

## Hilsa sold at Tk 16,000 in auction

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

If you are willing to have hilsa on your Pahela Baishakh menu, be ready for your wallet to take a hit.

A hilsa weighing 2.2 kilogram was sold at Tk 16,000 at an auction at the wholesale fish market at Mawa, Munshiganj yesterday.

Fishermen netted the hilsa in the Padma near Sureshwar of Shariatpur early yesterday and put it up for sale at the shop of Chhana Ranjan Das.

Buying the fish, trader Goya Nath Das sent it to the capital to make a good profit.

With the Pahela Baishakh, the Bengali new year, just five days away, the prices of hilsa have shot up in the wholesale market.

A pair of hilsa, each weighing a kg, was sold at Tk 8,000 yesterday, around Tk 6,000 more than the price of a week ago. But the small ones were comparatively cheaper. Each 500 gm hilsa was sold at Tk 1,500.

The wholesale fish market is near the pillar number-2 of the under-construction Padma bridge. Some 30,000 pieces of hilsa are traded in the market daily, said traders.



**BELIEVE IT OR NOT... this hilsa, weighing 2.2kg, sold at Tk 16,000 at a wholesale bazaar of Mawa on the bank of Padma yesterday.**

## Blair enters UK election battle with EU warning

AFP, London

Tony Blair was to wade into the British general election campaign on Tuesday, with the former prime minister set to sound a warning about the dangers of leaving the EU.

Blair, who was in office from 1997 to 2007, is to claim Prime Minister David Cameron's planned referendum on European Union membership threatens the British economy.

Conservative centre-right leader Cameron, if he remains prime minister after the May 7 election, has pledged to renegotiate Britain's relationship with the EU and then hold an in-or-out referendum on the outcome by the end of 2017.

Blair was to speak in his former Sedgefield constituency in northeast England, in a first campaign stop this week in support of the main opposition centre-left Labour Party, which he headed for 13 years and led to three general election victories.

The possibility of leaving the EU would create job insecurity and leave a "pall of unpredictability hanging over the British economy", Blair was to say,

according to pre-released extracts from his speech.

"I believe passionately that leaving Europe would leave Britain diminished in the world, do significant damage to our economy and, less obviously but just as important to our future, would go against the very qualities and ambitions that mark us out still as a great global nation."

He claimed Cameron's plan was a "concession" to the right of his party, a "manoeuvre" to win back voters from the anti-EU UK Independence Party and "a sop to the rampant anti-Europe feeling of parts of the media."

"This issue, touching as it does the country's future, is too important to be traded like this."

Blair was to set the issue in the strategic context of an aggressive Russia and the economic rise of China and India.

"Do we really think this is the time in which to put into play our very membership of the European Union, the largest commercial market and most developed political union in the world? And the one on our doorstep?" he was to ask.

## Tabith cleared as DNCC candidate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nomination of Tabith Awal, who is a mayoral candidate in Dhaka North City Corporation polls, was declared legal last night by the Dhaka divisional commissioner after the hearing on a loan default allegation raised by a state-run bank.

But Tabith, elder son of Abdul Awal Minto, will have to wait to launch his election campaign till tomorrow, the day when the hearing will be held on his father's appeal with the Supreme Court challenging a High Court order that upheld the cancellation of Minto's nomination.

Chamber judge of the apex court Justice Hasan Foez Siddique yesterday sent the appeal to a full bench for its hearing on April 9. Rokonuddin Mahmud appeared for Minto, an adviser to the BNP chairperson, during the hearing.

In his appeal, Minto sought directives from the SC's Appellate Division on the Election Commission to accept his nomination and to allow him to contest the DNCC election scheduled for April 28.

Tabith is likely to get BNP support in DNCC instead of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh leader Mahi B Chowdhury if Minto finally fails to compete in the mayoral race, said BNP insiders, referring to the outcome of Khaleda Zia's meeting with Minto's family at her Gulshan residence on Monday night.

## Work takes back seat at secretariat

FROM PAGE 1

was no vacant post in the civil administration. This means, these officials will continue to do the same old job but will be paid more, which many see as "not honourable".

In one of the biggest promotion sprees, these officials were elevated to the rank of deputy secretary, joint secretary and additional secretary. Of them, 231 joint secretaries were made additional secretaries, 299 deputy secretaries were elevated to the rank of joint secretary and 343 senior assistant secretaries to the post of deputy secretary.

The immediate big challenge for the government is to distribute posts amongst them.

