

# Khoka wants DCC under Prime Minister's Office

## Move to ensure better coordination among agencies



JULHAS RIPON

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) needs to go immediately under the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) if it is to ensure better service, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said.

The move would also ensure better co-ordination among different agencies working for developing the city's infrastructure.

"Now, the city corporation works under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development for which it needs to go through many formalities to take decisions and it creates unneces-

sary problems," the mayor said in an interview with The Daily Star yesterday.

The move was also needed to ensure faster decision-making as the capital is growing fast with a lot of problems, Khoka observed.

He said after coming to office in May last year he had tried to restore the city dwellers' confidence in the corporation.

"I am proceeding steadily as over the years the entire DCC administration had almost stopped functioning," said the mayor.

He had set out with long-term goals of improving the waste man-

agement, repairing the run-down roads, eradicating mosquitoes, minimising traffic jam and curbing violence.

Many residents are disappointed with the results, but the mayor said restoring public confidence in 10 months' time is no easy task. He gave an assurance that within 'five to seven months' the city would 'look much better than ever'.

He said his first-year priorities are repairing the broken-down roads, fighting mosquito menace and promoting good management in the DCC.

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleida Zia poses with the recipients of Ekushey Padak 2003 at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium yesterday. Eleven personalities and UNESCO received the award.

## Ekushey Padak for 11, UNESCO

UNB, Dhaka

Eleven personalities and one international organisation yesterday received the Ekushey Padak 2003 from Prime Minister Khaleida Zia at a function at the Osmani Memorial Hall here in recognition of their valuable contributions in different fields.

The award recipients are M Shamsul Huq (education-posthumous), M Ekramul Huq (education-posthumous), Zebunnisa Rahman (education-posthumous), Zobeda Khanam (education-posthumous), Abdul Mannan Syed (research), Al Mujahidi (literature), Anjum Ara Begum (music), Lokman Hossain Fakir (music-posthumous), Khan Ataur Rahman (film-posthumous), Abdul Hamid (sports journalism), Nazimuddin Mostan (journalism) and the UNESCO.

The UNESCO got the award for placing Bangla in a dignified position at the international level by declaring February 21 as International Mother Language Day.

Each awardee received a gold medal, Tk 40,000 and a citation.

The posthumous awards were received by family members of the recipients; the award for UNESCO was received by Wolfgang Vollmann, the country representative of the UN organisation.

Addressing the function, the prime minister said the supreme sacrifice of the martyrs of the Language Movement would be meaningful only when the country's population becomes literate.

"Can the sacrifice of the martyrs SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## Turkey tests US patience, Russia hints at veto use

AFP, Ankara

Turkey was proving a stumbling block yesterday for US hopes of launching possible strikes on neighbouring Iraq from its territory while Russia raised the prospect of using its UN Security Council veto to thwart the Americans plans for war.

The Russians also expressed concern that UN arms inspectors were under pressure to submit reports favouring the US stand and which could serve as an excuse for the eventual use of force.

Arab leaders set a date for a key summit on the looming conflict and Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein gathered his most senior political and military aides together to discuss army and civilian preparations for an eventual war.

Turkey dug in its heels, insisting on a guaranteed multi-billion-dollar financial package in return for its support of the US and has rejected an offer of up to 24 billion dollars in financial aid to offset the impact of a war.

White House spokesman Ari

Fleischer gave the impression that Washington was losing patience with Ankara, when he said: "Turkey's support would be desirable but not essential in a US military operation against Iraq."

The standoff between the two NATO allies has complicated military planning in Washington, prompting warnings from US officials that they might consider altering operational plans on Iraq.

"We have found the figures insufficient and we are not looking favourably at the offer," Economy Minister Ali Babacan told the Cumhuriyet daily in an interview published yesterday.

Without giving figures, Babacan said Ankara had sent Washington a counter-proposal, but no progress towards a compromise had been reached so far.

The spat has led the government to hold up a parliamentary vote on allowing the United States to deploy combat troops in Turkey ahead of a possible two-pronged attack on Iraq, from both the north and south.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and his deputy, Yuri Fedotov gave the strongest hint yet that Moscow would oppose US attempts to win UN approval for an attack.

But Russia also urged Baghdad to comply with UN resolutions to disarm its suspected nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes.

