

## 'Unite to protect women's rights'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Karmojibi Nari, a women workers' organisation, yesterday at a rally urged women to

### AL leader Abidur Reza hospitalised



Abidur Reza Khan, a veteran Awami League leader and an associate of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was admitted to Samarita Hospital in the city in a critical condition due to complicated diseases, says a press release.

He is under treatment of Prof MN Alam. A medical board has also been formed for his treatment.

His family has requested all to pray for his early recovery.

form a united platform to protect their rights and resist extremism in the country.

The rally was held at the city's Muktangon to mark the Women Repression Resistance Day.

President of Karmojibi Nari Shirin Akhter in a written speech said the women community in the country is divided by politicisation and party interest. Terming the fundamentalist forces as anti-women empowerment, she called upon the women folk to resist them.

Women leaders demanded to stop state violence against women, to cancel the reformed Women Development Policy 2004, to make provision for direct election in reserved seats for women in parliament and to ensure women's security everywhere.

Barrister Amirul Islam, Director of Nijera Kori Khushi Kabir, Executive Director of Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK) Sultana Kamal and Umme Hasan of Bangladesh Jatiya Sromik Jote also spoke.



PHOTO: STAR

Samajik Protirodh Committee forms a human chain at Manik Mia Avenue in the city yesterday demanding direct election to the seats reserved for women in parliament.

## Direct election to JS reserved seats demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred women formed a human chain at Manik Mia Avenue in the city yesterday demanding direct election to the seats reserved for women in parliament.

Representatives from 31 women's rights organisations and NGOs joined the demonstration under the auspices of Samajik Protirodh Committee (Social Resistance Committee).

The government has not taken any initiative yet to meet the long-standing demand of women for direct election, although the ruling party had pledged before the elec-

tion to meet the demand, said the women leaders. Rather, the government has undermined the women's rights by passing a bill regarding the reserved seats recently only for the party's interest, they added.

"We, the women of the country, will never retreat from our demands for direct election and an increase in the number of reserved seats," said Ayesha Khanam, general secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad.

She regretted that many women are now lobbying the ministers for nomination in the upcoming election to the reserved seats. "They even do not hesitate to pay Tk three or four lakh to get nomination," she added.

The women's rights activists also expressed their grave concern over a series of bombings across the country on August 17.

They called on the government to take effective steps to track down the culprits behind the bomb attacks and stop state-sponsored violence.

The organisations that took part in the demonstration included Ain O Salish Kendra, Sammita Nari Samaj, Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha, BLAST, Bangladesh Mahila Ainjibi Samity, Karmojibi Nari, Mahila Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Mahila Samity, Nari Pakkha, Nari Unnayan Shakti, Brac and Proshika.

## Nat'l biotechnology policy soon: Moyeen Khan

UNB, Dhaka

The government will soon formulate a national biotechnology policy to give a boost to the country's farm output.

Science and ICT Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan said this while was addressing a conference titled 'Biotechnology in Agriculture: Myths and Realities' in the city yesterday.

Dr Moyeen said a taskforce, headed by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, has been formed recognising the importance of the technology.

Moyeen Khan said setting up of National Biotechnology Institute at a cost of five million US dollars is nearing completion. "The entire project has been funded by our own resources, which reflects the government's priority to the technology," he added.

Agriculture Minister MK Anwar inaugurated the daylong conference jointly organised by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (Barc) and the US Embassy in Dhaka.

Forest and Environment Minister Tariqul Islam and Moyeen Khan were present at the conference as special guests.

Barc Executive Chairman Dr M Nurul Alam, First Secretary of the US Embassy David Renz, Prof Emdadul Haque Chowdhury, Dr Nina V Fedoroff and Dr Uttam Kumar Deb also spoke. USDA Regional Director Chad Russell made the keynote remarks on the occasion.

The speakers it is essential to adopt biotechnology in agriculture of the country along with other developing nations for ensuring food security against the backdrop of its increasing population and decreasing farm-

### AUG 21 ATTACK Mahila League observes token hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Mahila Awami League, women wing of the opposition Awami League (AL), yesterday observed a token hunger strike at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city in memory of the martyrs of the August 21 grenade attack.

AL Presidium Member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury urged the people to unite to establish a democratic Bangladesh under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina for resisting the bomb attackers.

She was addressing at the hunger strike programme. AL leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed and Sahara Khatun also spoke.

Later, Sajeda Chowdhury broke the hunger strike offering juice to Mahila League leaders and workers.

lands.

If biotechnology can be widely used in the country, productivity of crops may rise by 20 per cent, they said.

The speakers, however, stressed the need for safeguarding the human health and environment because people around the globe are skeptical about the genetically modified (GM) foods.

They said strong assurance of the safety of public health and environment is needed to make the technology acceptable to all.

They said biotechnology will help the farmers improve food and nutritional security, enhance production efficiency, and empower the rural sector through income generation apart from reducing economic inequality.

MK Anwar said biotechnology can play an important role in crop production throughout the country, as farmlands are shrinking fast for various

reasons, including urbanisation and land degradation.

Emphasising the importance of public awareness, he said the technology should be used sensibly and responsibly to gain public confidence in GM foods.

Describing the biotechnology research in the country still at initial stage, he said the country needs to develop and improve the capacity of biotechnology research to meet the food demand of the growing population.

He urged the US government to extend more support in developing research capacity in this field.

Tariqul said food production has to be raised to meet its growing demand for the country's increasing population. "The appropriate biotechnology will have to be invented and applied to increase the productivity," he added.

He said efforts have to be made to grow crops on infertile and saline lands.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Mahila Awami League observes a token hunger strike at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday.