - BNP's Wadud Bhuiyan and Moni Swapan Dewan in Khagrachhari and Rangamati and Awami League's (AL) Bir Bahadur from Bandarban.

UPDF candidate Proshit Bikash Kheesa bagged 34,000 votes from Khagrachhari and 10,000 from Rangamati constituency in the 2001 general elections.

Padma bridge

FROM PAGE 1 The project is yet to be completed.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency conducted a feasibility study on the project in 2005 and recommended the Maow-Jajira point as suitable for the bridge.

The proposed Padma bridge, a long time demand of the people of the south-western region of the country, would greatly reduce the time in road communication between southern districts and capital Dhaka.

NDI raises

FROM PAGE 1 an updated voter list with a staggering number of 9.30 crore voters while there are allegations of leaving out many eligible ones.

The number of voters in the updated voter list is 17 lakh higher than that in the draft of the fresh voter list that the High Court later nullified.

The incorporation of unusually high number of voters (9.13 crore) in the draft voter list had triggered enormous controversy.

Even CEC MA Aziz on several occasions referred to the NDI's report to point to the existence of 'eight per cent fake voters' on the voter list prepared in 2000, which served as the base for updating the recently published electoral rolls.

Kader Siddiqui, Rob

FROM PAGE 1 The hands of only 2,200 people, he said, adding that monarchy is being established here when it is discarded elsewhere in the globe. "We want honest politics... we want to establish it through unity among us," he added.

JSD General Secretary Abdul Malek Ratan read out the declaration at the press conference while KSJL General Secretary Advocate Fazlur Rahman, UPR Member Secretary Abdul Baten Chowdhury, JSD Acting President Professor Mohammad Shafiq, Bangladesh Labour Party Chairman Sekandar Ali Moni and Secretary General Akter Hossain were present.

2 killed

FROM PAGE 1 cohorts opened fire on the team forcing them to retaliate. Mustafizur was bullet-hit when he tried to escape custody. He died on the spot.

One single barrel gun, a live cartridge and two used shells were recovered from the spot, Rab sources said. His accomplices "however managed to escape."

The slain outlaw was accused in five cases including three murder cases.

Another PBCP-Janajuddha leader was killed during a shootout between police and his accomplices at Sardarpara of Shantinagar upazila in Pabna yesterday afternoon. Three policemen were also injured in the incident.

The victim was identified as Akkas Kamar, 35. The injured are Sub-inspector Azizur Rahman and constables Firoz and Ruhul.

Police claimed they, following information, cordoned off and raided Sardarpara around 1:30pm to arrest criminals who were hiding there. They said the criminals opened fire on them as they asked them to surrender. Police said they were forced to return fire.

During the shootout, Akkas received bullets and died on the spot. Police sent his body to Pabna General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police recovered a locally made gun, a few bullets and a number of sharp weapons from the spot.

Akkas was an accused in at least eight cases including four murder cases.

Hartal today

FROM PAGE 1 Nanak, Saidur Rahman, Mamunur Rashid and Fazlul Haque Atik addressed the rally.

The leaders warned the government of launching vigorous movements if they torture the opposition today.

The JSD also held a rally and brought out a procession in front of the GPO. JSD leaders Abul Hossain, Saikat Raihan and Naïmul Hossain Jewel spoke.

Police sources said at least five buses were torched and several hand-bombs went off in the capital on the eve of today's hartal. Two people were also injured when hartal supporters hurled bombs at that in Siddikbazar area in the capital around 10:00pm, Dhaka Medical College Hospital sources said.

Meanwhile, law enforcers launched drives at different parts of the city last night to arrest trouble-makers. They arrested a number of people on suspicion. Police said the drives would continue throughout the night.

PMO SIEGE ON SEP 12 The opposition combine will gather at Bangla Motor crossing, Russel Square, Agargaon and Mohakhali in the capital in procession before marching towards the PMO at 11:00am.

A meeting of the opposition combine with AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu in the chair yesterday decided the spots and warned of going for one-point agitation to topple the government if it does not accept electoral reforms within September 18.

test at the police atrocities on its activists trying to lay siege to the EC Secretariat on September 6.

Besides, the opposition prepares to lay siege to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on September 12 amid Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) ban on rallies and demonstrations in and around the PMO.

The session will be a short one due to the Ramadan. Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, however, told the media on Friday that if both the ruling and opposition parties want, the session could be run during that time as well.

The Business Advisory Committee will meet today to allocate duration and business of the 23rd session.