



Students press onward

By JAGLUL ALAM

The Central Students' Action Committee and the Sramik Karmachari Oikkya Parishad comprising the student and workers wings of the 5-party alliance, the Sangrami Chhatra Jote led by the Bangladesh Jatiyotabadi Chhatra Dal, the student wing of the BNP, and some other political parties have been taking massive preparations to hold a half-day country-wide general strike March 10 with a view to pressing home their 10-point charter of demands.

The situation deteriorated last Thursday when the Central Students' Action Committee brought out a procession in the city in support of the general strike and to encircle the BRTC head office to protest against

the increase of transport fare which is one of the main issues of the program.

The police resisted the procession near Purana Paltan crossing and a student of the Engineering University was beaten severely. He was later on admitted into the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The 8-party alliance led by the Awami League and its student and workers' organs have yet to join the program. Last week the representatives of the 8-party alliance and its students' and workers' wings told Holiday that they were observing the situation and a concrete program would be taken up after evaluating the whole situation.

Meanwhile, the 5-party

alliance comprising five left political parties, the 7-party combine led by the BNP, Freedom Party and Bangladesher Communist League have extended their support for the observation of the March 10 program while views are being exchanged by the organizers of the program with some more political organizations.

The major demands for which the general strike has been called include resisting the government's move for denationalization, resolving the admission and accommodation problems of the students, ensuring employment for the unemployed communities, neutralizing the government-controlled publicity media including radio and television, etc.

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It is gathered that when the Students' Action Committee had decided to announce its program on February 20, the representatives of the Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student wing of the Awami League, had extended its support to the program.

But on February 21, a leader of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, the student wing of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, communicated to the action committee that the 8-party alliance had decided not to observe general strike on March 10 as they believed that such a massive program announced by the students and workers alone would not be successful.

They opined that the program should be announced by the political parties and the role of the students should be confined to supporting the program only.

According to sources, the 8-party alliance led by the Awami League has been playing a deceptive role in respect of the program of March 10.

Some of the leaders of the alliance expressed the opinion that they should observe the situation first to ascertain the feasibility of the program.

They opined that if the program seems to get favorable response from the people, the alliance should join the program with a view to taking a leading role in it.

On the other hand, if the response proves negligible, they should keep themselves aloof to prove that without the participation of the 8-party alliance no major programs could be successful.

It is gathered that Bak-sal, a component of the 8-party alliance which had exchanged views with the pro-movement forces informally, has been advocating for joining the general strike with a view to giving the program a broader base.

The pro-movement forces also exchanged views with the leaders of the Sramik Karmachari Oikkya Parishad comprising the workers' wings of the 8-party alliance.

In course of their discussions, the Skop leaders opined that they would follow the decisions of their parent organizations and would convey their respective stands after discussing the matter with the alliance leaders.

However, the coordination council for resisting denationalization comprising representatives from both the 5-party and the 8-party alliances, may adopt a unanimous resolution to support the call for

ment opportunities, the students have demanded withdrawal of restrictions on employment in government offices and corporations, to fix the age limit for obtaining government services at 30 years and the removal of defense personnel and retired defense personnel from key posts in the administration.

For ensuring better administration at the university level, the students demanded implementation of the 1973 autonomy ordinance and to make the governing and managing committees of the educational institutions free from political influence.

THE MEDIA

They have also reiterated their demands for neutralizing the government controlled media including radio and television with a view to making such media more mass-oriented and credible and to withdraw the system of publicizing one-sided reports of the government and its party.

In the charter of demands, the students demanded supply of books and other materials for the students at subsidized rates.

They also demanded the establishment of primary schools proportionate to the size of the population in the rural areas so that primary education could be available to people of all tiers of society.

The charter of demands of the Students' Action Committee also included immediate resignation of President Ershad and his government and handing over power to a neutral authority; dissolution of the existing parliament to hold free and fair neutral elections; release of all political leaders, and meeting the demands placed by the teachers, lawyers, journalists, and other professional groups.

The students also demanded immediate withdrawal of the increased transport fares and restoration of the previous bus fares throughout the country.