

Make pledges on land, agri reforms in polls manifesto

Speakers urge political parties

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar on Sunday urged political parties to make specific pledges on land and agricultural reforms and include them in their election manifesto.

They said no development is possible without agricultural and land reforms, but it is a matter of regret that political parties do not attach importance to these sectors.

Bangladesh Sramajibi Kendra, a labour organisation, organised the seminar on "Political parties' pledges on land and agricultural reforms" at Women Voluntary Association in the city, says a press release.

Nurul Anwar, president of the organisation, presided over the seminar and read out a keynote paper.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics the number of agriculture labour is 63% and agriculture and rural labour is 83% out of total of six crore and 30 lakh labour forces in the country, Anwar said, adding that majority of these rural labourers are landless, jobless or seasonal jobless.

"Any development in the country is a far reached dream, if these labourers are not provided job and only reforms in land and agriculture sectors can ensure it," he

observed.

Prof Shafiquzzaman of Economics department of Dhaka University said the agriculture sector has been remaining neglected for years in the country, as allocation in agriculture sector was 23% in 1972 but now this is only four per cent.

Communist Party of Bangladesh Presidium Member Morshed Ali, ALRD Executive Director Shamsul Huda, Samata Deputy Director Ayub Hossain and Bangladesh Krishak Federation General Secretary Zayed Iqbal Khan, among others, addressed the seminar.

ATTACK ON JOURNO 'Arrest Shibir cadres within 48 hours'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Journalist leaders gave an ultimatum to the Chittagong University (CU) authorities and the police yesterday demanding that the Islamic Chhatra Shibir cadres involved in the attack on photojournalist Amran Hossain be arrested within 48 hours.

Otherwise, Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ), Chittagong Press Club (CPC) and Chittagong Photojournalists' Association (CPJA) would launch a joint movement, they said at a protest rally in front of the press club.

On December 24, Shibir cadres led by Borhan, Nazrul and Abdur Rab swooped on photojournalist Amran on the university campus while he was performing his professional duty. They kicked him indiscriminately and damaged his camera.

The journalist leaders said the Shibir cadres and activists have created a reign of terror and intimidation on the university campus and are carrying out heinous attacks on students, teachers and journalists.

But the university authorities have turned a blind eye to such attacks, they added.

They also expressed concern over the inaction of the law enforcement agencies as they could not arrest the Shibir cadres even after 24 hours of the incident.

Eminent journalist Obaidul Hoque, CPC President Abu Sufian, CUJ President Shahidul Alam, former president Anjan Kumar Sen, CPC General Secretary Kalim Sarwar, CPJA General Secretary Didarul Alam and Sammitia Abrity Jote leader Rashed Hasan spoke at the rally presided over by CPJA President Ali Abbas.

CIDA office besieged in Kamrangirchar, 5 injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of pro-BNP activists yesterday laid a siege to an office of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) at Kamrangirchar in the city.

Around 200 activists of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) encircled the CIDA regional office at Alinagar at Kamrangirchar at about 1:00am and injured five CIDA employees and ransacked the furniture of the office.

Police later brought the situation under control.

CIDA officials currently working with voter list for the upcoming election said they are politically unbiased and such an attack by BNP activists is extremely shocking and disheartening.

Rajbari Govt College VP killed in attack

UNB, Rajbari

Nasiruddin Ahmed Nasir, vice-president of Rajbari Government College Student Union and a JCD leader, was killed in an attack yesterday, triggering violent protests.

Nasir, 28, also organising secretary of the district Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), received injuries in a terrorist attack on him on Sunday evening.

The sources said some unidentified terrorists attacked Nasir on the way when he was going to visit an ailing Jubo Dal leader at Sadar hospital at 6:30pm on Sunday.

"The assailants chopped and beat him mercilessly, leaving him seriously injured," says a spot account of the incident.

He was rushed to Sadar hospital and then shifted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital. Later, he was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital at 3:00am yesterday where he succumbed to his injuries, DMCH sources said.

As his death news travelled fast into the town, some unruly youths ran riot through the town, vandalised a number of vehicles, ransacked some shops and looted valuables in Boro Pool area.

Some bus passengers were injured at the time.

Traffic on Rajbari-Faridpur road and Rajbari-Kushtia road halted for some time during the rampage. Traffic resumed after army went to the spot and removed the damaged vehicles from the road.

Additional police have been deployed in the town.

The district JCD enforced hartal from 12:00noon to 6:00pm in the district. They blamed Awami League and Jubo League for the killing. However, Awami League denied the allegations.

