

## Govt 'welcomes' AL 'willingness' to join JS

REZAUL KARIM and REAZ AHMAD

The government has taken a positive note of Awami League's 'willingness' to join parliament session and appreciated the main opposition party's move.

Addressing a rally in the city on Sunday, acting AL chief Abdus Samad Azad 'clearly indicated' the party would join parliament session. He however did not specify when they would do so.

In response, BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told some newsmen yesterday that he welcomed the statement of the AL leader.

"We want the main opposition party to come to parliament and speak out whatever they have got to say. The opposition would be given adequate opportunity to speak on the floor of the House," Bhuiyan said.

He claimed that because of the Opposition's absence from the House, parliamentary standing

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## BADC saddled with redundant staff

### 2,400 draw salary for no work

REAZ AHMAD

With the private sector taking over much of its work, the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) is now over-staffed by about 2,400 employees.

One of the largest public sector unit, the BADC has now 9,200 staff on its payroll. But a government assessment three years back concluded that the organisation can run with only 6,800 staff as its work-

load has decreased over the years.

BADC Chairman Badre Alam Khan told some newsmen yesterday that the corporation counts Tk 10 crore every month as salary against its annual income of Tk 9 crore only.

"We badly need immediate restructuring," the chairman expressed.

He said in addition to production of seeds, marketing of fertiliser and

expansion of irrigation were two other key areas where the BADC had once played a vital role. Over the years, fertiliser business had gone to the private sector, while other government agencies like the local government engineering department (LGED) and the water development board (WDB) emerged as irrigation facilitators, Khan explained.

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Nritya Shilpi Sangstha (the Dancers Association of Bangladesh) brought out a colourful procession in the city marking the International Dance Day yesterday.

## Cry about metro govt may end in whimper

NAZMUL ASHRAF

The concept of metropolitan government is again being talked about with the election of new mayors in Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi cities although all past attempts to this end ended in futility.

All the three mayors-elect are now favouring the metropolitan government, which Dhaka's outgoing Mayor Mohammad Hanif tried to put in place.

Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Dhaka's mayor-elect, has already

seconded his predecessor's demand for a metropolitan government. Two other mayors-elect, Shaikh Taiyebur Rahman of Khulna and Mizanur Rahman Minu of Rajshahi, also share Khoka's proposition.

They say they would pursue the BNP-led coalition government, the party they belong to, to institute metropolitan administrations in their cities.

"The metropolitan government does deserve consideration. It sounds logical," Khoka said to The Daily Star last night. The new mayor,

who along with two others are due to be sworn in on May 5, added that he would take up the issue with the government soon.

Asked to elaborate, the mayor-elect said he would basically try to

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## EC wants independence, drafts new proposal

NAZRUL ISLAM

The Election Commission (EC) has drafted a fresh proposal that envisages independent functioning of the quasi-judicial body, free from 'influence' of the executive.

The four-member body sits Thursday to discuss the draft proposal, which would be "formally placed before the government sometime soon," according to a senior EC official.

Bitter experience of the October 1 general elections and the just held city corporation polls in Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi has prompted the EC to draft the proposal, he said. "Independence of the commission would not only strengthen the electoral process but also help restore public confidence in the constitutional body."

The election commissioners, high officials of the EC and legal experts on special invitation are expected to attend the meeting and review the pro-

posal, a source at the EC Secretariat said.

Just before the elections to the eighth Jatiya Sangsad, the EC brought reforms proposal, which was implemented under a presidential promulgation during the caretaker regime and later ratified by the parliament.

The Representation of People Order (Amendment) 2002 empowered the EC to formulate election-related rules.

However, the order does not ensure independent functioning of the EC Secretariat and therefore is not enough to conduct elections credibly, the election commissioners now feel.

According to EC officials, the new proposal has been modelled on the Indian Election Commission, regarded as one of most credible electoral bodies in the world. There will also be reference to the electoral system of the

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## Priest murdered at temple in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, CHT

Two persons, one of them a Hindu priest, were killed and another person was injured in separate incidents in the Khagrachhari hill district in last two days.

Madan Gopal, 45, priest of Radha Madan Ashram in Manikchhari Upazila was stabbed to death by a gang of criminals at the temple Sunday night, police sources said.

The criminals also looted a gold statuette from the temple.

Temple authorities said the murder of the priest was a sequel to a dispute over tolls demanded by some criminals. The priest had refused to give in to their demand.

The police arrested one Sanwar Hossain on suspicion.

The Hindus in Khagrachhari brought out a protest rally after the murder and demanded punishment to the culprits.

In a separate incident, an activist

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## Four children rescued, trafficker arrested



PHOTO: STAR

Close call...children now with their mother at their Balur Ghat residence in the city's Lalbagh area after they were rescued from traffickers yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Lalbagh police arrested an alleged child trafficker and rescued three unconscious girls and a boy while they were being smuggled out of the city on Sunday night.

Local people caught Mohammad Ramzan, 40, in front of the West End School at Azimpur. He was going on a rickshaw with the four kidnapped children at around 9:30pm Sunday. The children were abducted from JN Saha Road at Lalbagh.

When Ramzan was crossing the West End School with the unconscious children, some local people became suspicious and stopped the rickshaw he was travelling on. As he could not give any satisfactory answer about the kids, the people confined him and informed the police.

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## Target Nagar Bhaban

### Front organisations of BNP want the pie

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Activists of the ruling party's front organisations are already doing 'their homework' at the Nagar Bhaban, visiting different departments and exploring possibilities of financial gains as soon as the new mayor takes over, possibly in the first week of next month.

Sources at Nagar Bhaban said the 'new visitors' are often accompanied by leaders of Jatiyatahadi

Sramik Dal, workers' front of BNP, based there. These leaders and their followers are now found 'interfering' in activities of the corporation.

These visitors might eventually pose the same problem as happened with the 'five star' and 'seven star' groups a couple of years ago, they feared.

"If the new mayor is not strict enough with this bunch of hoodlums, the same problem is sure to surface again and it will cripple the Nagar

Bhaban," said a top DCC official.

Another top official said there are instances left by activists of the immediate past ruling party. Among many other challenges, tackling the 'hoodlum problem' will be one of the biggest the new mayor will have to face. If he can tackle it he will be able to run the DCC smoothly.

"The new mayor will not have much in hand to spend, so he will

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