

TO  
**People's Right to Know**

## Titas Gas to abolish posts of meter readers, supervisors

### New organogram drafted to curb rampant graft

**KAILASH SARKAR**

A new organogram for Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Ltd has been prepared abolishing about 200 posts of meter readers and supervisors following discovery of large-scale corruption in the organisation.

The new organogram proposes 3,481-strong staff for Titas instead of previous 3,622, curtailing the number by 141.

Sources said the posts of meter readers and supervisors would be eliminated for their involvement in corruption and with a view to curbing further graft. Instead, engineers would be tasked with the meter-reading job.

A committee comprising existing and former officials of Titas has prepared the draft organogram with assistance from the Taskforce members and a number of experts.

Committee sources said they would submit the draft to the government for approval very soon.

Titas high-ups and the Taskforce sources said the proposed draft suggests appointment of more technical staff reducing the size of general section.

Besides, it has also proposed to reduce the number of luxurious vehicles and increase vehicles for the utility services.

The sources said the Taskforce set up at the Titas Gas building has identified problems in the existing organogram and the staff involved in massive corruption. Following the Taskforce's recommendations and advice, the authorities have decided to bring changes to the organogram.

According to the sources, the committee has suggested doing away with number of meter readers and supervisors who appeared to be the most corrupt officials.

Currently, Titas has 80 meter readers and 125 supervisors.

According to the new organogram, Titas engineers and officials would read meters and newly appointed contractors would carry out the duties of supervisors.

**SEE PAGE 15 COL 4**

## Indo-Bangladesh games to help expand ties: CA

**UNB, Dhaka**

As Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games got off to a gala start here yesterday, Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed hoped such camaraderie in the sporting arena will also help expand relations in other areas between Bangladesh and India.

The head of the caretaker government made the remarks while formally inaugurating the five-day long Second Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games 2008 at Bangabandhu National Stadium amid a euphoric mood among the athletes and spectators from West Bengal and host Bangladesh.

He hoped that Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games would open up new horizons in attaining skill in sports by athletes of the two countries.

Players of the two countries will strengthen the bond of friendship by coming closer to each other through this competition. Besides, they will create a new chapter of success in the international sporting arena through combined efforts, the CA told his audience.

"In the era of globalisation, we will have to flourish also in sport arena alongside flourishing of education, culture, industry and economics. New example of success will have to set up in the sport

**SEE PAGE 2 COL 5**

## Fahim frontrunner for Pak premier post

### Coalition partners seek to thrash out choice

**AFF, Islamabad**

Pakistan's two biggest opposition parties sought to thrash out their choice for premier yesterday after agreeing to form a coalition government that could drive President Pervez Musharraf from power.

Ex-premier Nawaz Sharif and the widowed husband of slain opposition leader Benazir Bhutto said their parties, once bitter rivals, would join forces after trouncing Musharraf's allies in elections earlier in the week.

Officials from both parties said the frontrunner for prime minister was Makhdoom Amin Fahim, the widely respected vice president of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

A senior PPP official said Bhutto's widow, Asif Ali Zardari, and Sharif "discussed the name of Makhdoom Amin Fahim as the future premier" during their meeting late Thursday.

"It is expected that he will get his party's nomination today," the party official told AFP.

The proposed alliance between the parties brings them nearer the two-thirds majority they would

**SEE PAGE 15 COL 4**



Makhdoom Amin Fahim



Mugdho, 13, is being taken to the Ekushey Book Fair yesterday. The boy is now home schooled. His keen interest in fiction inspired the guardians to take him to the fair.

## 42 artefacts return from Paris today

### 185 pieces to be put on display in Dhaka

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Forty-two artefacts from Bangladesh sent to Paris for an exhibition at Guimet Museum are being brought back today.

A cargo flight of Air France carrying the artefacts will reach Dhaka airport early this morning, cultural affairs ministry sources said.

The archaeological masterpieces will then be brought to the National Museum under tight security.

The government is going to hold an exhibition of 185 artefacts including those 42 in Dhaka next week.

Meanwhile, a committee headed by Cultural Affairs Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury has been formed to check whether the artefacts brought back are the ones that were sent to Paris on December 1 last year.

Under a cultural exchange agreement, the government was to send 187 ancient artefacts to Paris for exhibition. But two of those -- ancient statues of Vishnu -- were stolen from the cargo house of Dhaka airport on December 21.

The government then decided not to send any more artefacts to Paris and requested the Guimet museum authorities to postpone the exhibition.

Sharful Alam, secretary of the

**SEE PAGE 15 COL 6**



HAMID MIR From Pakistan

## US decides to respect wishes of Pak voters

The world super power has now decided to respect the wishes of Pakistani voters expressed on February 18 polls.

The US government has finally given a go-ahead to the two main poll victors to resolve all the issues including that of deposed judges according to the wish of people.

US diplomats have met some of the top leaders of PPP and PML-N in last two days and conveyed that restoration of deposed judges is an internal issue of Pakistan and the US will not interfere in any internal political or legal issue of Pakistan.

**SEE PAGE 15 COL 7**

## Slaughtered sick chickens on sale at city markets



Chickens about to die from diseases are hurriedly slaughtered and hung up for sale at city markets. Hoteliers are their main consumers. The photo was taken from Kaptan Bazar.

**SHAMIM ASHRAF**

A number of unscrupulous poultry sellers in city markets have been putting members of the public at risk of avian flu infection by selling slaughtered sick chickens at low prices.