At present, the civil bureaucracy is dominated by the administration cadre. Of the promoted officials, 680 are from this cadre of already 5,000 officials. The rest 193 are from 26 other cadres of 27,000 odd officials.

Reactions to the promotion have been mixed. Some officials are happy for themselves but disappointed for their "deprived" colleagues. Others are frustrated that many got the promotion not because of their merit but because of strong lobby.

"I got promotion but these two [of my colleagues] didn't, although they

deserved it," said an official, now posted at the disaster management ministry.

Standing by him was one of his colleagues, who said: "I have been deprived thrice now. This is embarrassing and I am not going to continue with the service anymore."

Several others questioned the method and the basis of the promotion. "There are no specific criteria. Lobby and link with the powerful quarters is the key these days," one of them said.

The picture was similar at different ministries.

Merit and performance are supposed to be the basis of promotion, but political lobbying and loyalty to the ruling party seem to have played a key role in the latest promotion.

There are allegations that a good number of officials, including those known for their links with Jamaat-Shibir, secured promotion through lobby, sources said, a claim this newspaper could not verify.

Officials linked with Jamaat-Shibir maintain so strong a lobby that they always manage to get promotion, although many officials affiliated with BNP politics fail to do so, claimed the sources.

The Superior Selection Board (SSB) headed by Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan prepared the list of officials for promotion after going through their service records and Annual Confidential Reports. Officers facing departmental proceedings are not considered for promotion.

In recent years, whenever a selection process began, potential candidates started meeting influential officials. They also lobbied through ministers and secretaries for promotion.

Some officials at the Prime Minister's Office and top Awami League leaders also work as lobbyist, sources alleged.

Once finalised, the SSB sends the list to the PM for approval. Also being the minister for public administration, she can scrutinise the list and include or exclude anyone.

"Once the list is in the PMO, the officers who are not on it begin to lobby hard for having their names included. This has happened in the latest round of promotion," an official of the public administration ministry told The Daily Star yesterday.

Originally, the SSB had sent a list of 750 for promotion. But when the list came out of the PMO, it had 873 names on it. "Only a few of deserving

officials managed to get on the list," said the official, seeking anonymity.

The civil bureaucracy has turned top-heavy with excessive promotion in the last six years. The Awami League government in its previous tenure gave promotion to about 2,500 officials. And the trend continued in the new term.

A number of officials said the promotion was a payback for the officials who served the "political purposes" of the government before and after last year's January 5 parliamentary elections.

The wholesale promotion will push up the number of OSDs.

Contacted, former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder termed unjustified the wholesale promotion. "The acceptable policy is to give promotion against vacant posts in the interest of the state, not for anyone's personal interest."

He said an official is supposed to have new offices and duties after his or her promotion.

But in the present case, the officials will be doing the same old job which, in a sense, is "disgraceful" for an official, he added.

Senior Secretary to the public administration ministry Kamal Abdul

Naser, who had a key role in giving promotion, claimed the promotion was given on the basis of merit and performance.

"There are specific reasons regarding those who did not get promotion," he told reporters at the secretariat.

Abdus Sobhan Sikder, who went on leave preparatory for retirement (LRP) recently as principal secretary to the PMO, said the promotion was given through proper scrutiny.

There is no scope of creating so many posts, but the officials deserved promotion as they have been serving for 20 years and more, he added.

But there are instances that posts of non-admin cadres remain vacant for years. This discrimination has caused serious resentment among them as many brilliant officers don't get promotion and serve in the same post for even 15 years.

As a result, frustration grips a large chunk of officials after every mass promotion. They are gradually losing interest in discharging their duties, many officials said.

A move to promote officials to the rank of deputy secretary through a mandatory exam was underway. This could stop malpractice and discrimination, but the move has been shelved.

## AL candidates on campaign trail

FROM PAGE 1

campaign only for 21 days ahead of the polling day. The campaign will continue till April 26 midnight as voting will start at 8:00am on April 28.

Tomorrow is the last date for withdrawal of candidacy. The Election Commission will allocate electoral symbols for the candidates on April 10.

Meanwhile, some pro-BNP professionals last night announced formation of the 1001-member "Adarsha Dhaka Gorar Andolon" to work for the party mayor favourites in Dhaka.

Former Dhaka University vice-chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed and journalist leader Shawkat Mahmud have been made convener and member secretary of the platform, said Sayrul Kabir Khan, a member of the BNP chief's media wing.

