

## Petrobangla cos' autonomy trampled in 10-day span

Boards reshuffled unilaterally, people with conflict of interest inserted

**SHARIER KHAN**  
 Less than 10 days of a government decision on respecting autonomy and financial freedom of all nine companies of Petrobangla-- the energy ministry violated the rights of these companies and their parent organisation. The ministry unilaterally shuffled the boards of three of these companies last week while it shuffled the boards of

six remaining companies back in February. However, there is no legal basis of this act, sources said.

Till recent times, the boards of these companies were predominately formed with Petrobangla's board members, respective company managing directors and some high officials of the energy ministry.

On April 6, the cabinet noted that

although these nine companies legally enjoy autonomy and financial freedom-- their activities have been interfered with and as a result, they were not performing properly. The cabinet decided that from now on Petrobangla and the energy ministry would ensure their autonomy and financial freedom.

In this restructuring, the ministry brought in a BUET teacher and two

senior assistant secretaries and appointed them as directors in these companies. In addition to that, it appointed as directors two businessmen belonging to private companies working in the same sectors dealt with by two Petrobangla companies. "This is unprecedented and ridiculous," commented a source.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Army personnel man a water tanker at a pump house of the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) in Fakirpool yesterday in the wake of irregularities that led to acute shortage of water.

## 'Mauled' army sergeant dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army sergeant Mohammad Azimul Awal, allegedly beaten up severely by policemen at the Sangsad Bhaban premises on Thursday, died at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Dhaka yesterday.

Awal, 34, was an anti-aircraft gunner of 6th air defense artillery battalion based in Mirpur. While returning with his colleague after an official patrol, he was talking with some women at the Sangsad Bhaban at 7:00pm Thursday.

A police team caught him and took him to a police box where he was severely tortured by the policemen. After an hour when he fell ill,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Water supply in criminal clutch

WASA staff's laid-back, corrupt approach makes things even worse

M AMINUL ISLAM

Hoodlums and corrupt, callous staff reign supreme at pump houses of the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA), leading to water crunch in the city.

In some areas, local hoodlums pressure the pump house employees to divert the direction of water towards their houses or those of their

'big bosses', said a top official of WASA. Besides, employees at the pump houses themselves do not do their job and look for quick money through illegal means, he added.

"One pump supplies water in two to five directions and for each direction water lines connected with the pump have locks. Pump house employees are supposed to control those locks so that water goes in

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## Unocal protests move to award gas field to Niko

STAR REPORT

US oil giant Unocal yesterday officially protested a government move to award an unexplored gas field to a Canadian company, Niko Resources, in the name of marginal gas field development.

Threatening arbitration, Unocal said the move violated its Production Sharing Contract (PSC) for Block 12 with Petrobangla. The unexplored gas field, Chhatak East, is located in Block 12 but was not given to Unocal as it was marked 'ring-fenced' or reserved by Petrobangla.

In a letter to the energy ministry, Unocal said if the government wanted to open up this area for exploration and development, it should get priority as the company was working in the areas surrounding the gas field.

Referring to Article 6.5 of the PSC, Unocal said as per the agreement it

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## Armed men beat up shopkeeper

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army men beat up a shopkeeper following an altercation over purchase of a pre-paid mobile phone card yesterday.

Witnesses said an army team travelling in an official vehicle stopped at a shop at Madhya Badda

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Scientists spot SARS virus

STAR REPORT

The World Health Organization (WHO) yesterday announced that a new pathogen, a member of the coronavirus family never before seen in humans, is the cause of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The speed at which this virus was identified is the result of the close international collaboration of 13 laboratories from 10 countries. The final confirmation came yesterday and the virus has been named SARS-virus, an official WHO release said yesterday.

"The pace of SARS research has been astounding," said Dr David Heymann, executive director, WHO Communicable Diseases Programmes who earlier communicated to The Daily Star through e-mail about the progress of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

## US shooting spree kills four more

STAR DESK

At least four people were killed and several others wounded yesterday by gunshots near the government buildings in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, the second such incident in as many days, a hospital official and witnesses said.

US troops fired on a crowd from the rooftops of the buildings, several witnesses told AFP. One of the wounded, an Iraqi policeman, said police at a station a few hundred metres from the government buildings had opened fire to disperse looters trying to rob a bank.

Meanwhile, the death toll in

Tuesday's shootings near the same buildings rose to 15 with 28 wounded, according to hospital sources.

US forces admitted partial responsibility for Tuesday's incidents, when witnesses also said American troops fired on a crowd, admitting yesterday that they had killed "around seven" of the victims.

"Fire was indeed delivered from coalition forces, it was lethal fire and some Iraqis were killed as a result, we think the number is in the order of seven and we think there were some wounded as well," said Brigadier General Vincent Brooks at US Central Command's war base in Qatar.

Yesterday, an AFP journalist saw two bodies arrive at the city's Al-Zahrawi hospital, where a doctor said eight people were also wounded. "Four bodies have just been brought in," Dr Riyadh Hamdi said.

Witnesses told AFP that US troops stationed on top of the government buildings had opened fire, but a US army spokesman would only confirm that an incident had taken place.

An Iraqi police officer, who had only just resumed duties after the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime last week, said his men had intervened in a bank raid when the Americans started shooting.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## Pro-war leaders at Athens summit spark protest

AFP, Athens

Dozens of people were arrested yesterday following scuffles at an anti-war march as protesters labelled as "butchers" the pro-war leaders of Britain, Italy and Spain who are in the Greek capital for an EU summit.

With the war in Iraq winding down, young communists and anti-globalisation activists massed in the city centre, partly cordoned off by a 10,000-strong police force, to denounce what they called the US occupation of Iraq.

Police estimated the turnout at 3,000 people, Greek media at double that figure -- a far cry from the mass anti-war rallies of recent months which drew several hundred thousand into the streets of Athens.

About 100 hooded and masked youths on the protest sidelines hurled Molotov cocktails and other objects at the British, French, Italian and US embassies and several banks.

Police fired tear gas into the air to scatter the troublemakers, and made dozens of arrests, before the demonstrators marched on, cough

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



PHOTO: AFP

Demonstrators clash with riot police in front of the US embassy in Athens during the EU summit yesterday. Scuffles broke out in the Greek capital at an anti-war march called to protest the presence of pro-war leaders from Britain, Italy and Spain for the EU summit.

## Hosts bow out, India in final

SPORTS REPORTER

It was another day of positives for Bangladesh despite Khaled Mahmud's men going down fighting against India by four wickets in the TVS Cup tri-nation tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Defending a modest total of 207, Bangladesh gave the under-strength India team a real scare before they laboured to 208-6 in 42.5 overs. But at the end of the day the hosts felt another 30-odd runs could have

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1