Police arrested four youths, Kutub Uddin, Abdur Razzak, Rezaul Karim and Md Sagar in this connection.



A large number of supporters of Awami League nomination seekers gather in front of Sudha Sadan at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday.

BENIN TRAGEDY DCC urged to build monument in memory of Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday urged the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) authorities to construct a monument in the capital in memory of those members of the armed forces who made supreme sacrifices during their UN peacekeeping missions across the globe.

The discussion was organised by Rhythm Cultural Society at the National Press Club in the city in memory of 15 Bangladeshi peacekeepers who died in a plan crash in Benin in 2003.

In his speech, Brig Gen (Retd) M Sakhawat Hussain focused on the image of Bangladeshi soldiers that they have built up through their commendable services in peace-keeping missions around the world.

He also urged all not to make the armed forces controversial.

Speaking as chief guest, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka pledged to extend all possible cooperation to the members of the bereaved families of the peacekeepers.

He also called upon the well-off section of the society to come forward in this regard.

Maj (Retd) Ameen Ahmed Afsary moderated the discussion which was participated by Maj Gen (Retd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury, Prof Anisuzzaman, Lt Col GM Jamayet Hossain, Dr NI Khan and Ayman Anam Khan.

'Keep space in newspapers for issues on adolescents'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop recently stressed the need for a separate page in newspapers for adolescents that will focus on issues related to them.

They also asked for follow-up reporting on violence against adolescents specially girls to raise awareness and resist violence.

The two-day workshop titled 'Gender violence and adolescence report-writing orientation for local reporters' ended on December 23 at Mass-line Media Centre (MMC) Training Centre in the city.

MMC Executive Director Kamrul Hasan Monju formally inaugurated the workshop, organised by MMC and Action Aid, Bangladesh.

Abdullah Al Mamun, programme manager of Manusher Jonno, while conducting a session in the workshop said gender based violence takes place throughout the life cycle including pre-natal, infancy, girlhood, adolescence and adulthood.

The forms of violence include sexual, physical, emotional, socio-economic, and harmful traditional practices, he added.

While discussing about the risks of adolescents, Fahmidul Haque, lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Dhaka University, said they easily get in touch with harmful people and dysfunctional family and proper guideline make them suffer.

Criticising the commercial advertisements of electronic media, he pointed out the adverse effects of reduced call rate of cellular phone at late night and urged media to report in a positive way to sensitise policy level in this regard.

Munmun Gulshan, project theme leader of Action Aid, Bangladesh, suggested a space to be allotted in the newspapers where adolescent health problems and solutions will be published.

She also urged media people to highlight the loopholes of women repression and gender violence related laws and policies in their reports.

A total 20 journalists from four districts including Dhaka, Comilla, Chittagong and Rangamati took part in the workshop.

30 hurt as BNP factions clash at Patuakhali

Altaf's house attacked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 30 people, including two policemen, were injured in a clash between two factions of BNP in the town yesterday evening.

During the clash, the supporters of Patuakhali Municipality Chairman Moshtaq Ahmed also attacked the house of former minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and vandalised five business establishments and a motorcycle

in Titas Cinema area. Later, they set fire to a BNP office at Kathpatti, about one and a half km away from the cinema.

Nine of the injured - Krishak Dal district unit President ASM Abdur Rob, BNP leaders Idresh Mia and Bashir, Jubo Dal activists Suja, SM Touhid, Noman and Ismail and Sub-Inspector Shah Newaz and Assistant Sub-Inspector Shah Alam - were admitted to different hospitals and clinics.

Witnesses and police said BNP leader Moshtaq Ahmed submitted his nomination paper for the forthcoming election from Patuakhali-1 constituency at about 5:00pm yesterday.

After submitting the nomination paper, Moshtaq and his supporters were returning to the party office in a procession. But the procession came under attack in front of Titas Cinema when some supporters chanted slogans against his rival Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, resulting in the clash between the activists of two factions.

Moshtaq's followers also hurled pieces of bricks at the house of Altaf and vandalised business establishments.

Later, at a press conference Moshtaq blamed Altaf for the attack on his procession and demanded a fair investigation into the incident.

When contacted shortly after the clash, Altaf said, "I could not say anything about it right now. I would brief reporters later."

Additional policemen were deployed in different points of the town to avert further clashes.



Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Badruddoza Chowdhury speaks at a press conference at the Baridhara party office in the city yesterday. On his left is LDP Secretary General Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan.