Iraq meanwhile accused some Arab countries of refusing to help it, and called on all nations in the region to make a strong stand to prevent a US-led war.

Along with France and China, two of the four other veto-wielding powers on the Security Council, the Russians favour weapons inspections continuing and Fedotov was quoted by the ITAR-TASS news agency as saying they would not support a resolution authorising the use of force.

Ivanov, in an interview with the Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera, appeared to go even further

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## President asks journalists to work without fear or favour

UNB, Dhaka

Journalists should provide correct information without fear or favour and make constructive criticism of the government and the opposition, President Iajuddin Ahmed said yesterday during a breakfast meeting with members of the Commonwealth Journalists' Association (CJA) at Bangabhaban.

"It's a pleasure to see journalists SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Pakistan air chief killed in plane crash

AFP, Islamabad

The head of Pakistan's air force, his wife and four top officers were killed Thursday when an air force plane crashed in foggy weather in mountains near Pakistan's north-west border with Afghanistan, killing all 17 passengers and crew.

The F-27 twin turboprop Fokker came down just before 8:30am (0530 GMT) in mountains near the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) town of Kohat.

Ali, 55, and his companions were heading to Kohat air force base for the annual inspection ceremony, air force spokesman Air Commodore Sarfraz Ahmed Khan said.

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## VOICE OF THE TRIBES



A tribal woman shouts slogans during a demonstration demanding primary education in their mother tongue yesterday. More than 200 activists of the Hill Students Council (HSC), a student organisation of the Chittagong Hill tracts, took part in the protest.

PHOTO: AFP

## Freedom of speech must to uphold democracy

### McKinnon tells CJA conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and many other Commonwealth countries 'must be serious about protecting the freedom of speech' if they want to strengthen democracy, Commonwealth Secretary General Donald C McKinnon has said.

"Preventing journalists from reporting the facts does not only deny citizens the right to know, it undermines the democratic dialogue which is at the root of social progress" he told a session of the Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA) conference in the

city yesterday.

McKinnon said Bangladesh media is playing a key role since the restoration of democracy in 1991, exposing corruption and drawing attention to environmental and public health concerns. "But despite these advances, much remains to be done."

"You cannot create a strong democracy if people are not allowed to express their views about what makes a democracy strong," he said. Every time a journalist is put in prison, citizens are 'robbed of their voice'.

The Commonwealth secretary

general said that only fair election, effective opposition and strong parliament, independent judiciary, strong and effective oversight bodies -- auditor general, electoral commission, human rights commission -- are not enough for democracy. If there are 'strong restrictions on what the press is allowed to report, you are not there yet,' he added.

McKinnon said freedom of expression is not only a fundamental human right, it is also an effective tool for driving social and economic change.

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## NAM conference begins with a swipe at West

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Western nations were attacked yesterday for "racist" policies in the war against terrorism as the 114-nation Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) began a conference expected to be dominated by the Iraq crisis.

Rich nations lectured developing countries on alleged human rights violations but "acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of related intolerance" were growing in their own backyard, said host Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar.

He voiced concern that political parties, which based their ideologies on racial superiority, racial discrimination or ethnic exclusivity, were gaining popularity in rich nations following the terrorist attacks on the United States.

"It would seem that the fight against terrorism has brought out the worst racial impulses in these countries, which is now manifested in their policies established in the aftermath of September 11, including those which can be considered to be racial profiling," Syed Hamid said.

A draft of the final document to be adopted at the NAM summit next

week, obtained by AFP, says terrorism "cannot be attributed to religion, nationality or civilisation."

Most member states are developing countries without international clout of their own, but many are also key players in the US war on terrorism -- with NAM's roll-call stuffed with countries from the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The movement, set up during the Cold War as an alternative to the Eastern and Western power blocs, also includes in its ranks 50 of the 57 members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), to which Malaysia belongs.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, who takes over the NAM chairmanship, has called a special "informal" OIC meeting on Iraq for immediately after the two-day summit that begins on Monday.

He has made it clear that he will attempt to steer the NAM into declaring strong opposition to the US threat to attack Iraq, which he says is a "primitive" response to the task of disarming President Saddam Hussein's regime.

An invasion of Iraq will simply add to the perceived oppression of

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 21		5-57 pm
Feb 22	6-28 am	
Prayer Timings		
Feb 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	6-05
Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-02	6-08
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		