



Children offer prayers at the grave of national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam on the Dhaka University campus on his 104th birth anniversary yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# AL's joining budget session depends on govt attitude

 Deputy opposition leader tells **The Daily Star**
**NAZRUL ISLAM**

Participation of the Awami League (AL) in the upcoming budget session of the Jatiya Sangsad depends on the ruling alliance's attitude to the opposition, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid said.

"It depends on the ruling parties' attitude. We have yet to decide on the issue," Hamid said in an interview with **The Daily Star**.

"We've to lodge protests if the government places an anti-people budget," he added.

Will the opposition legislators resign en masse if the current trend continues?

"Resignation is not the ultimate solution."

"We'll continue our protest in and outside the parliament and let the people know that the government has lost legitimacy to run the



Abdul Hamid

country," he said.

It is the common man who will decide whether the government will continue in power or be toppled through a mass movement,

Hamid said.

The AL boycotted the previous session on the opening day protesting against the switching off of the microphone of the leader of the opposition.

After walking out of the House, the AL lawmakers threatened the government with non-participation in the budget session that begins on June 10.

Hamid said: "The Jatiya Sangsad will be effective once the government changes its stepbrotherly attitude towards the opposition, ensures opposition lawmakers' participation in development activities and helps the speaker run the House as per the constitution, the Rules of Procedure and parliamentary conventions."

Without tolerance, democracy cannot flourish and parliament

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

Four test tube babies were born at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital on Friday and Thursday. Their mother is doing fine, but the babies, placed in incubators, are at risk. The mother earlier gave birth to seven children, but two of them died from hereditary disorder.

**CPD**

## Dialogue in N'ganj today

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

A National Policy Review Forum meeting will be held in Narayanganj today.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), The Daily Star and Prothom Alo are co-organising the meeting at the Narayanganj Press Club.

CPD Chairman Prof. Rehman Sobhan will deliver the introductory speech while Motiur Rahman, editor of the Daily Prothom Alo, will deliver the opening speech.

Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy, chairperson of Narayanganj Pourashava will speak as chief guest and President of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association Monjurul Huq will preside over the meeting.

Prof. Dr AKM Atiqur Rahman of North South University will read out the taskforce report.

Economists, university academics, government and non-government officials, business men, journalists and representatives from various social organisations will take part in the discussion.

A taskforce had earlier identified priorities and recommended suggestions on policy issues in the run-up to the last general elections.

## S Asian media conference opens in city

**AFP, Dhaka**

Hopes for peace in South Asia are high amid recent moves by India and Pakistan to restore normal ties, a regional meeting of journalists here was told yesterday.

"After a prolonged stand-off between India and Pakistan, the ice seems to be melting, even though the causes behind the animosity and conflict continue to persist," Imtiaz Alam, secretary general of the Pakistan-based South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA), told the opening session of a two-day conference.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



From left: LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil and Workers' Party leader Rashed Khan Menon at the South Asian Free Media Association conference in Dhaka yesterday.

**PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi**

Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee missed out on returning to the corridors of power when Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee expanded his cabinet Saturday night, inducting seven new faces. But Mamata still appears to be in with a chance to stage a comeback.

The most talked-about element in Vajpayee's reshuffle of his ministry -- the eleventh since he assumed power in October 1999 -- was the drama leading to non-inclusion of Mamata and her party colleague Sudip Bandopadhyaya in the cabinet.

After the reshuffle at the Presidential Palace here, Vajpayee told reporters that talks were on to persuade Mamata to rejoin his government and for that he would soon effect a "minor" expansion of the ministry.

Mamata, who stayed out of the

cabinet to protest Vajpayee's decision to induct Sudip without consulting her, is now expected to come here for consultations with the prime minister after he returns on June 4 from his overseas tour beginning tomorrow.

In fact, Vajpayee reportedly asked Mamata to fly to Delhi yes-

terday for discussions to sort out the problem arising out of the decision to give a ministerial berth to Sudip.

The Trinamool Congress chief reportedly conveyed to Vajpayee that there was no need for hurry and the matter can wait till his return from foreign tour.

Asked whether the BJP wanted to split Trinamool Congress by deciding to induct Sudip in the cabinet, Vajpayee said "there is no intention to break the party. On the

contrary, we want to give more representation to it (in the cabinet)."

Mamata and Sudip were among the founders of Trinamool Congress in 1997 after breaking from Congress. But the two have fallen apart over differences on the issue of quitting Vajpayee's government in February 2001 and India's ruling BJP-led alliance in the wake of a news portal's expose of corruption in defence purchases.

Mamata, the then railway minister, had resigned from ministry demanding Defence Minister George Fernandes' resignation in the wake of the expose and joined hands with Congress to fight assembly polls in West Bengal in March 2001.

After Trinamool's unimpressive poll showing, Mamata again veered away from Congress and returned to the BJP-led alliance.

But even after patching up with

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## Non-payment of dues

# BPC scraps Biman's credit privileges for jet fuel purchase

**UNB, Dhaka**

be given after every six months only if the state-run BPC can make profit.

The rebate will be calculated keeping only 20 per cent of the profit margin of BPC -- that is the difference between the total cost of import and supply, and the selling price.

Following a dispute between Biman and BPC authorities over the previously unpaid rebate, a four-member joint committee had been formed to resolve the matter, said an official.

"After the committee submits its report on the rebate dispute, a procedure will be sorted out to enable Biman to pay its dues to the BPC," said the official.

Before 1996-97, BPC was a profit-making concern and it used to award 20 percent rebate every six months. From January 1991 to June 1995, Tk 140.61 crore was awarded as rebate to Biman.

"At that time the local sale price was rational, compared to the purchasing cost and Biman was then a loss-incurring state organ," said the senior official.

But in 1996-97, BPC incurred a loss of Tk 427.45 crore that prompted the Energy Ministry to withdraw the rebate.

Biman says rebate amounting to Tk 130.91 crore remained unpaid but BPC put the amount at Tk 77.91 crore.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

## All is not over for Mamata

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SEE PAGE 11 COL 3