'Introduce FWP to ensure food for Vabodaho people'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a rally yesterday demanded immediate introduction of food for work programme (FWP) for the people of waterlogged Vabodaho to ensure their food and employment.

They said about one million people of Vabodaho situated in the districts of Jessore, Khulna and Satkhira have been remaining waterlogged for years but there is no sign of improvement in their lives due to greediness of some unscrupulous people and negligence of the government as well as political parties.

They further said water stagnates in their houses, agricultural lands, educational institutions, the mosques and temples for years. Poor farmers pass days in hunger, as they do not have jobs to do. Crores of Taka has been spent that benefited some engineers, contractors and political leaders but not the waterlogged people.

Nagorik Sanghati organised the rally in front of the Public Library near

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He also urged all not to make the armed forces controversial. Speaking as chief guest, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka pledged to extend all possible cooperation to the members of the bereaved families of the peacekeepers.

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Fertiliser worth Tk 55000 looted in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least 180 bags of fertiliser worth Tk 55000 have been allegedly looted from a fertiliser shop at Moroil Bazar at Adamdigi in the district in the early hours of Sunday.

A case was filed in this connection. However, police said the investigation is going on but nobody has been arrested till yesterday evening.

Comrade Moni Singh Fair begins Dec 27

DU CORRESPONDENT

A five-day fair will begin at Susang Durgapur in Netrokona from December 27 to mark the 16th death anniversary of Comrade Moni Singh, says a press release.

Comrade Moni Singh was an organiser of the War of Liberation, an adviser to the Bangladesh government during the liberation war and also a hero of the Tonk Movement in Netrokona.

Comrade Moni Singh Mela Celebration Council will organise the fair, where country's politicians, intellectuals, academicians and leaders of different professional movements will take part in various programmes.

Different political and cultural organisations including Communist Party of Bangladesh, Trade Union, Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, Khetmojur Samity, Krishak Samity, Chhatra Union and Jubo Union have also taken various programmes to observe the day on December 31.

\$20,000 for visually impaired children

Asha Menon, managing director of Target Sourcing Services (TSS)/AMC, USA donated 20,000 US dollar for educational expenses of 70 visually impaired children of seven sponsored hostels of Assistance for Blind Children (ABC) for one year, says a press release.

Asha handed over a cheque for 20,000 US dollar to ABC treasurer and president on December 20 at ABC Complex Eye Clinic in Gazipur at a function.

Gift packs and kits bags were also handed over to the children of ABC hostels at the function. TSS/AMC also supported ABC last year with 18,000 US dollar for the same cause.

Asha lauded ABC leadership for the services they provide for overall development of the visually impaired children in Bangladesh.

A total of 154 visually impaired children have so far passed SSC from 7 ABC sponsored hostels since 1980.

Past President Munira Khan, General Secretary Lutfa Islam, Vice President Zakia Doha, Treasurer Raushan Ahmed and ABC President Rahima Asafjah spoke at the function.

Jukta Front won't join any of 2 alliances

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jukta Front will contest the upcoming national election separately without joining any of the two big alliances.

Jukta Front leader and President of Krishak Sramik Janata League (KSJL) Bangabir Kader Siddiqui Bir Ullam said this at a press conference at KSJL party office at Motijheel in the city on Sunday.

He, however, also said they will not nominate any candidate against Khaleda Zia, Sheikh Hasina and Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar to show respect to the immediate-past prime minister, leader of the opposition and the Speaker in the parliament.

"We think the country people want to break free from the ruling of these two mainstream political parties and live their life with dignity," said Kader Siddiqui while justifying their decision.

He also said they will contest the upcoming election once a congenial atmosphere to hold a free and fair election is ensured.

The election would not be acceptable if any big alliance boycotts the election, he added.

Blaming the two big parties for making the environment unstable, he said the two political parties have created the atmosphere ambiguous as part of their ill effort to create obstacles in the way of taking election preparation for other political parties.

He said he would contest in five constituencies, but declined to mention any of the names. KSJL has so far submitted nominations for 90 seats, he added.

An atmosphere to submit nomination papers has been created and that is why they have submitted nomination papers, he said while replying to a question.



Jatiya Party Presidium Member Shah Moazzem Hossain joins BNP presenting a bouquet to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at Hawa Bhaban in the city yesterday.

Govt urged to strengthen local govt bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nari Uddug Kendra (NUK) yesterday organised an orientation and planning workshop in the city with a view to increasing organisational activities at local government level and setting advocacy issue and plan of action for the next year.