Annisul Huq, the AL-blessed mayor aspirant in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), kicked off his campaign by offering prayers at his mother's grave at Banani in the morning.

He visited the Bangabandhu Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi, National Memorial at Savar and the martyred intellectuals' memorials at Rayerbazar and Mirpur.

Annisul, a top businessman, at different areas shared his views with reporters on the problems and prospects of DNCC.

He was accompanied by AL leaders and activists, including party Joint General Secretary Dipu Moni.

"For the residents of Dhaka, the most important thing is to make the city green and safe. I would initiate a master plan for turning the capital into a green city within three years," he said at Rayerbazar.

While campaigning at Karwan Bazar kitchen market, Annisul said the city's problems had already been identified and he would now go for the solutions.

Blessed by the AL, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) mayor hopeful Sayeed Khokon started his campaign at the Jatrabari point of Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover.

Son of late AL leader Mohammad

Hanif, the first elected mayor of undivided Dhaka, Khokon said he would dedicate his life to the welfare of city residents, if elected.

"If the Almighty gives me the chance and if you [people] vote for me, I pledge that I would make Dhaka a livable city."

Abdullah AlKafee, the DNCC mayor favourite of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, launched his campaign at the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial at Rayerbazar.

"If I am elected, my main target would be to free the city corporation administration from corruption," he told The Daily Star.

Zonayed Saki, another DNCC mayor aspirant, opened his campaign at the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial at Mirpur. He visited different areas there to woo voters.

"I want to make sure that people get access to the basic utility services," said Saki, coordinator of Gono Sanghati Andolon.

Meanwhile, BNP leader and DNCC mayor hopeful Abdul Awal Minto

yesterday filed an appeal with the Supreme Court challenging the High Court order that upheld the cancellation of his nomination.

Rokonuddin Mahmud appeared for Minto as the chamber judge Justice Hasan Foez Siddique of the apex court sent the appeal to a full bench after holding a brief hearing on it. The full bench will hear the prayer tomorrow.

In his appeal, Minto sought directives from the Appellate Division of the SC upon the EC to accept his nomination.

On Monday, the HC summarily dismissed his writ petition against the Dhaka divisional commissioner's order that rejected his nomination due to a procedural error.

Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Zillar Rahman on April 4 dismissed Minto's appeal challenging the returning officer's decision to cancel his nomination.

BNP-backed DSCC mayor hopeful Mirza Abbas has been facing 60 cases. He is waiting to secure bails from the HC in some cases to start his cam-

paign, Abbas' personal secretary Jahangir Alam Minto told this newspaper last night.

In a statement, Minto said Afroza Abbas, wife of Abbas, will start the campaign today on her husband's behalf.

In the port city, the AL and BNP mayor favourites AJM Nasir Uddin and M Manjur Alam started electioneering yesterday.

**BNP STATEMENT**  
The BNP yesterday in a statement blasted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for extending support to Annisul Huq in an AL meeting at Gono Bhaban and subsequent silence of the Election Commission on the matter.

The party also accused the government of using the administration and Election Commission in favour of it after the BNP decided to back candidates in the city polls.

BNP Standing Committee Member Nazrul Islam Khan in the statement also said though the EC drew criticism from media and other quarters, it seemed to be unshamed.

## Green, clean, healthy

FROM PAGE 1

was something that led me to believe that I too can directly contribute to public welfare instead of just being a sideline critic," Annisul told The Daily Star while explaining the reasons for his decision to contest the election.

"It's only the chance of being a part of public service that prompted my decision," he added.

In the exclusive interview, he set out his priorities and promises to win voters' confidence.

"There are multiple problems that plague our city. Lack of substantial and efficient transportation, road jams, food contamination, lack of healthy public space and low cost housing, mosquitoes, clean city and waste management weigh heavily on my list.

"If elected, I will concentrate on waste management and recycling, introduce

special transportation and public toilets for women, introduce Wi-Fi in public spaces, enhance urban healthcare programmes which will also offer primary healthcare for school going children, ... control noise, air, water pollution and food contamination in markets."

"Problems are all known; it's time to begin the journey to solve the problems now," he said in a written reply to a set of questions sent by The Daily Star.

And how is he planning to do all these? Annisul has a rather simple solution: "The people have to be consulted and have to own the changes they want to make in North Dhaka (DNCC)."

As for the major obstacles, he said, "The corporation has 28 responsibilities and effectively can directly deliver in five areas. For the rest of the areas, intense bridging, [and] coordination are required."

"Unfortunately currently DNCC does not have many powers to exercise except to bridge and coordinate amongst ministries, agencies, service providers etc. But if one is sincere in one's intent, one can turn things around by raising community awareness and by including communities to participate in bettering Dhaka."

Annisul also laid out his plans to deal with the resource constraints.

"... I have listed a number of projects in my manifesto which will set up multiple sustainable methods and generate revenue. 50% of the corporation's budget comprises of grants from donors and other agencies. With time, we can try and change that and build up our own resources," said the former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

He has been doing numerous businesses for around three decades without ever having any visible ties to any political party. Yet, he managed to secure the blessing of the ruling Awami League. How?

"Neutrality and acceptability are things I have earned through hard work in my life and I guess these are the two elements that were considered when I was asked to contest," said Annisul, who in 1986 had started a small business with Tk 84,000 borrowed from his pensioner father. His Mohammadi Group now employs over 12,000 people in as many as 22 fields of business.

And his meteoric rise in life is what he thinks will be the key factor to win votes for him.

"I believe that given my track record and history of rising from the scratch, the citizens will believe me and vote for me

so that I can, as I have done in my life, lived to fulfil my promises," he wrote.

"I hope voters will vote for me, as I stand for hard work and objectivity. I also believe that the time has come to acknowledge people like me who have risen from middle class backgrounds ... and reached a certain level in life through sheer perseverance and honesty."

"My positions as a people's man and an anchor, and then my gradual journey of starting a business, growing it and then finally becoming a business leader will only make people believe in me," Annisul, who once used to be a popular TV anchor, said.

On his wealth statement, in which he mentioned he didn't have any car or house, Annisul said that he had given his house to his three children as heba (gift). And the cars that he uses actually belong to the companies he owns.

## 5 of a family killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Five people, including three women, of a family were killed, and 20 others injured as a bus hit a battery-run easy bike at Selimnagar of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila yesterday.

The dead are Farouque Hossain, 50, his mother Jobeda Bewa, 70, wife Anwara Begum, 45, younger brother Paru Islam, 38, and daughter Lamia Islam, 18. They were easy bike passengers and hailed from Ramdas village of the upazila.

The accident occurred on Rangpur-Kurigram road when the Kurigram-bound bus from Rangpur crashed into the three-wheeler from the opposite direction around 12:45pm. The bus fell into a roadside ditch. Three people died on the spot and 22 others were hurt in the accident, according to police.

Of the injured, two died on the way to Kurigram Sadar Hospital. The other injured were admitted to Rangpur Medical College and Kurigram Sadar hospitals.

## Oppression

FROM PAGE 1

Council yesterday.

The issue of police torture on Bangla daily Prothom Alo's Bauphal correspondent Mizanur Rahman was highlighted in the meeting, held at The Daily Star Centre on Saturday, of the platform of editors of the leading national dailies.

According to the report of Patuakhali Civil Surgeon, marks of injuries and tortures were found on Mizanur's body, and his kidney may have been affected a well.

The meeting, chaired by the daily Samakal Editor Golam Sarwar, was told that Mizanur was taken to police custody in a fabricated case and that he was not granted bail.

He was accused of "beating police and hampering government activities". April 15 has been set aside for the case hearing. Hearing for another case of "extortion" is scheduled for April 28.

"This means, there is no possibility of his bail before April 28. He has been confined to jail despite an emergency need for treatment," says the statement signed by the Editors' Council General Secretary Mahfuz Anam, also the editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

It condemned the incident and demanded justice for Mizanur.

Against the backdrop of a rise in oppression on district correspondents, the Editors' Council has decided to hold a meeting with the district correspondents of its member dailies.

The meeting unanimously agreed that the Editors' Council will play a strong role in protecting freedom of the press and help journalists carry out their professional duties.

Apart from Golam Sarwar and Mahfuz Anam, Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman; AHM Moazzem Hossain, The Financial Express; Tasmima Hossain, acting editor of the daily Ittefaq; Khandker Moniruzzaman, acting editor of the Sangbad; Nurul Kabir, New Age; Shyamal Dutt, Bhorer Kagoj; Imdadul Haq Milon, Kaler Kantho; Noyem Nizam, Bangladesh Protidin; Alamgir Mohiuddin, Daily Nayadiganta; AMM Bahauddin, Daily Inquilab; Mozammel Hoque, Daily Karatoa; Dewan Hanif Mahmud, Bonik Barta; and Zafar Sobhan, Dhaka Tribune, were also present at the meeting.