

Protect interest of working class in election manifesto

Speakers urge political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties should incorporate the issue of protecting the interests of the working class into their election manifesto as there are around six crores voters in the country who belong to the working class, speakers at a roundtable discussion said yesterday.

They urged all working class organisations to be united and take effective measures for creating awareness among the workers about their role in the election.

Shikkha O Paribesh Andolok (SOPA) organised the roundtable discussion on 'The Role of Working Class Voters to Protect their Interests in the National Election' at the Cirdap auditorium in the city where people from all working classes participated.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna, organising secretary of the Awami League, said top leaders of the political parties who make the election agenda, ignore the working class as the leaders of the working class failed to highlight the importance of their issue in general election.

"As many as 35,000 factories and industries of the country have been closed down following the prescription of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), leaving thousands of workers jobless," said Abu Mohammad Jaffikar Azad, president of

Bangladesh Sangjukta Krishak O Khetmajur Samity while presenting the keynote paper.

Harun-ur-Rashid Bhuiyan, SOPA executive director, presided over the discussion and Prof Abdur Rashid, general secretary of Bangladesh Principal Parishad and Rashid-al-Mamun Titumir, executive director of Unnayan Anneshon, also addressed.

Romanian National Day observed

UNB, Dhaka

Enayetullah Khan, Honorary Consul of Romania in Bangladesh, hosted a reception on the occasion of Romanian National Day at his residence in the city on Friday.

Ministers, political leaders, members of the diplomatic corps, leaders of the civil society and different professions, elite of the city, senior journalists and high civil and military officials attended the reception.

Make best use of surface water

Hafiz tells conference

BSS, Dhaka

Resource Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed yesterday stressed the need for controlling the groundwater lifting and making the best use of surface water in day-to-day activities.

"Groundwater depletion is a major problem for water management in Bangladesh and I suggest all to use the surface water, especially the river water, in our day-to-day activities," he said this while he was addressing a conference of the Diploma Engineers Association of Water Development Board (WDB).

With the association president

Mohammad Abdul Matin in the chair, the function was also addressed by secretary of the ministry SM Zahurul Islam, WDB Director General Sharif Rafiqul Islam, President of the Institution of Diploma Engineers' Rafiqul Islam Bhuiyan and General Secretary Ibn Fazal Saifuzzaman.

Hafiz assured the diploma engineers that the present government would take proper initiative to build Water Bhaban within its tenure. He asked all to contribute their best in restoring discipline in the water management.

Dhaka, Islamabad enjoy very close relations

Pak PM tells Bangladesh team

UNB, Dhaka

Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has said Islamabad and Dhaka enjoy very close brotherly and friendly relations and these will be further strengthened with the passage of time.

He said both the countries can share their best practices for the speedy development of the people and region.

Referring to the experience of Bangladesh regarding micro-finance banking, he said Pakistan has learnt a lot from this experience and now micro-financing is moving forward to new heights.

Aziz said parliament plays a vital role in the socio-economic development of the people and stressed the need for promoting relations of the parliamentarians of both the countries for the development of the peoples. He appreciated the increasing engagements of the parliamentarians of both the coun-

tries and described it as welcome development for overall improvement of ties between the two countries.

He said both the countries can share their best practices for the speedy development of the people and region.

Aziz said South Asia has great potential and there is need for promoting people to people contact between the regional countries and cooperation to ensure progress and prosperity of the people of the region.

Aziz said South Asia is also growing fast with about 25 channels on air and more 25 are in the pipeline.

He has learnt lesson from Bangladesh and reducing population and it has achieved population growth rate of 1.9 per cent during the last year.

But he said it is not satisfactory and there is need for continuous efforts for population stabilisation as growing population can negate all gains.

Speaking on the occasion, leader of Bangladesh delegation Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury said Bangladesh was keen to enhance its ties with Pakistani people and government in all fields.

He said permanent exchange of parliamentary delegation is essential for giving new impetus to the existing ties.

Chowdhury said the delegation has come to Pakistan to express sympathy for the earthquake victims. He offered expertise for disaster management.

Chairman Senate Muhammad Soomro and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Sher Afgan were present.

Ershad sets conditions for joining alliance

UNB, Satkhira

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said his party will join only that political alliance which will accept its 12-point programme to jointly contest the next general election.

"JP will announce its decision to form alliance at a party grand rally at Paltan Maidan," he told a public meeting at Satkhira High School ground.

Twelve-point includes holding of upazila elections immediately, setting up of upazila and family courts, maintaining Islam as the state religion and Friday as weekend holiday, and supply of electricity and water to all places of worship and institutions, including mosques, madrasas and temples without charges.

He, however, said his party will separately take part in the next general election if they can gather

enough strength and competent candidates within the next six months.

He said both the BNP and Awami League have failed to run the state as Bangladesh has become champion in corruption after the two parties assumed the power.

Ershad said JP needs to be voted to power again to make Bangladesh free from corruption as he claimed there was no allegation of corruption during his nine-year rule.

Referring to the recent remarks by the Prime Minister and the opposition leader at their public meetings, he said the nation is now frightened as the two leaders are on collision course branding each other as traitors.

"The two parties are now behaving as each other's enemy," the Jatiya Party chief said.

Shamim Ahmad of United News of India (UNI) and Qadir Kallol of BBC have been elected president and general secretary of the Overseas Correspondents Association Bangladesh (OCAB) for 2006.

The elections held at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday was followed by the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Association. Outgoing President Zahiduzzaman Faruque presided over the AGM.

Other office-bearers are Vice-President Farid Hossain (AP), Joint Secretary Rashidul Islam (Radio Tehran), Treasurer Bashudeb Dhar (Statesman, Kolkata, India).

Executive committee members are Ahmed Matiur Rahman (Qalam Weekly, Kolkata, India), Ataur Rahman (The Yomiuri Shimbun, Japan), Hassan Shahriar (Newsweek, USA), Moslem Uddin Ahmed (Gemini, UK), Pan Xiaozhu (Xinhua, China) and Zahiduzzaman Faruque (Kyodo, Japan) ex-officio.

SSKOP emergency meeting tomorrow

An emergency meeting of Sangbadik-Sramik-Karmachary Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) will be held at 11:00am tomorrow at the National Press Club, says a press release.

The meeting will discuss the dallying of the government regarding the publication of gazette notification of 40 percent dearness allowance as declared by the 6th Wage Board.

The central leaders of SSKOP have been requested to attend the meeting.