Prime customers of these pre-slaughtered chickens are makeshift roadside diners, street vendors of cooked food and caterers who deliver food to offices or messes for the low-income group, said a few poultry traders seeking anonymity.

Although no case of human infection has so far been detected, the handling of sick birds without protective gear pose a great threat of spreading the deadly virus as the avian flu, commonly known as bird flu, spreads mostly through physical contact with the infected birds, said experts.

During a visit to Kaptanabazar poultry market a couple of days back in the morning, this correspondent came across a man who was leaving the market after buying two such slaughtered chickens.

Refusing to identify himself, the man said he had bought each chicken for only Tk 30. Considering the regular price of at least Tk 60 apiece, he apparently bought the chickens at a bargain price.

Asked what he does with the chicken, the man without any

**SEE PAGE 15 COL 4**

## Voter listing begins in Dahagram

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur**

Voter registration and work for preparation of national identity cards began in the Bangladeshi enclave of Dahagram Angorpota of Patgram upazila in Lalmonirhat yesterday.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Lalmonirhat Rafiqul Islam inaugurated the programme at Dahagram High School playground, Lalmonirhat army camp in-charge Kazi Monjurul Islam and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Patgram Kazi Abu Taher were present during the inauguration ceremony.

DC Rafiqul said till yesterday at least 4,726 forms were distributed

**SEE PAGE 15 COL 3**

## DIALOGUE WITH BNP EC to wait till HC picks out the mainstream

**UNB, Ctg**

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the Election Commission (EC) is absolutely neutral and there is no reason for it to favour any particular party.

"We will not sit with any party--no matter big or small--unless it is the mainstream and the mainstream of the BNP will be determined by the High court. We will have to wait until then," Huda said.

"The two factions of BNP have locked into infighting and the Election Commission had nothing to do with it. They should either solve their problems themselves or wait for the High Court verdict (in this regard)," he said.

The CEC was talking to the media after seeing the photograph-taking work of voter listing at two centres of Patia upazila under Chittagong-12 constituency.

Asked why the two factions of BNP are not being invited to the dialogue on electoral reforms, Huda said if both the groups were invited, it would be tantamount to favouring the BNP.

"If we do that, then what about the four factions of Jatiya Party, five of Islami Oikya Jote and two groups of Workers Party?" he said, adding that the EC does not want to lose its neutrality by favouring the BNP.

He, however, said the election rules would not be finalised without dialogue with the BNP.

He said the draft voter list would be published by June 30 and the election would be held by December this year as per the roadmap, "even earlier if possible".

The EC will be decentralised

**SEE PAGE 15 COL 3**

## Batters fail, bowlers shine

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful said before the first Test against South Africa that his bowlers have the ability to take twenty wickets but the batting remains a headache.

And after the first day's play at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday both his aspiration and concern remained as true as a red cricket ball in a Test match.

The Tigers fell like a pack of cards on a slow and low wicket for 192 runs and more importantly, the innings like many a occasion, folded just after the tea break. After the batting debacle came the revival when the less illustrious bowlers reduced South Africa to 76-4, giving the half-packed home crowd some satisfaction and hopes of a better tomorrow.

South African vice-captain Ashwell Prince (17) and night-watchman Johan Botha (5) were at the crease when the stumps were drawn for the day.

**SEE PAGE 2 COL 5**



A LOUD HOWZZAT: Bangladesh paceman Shahadat Hossain appeals successfully for a leg-before decision against South Africa opener Neil McKenzie during the first day of the first Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

## DIALOGUE WITH EC AL to demand announcement of poll date

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Awami League (AL) will demand announcement of a date for the next general election at the second-round talks with the Election Commission (EC) scheduled to begin Monday.

"Confusion runs rampant in public mind over the election and its timing. We will ask the Election Commission to announce a date for the polls," AL Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star after a meeting of the Presidium, the highest policy-making body.

Meanwhile, AL Central Working Committee meets today at party President Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi to finalise its proposals to be placed at the electoral reforms table. Outcome of the meeting scheduled to begin at 11:00am would later be shared with the press.

Besides discussing the proposals, the Presidium last night also decided to urge the EC to arrange

**SEE PAGE 15 COL 6**

## Edible oil market volatile for lack of monitoring

**SHAHEEN MOLLAH**

The country's edible oil market has been destabilised for a long time now, causing immense sufferings to consumers, since there is no official regulation controlling prices of the essential commodity.

Although according to a decision taken by a meeting between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refiners' and Vanaspati Manufacturers' Association, prices of edible oil were supposed to be rescheduled every 15 days on an ad hoc basis until further notice, the measure has not been followed through since the first meeting.

In the meantime most retailers and wholesalers of edible oil, middlemen, and oil refiners are hiking up the prices according to their whims, while blaming the international market for it.

Oil traders of Moulvibazar wholesale market in the capital alleged that a section of unscrupulous refiners and middlemen operating between the refiners and wholesalers, popularly known as 'DO traders', are bagging crores of taka in the name of an international price hike of edible oil.

Oil traders said it takes at least 15 to 30 days for imported oil to reach the domestic market since its departure from the point of origin, and the most recent international price hike of edible oil happened last week.

But prices on the domestic market shot up immediately after the news of international price hike reached the wholesale oil markets of the capital and port city Chittagong, although the oil bought for hiked prices has yet to reach the country.

Although the middlemen between the refiners and the wholesalers are quick to raise oil prices as soon as they get news of

**SEE PAGE 15 COL 1**