In the workshop held at LGED Bhaban, Prof Toyafel Ahmed in his speech said the government should strengthen the Union Parishad and the local bodies.

"The loopholes of the Local Government Act should be identified and the divisional organisations should be reinforced to work properly," he added.

The Union Parishad (UP) members should take steps for bringing changes in the prevailing administrative system if they want to work without intervention of the lawmakers, Prof Toyafel said.

Addressing the members of Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum (BUPF), he said the UP chairmen should first identify the short-term administrative problems and find out the ways to resolve them.

Executive Director of NUK Mashuda Khatun Shefali, Member Secretary of BUPF Ataharul Islam Bulbul, Programme Manager Shahin Sultana and around 200 UP members were also present in the workshop.

Prof DeVoogd completes lecture tour

Professor Timothy DeVoogd of Cornell University, USA, has recently completed a week-long lecture tour in Bangladesh under the auspices of the Asian University for Women Support Foundation, says a press release.

Prof DeVoogd, an advisor to the Asian University for Women (AUW), is a leading specialist in neurobiology of learning and memory in songbirds. He and his partner, Robin Beckhard, are actively engaged in promoting the AUW among members of the US academic community who may consider teaching at the university when it opens its doors in January 2008.

During his stay in Bangladesh, Prof DeVoogd spoke to an audience of over 250 students, physicians and medical faculty at the University of Science and Technology in Chittagong. He also spoke at Chittagong University, Dhaka University and Jahangirnagar University and the Bangladesh Zoological Society.

"I am deeply impressed by the vision and dedication of all those who are planning this university [AUW]. I am confident that colleagues in American colleges and universities will be excited about participating in its teaching and in helping to make it a center of excellence in South Asia," said Prof DeVoogd.

The Asian University for Women is being set up in Chittagong under international auspices through a special charter granted by parliament of Bangladesh.

Distribution of khas land key to agri dev

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Identification and distribution of khas land among the landless peasants is the key to development of agricultural sector in the country, said the speakers at a seminar on Sunday.

The national seminar titled 'Political parties' pledge to include issues of land and agricultural reform in their manifestoes' was organised by Bangladesh Sramajibi Kendra (BSK) at the Women's Voluntary Association auditorium in the city.

In a message to the seminar, Chairman of Unnayan Shamannyo Atiur Rahman said any meaningful change in the poor and ultra-poor's life is not possible without exhaustive land and agricultural reforms.

"But our political parties do not pick up their [poor people's] issues and launch any movement," he lamented.

BSK President Nurul Anwar came up with elaborate data on the country's khas land and said if 12 lakh acre of arable khas land is distributed among the landless and marginalised peasants, rural poverty would be alleviated to a large extent.

Prof Shafique-uz-Zaman of Dhaka University said while most of the developed countries had effected their land reforms, lawmakers here are always disinterested in land and agricultural reforms because they and their men have grabbed the khas lands.

BSK President Nurul Anwar moderated the seminar where Deputy Director of SAMATA Ayub Hossain, Executive Director of ALRD Shamsul Huda and General

Secretary of Bangladesh Krishak Samity Morshed were also present.

Cops record statement of Mirza Abbas' sister-in-law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday recorded a written statement of Mirza Abbas' sister-in-law Masuda for the second time in which she clarified her earlier statement on receiving one bullet by both herself and her husband at a time during a shootout on December 18.

Masuda, injured in a mysterious shootout at her Shahjahanpur residence, in the latest statement said the bullet first touched her husband war commissioner Mirza Khokon's finger then hit her abdomen.

Meanwhile, the police on Sunday appealed to the court to send the pistol, used in the shootout, to the criminal investigation department (CID) for examination, sources said.

The court is likely to grant the permission by today, the police sources added.

When asked whether the licence of Khokon's pistol would be cancelled, the police said they have to wait for CID's investigation report before taking any decision.

WEATHER TODAY

Fall in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather will prevail over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, Met Office said in a forecast.

Slight fall in night temperature is expected over the country.

Highest temperature 28.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and Cox's Bazar and lowest 09.8 degree Celsius at Ihwardi.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:19pm today and rises at 6:40am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity in celsius	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	26.2	16.6	59	44
Chittagong	27.3	16.0	91	62
Rajshahi	25.5	10.1	90	73
Khulna	26.0	13.0	68	70
Barisal	26.6	12.3	80	75
Sylhet	28.0	14.6	100	58
Cox's Bazar	28.0	17.0	71	72