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## 3 ordinances by this month to empower local govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to promulgate ordinances on local government commission, city corporations and pourashavas by the end of this month aiming to grant more power to the local government bodies.

An inter-ministerial meeting presided by Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Adviser Anwarul Iqbal yesterday finalised the drafts of Local Government Commission Ordinance 2008, City Corporation Ordinance 2008 and Pourashava Ordinance 2008.

"We have finalised the drafts of the ordinances and will send those to the advisory council after March 21 when the chief adviser returns," Anwarul Iqbal said.

He was addressing a press briefing after the meeting at the conference room of Local Government Division.

In the meantime, the drafts would be sent to the law ministry, so that the ministry's task could be

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## Hasina should be treated abroad

Concludes medical board after AL president's admission to hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina was admitted to the city's Square Hospital yesterday, and a panel of seven doctors there unanimously recommended she should be sent to the US for ear treatment.

Prof Mohammad Abu Tahir, Prof Tofail Ahmed, Prof Pran Gopal Dutta, Prof Modasser Ali, Prof MU Kabir Chowdhury, Dr ABM Abdullah and Dr MH Millat examined her for over an hour after her admission in the morning. They concluded there is no alternative to sending her abroad for treatment if she is to avoid permanently impaired hearing.

In another development, the US doctors, who had earlier treated Hasina for the ear injuries she sustained in the August 21 grenade

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Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina entering the city's Square Hospital for admission yesterday.

## ACC sues 7 top RPGCL officials for Tk 11cr graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed two separate graft cases against nine people including seven present and former high officials of state-owned Rupantarita Praktik Gas Company Limited (RPGCL) for embezzling over Tk 11 crore.

One of the former RPGCL officials who have been accused in both the cases currently holds a high rank at Dhaka Wasa (Water Supply and Sewerage Authority).

Abdul Mazed, an assistant director of the ACC, yesterday filed the cases with Khilkhet Police Station under Sections 409 and 109 of Penal Code and Section 5(2) of Corruption Prevention Act 1947.

The ACC in its first case accused eight individuals including six present and former officials of RPGCL-run CNG conversion workshop of causing a loss of over Tk 1.53 crore to the exchequer throughout the period of 1993-2006.

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## Find out ways to put lid on soaring prices

CA asks advisers, agencies; govt mulls edible oil import by TCB, BDR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday directed advisers and agencies concerned to find out mechanisms to keep prices of essentials, especially edible oil, under control.

Sources said the government is weighing options, including importing edible oil through the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Rifles and reducing duty on oil import, to curb the unusual price hike.

Expressing deep concern over the current price situation, the chief adviser directed the ministries to find out the reasons behind the abnormal increase of prices of essentials.

The directive came at a meeting with Finance and Planning Adviser Dr Mirza Azizul Islam, Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman, National Board of Revenue (NBR)

Chairman Muhammed Abdul Mazid and representatives from Bangladesh Bank and edible oil refiners at the office of the chief adviser.

The meeting agreed upon a new strategy but nothing was disclosed because of strategic reasons.

"The meeting has taken specific decisions but I will not tell you that now," Commerce Adviser Zillur Rahman told reporters after coming back to his office.

"We will finalise and disclose the strategies after having follow-up meetings with the government agencies concerned and other stakeholders," he said.

A commerce ministry survey has found that the prices of edible oil increased on grounds of price hike on the international market although no new consignments of edible oil reached the country between February 25 and March 9.

The prices of edible oil rather

decreased on the international market last week but it had no impact on the local market.

Zillur said they are going to take some effective measures immediately to ease the edible oil prices.

He said at the meeting the chief adviser discussed possible measures in this regard.

The meeting considered strengthening the market monitoring system to see if there is any flaw in it, if new intervention mechanism is necessary or the government could forecast the market situation, Zillur added.

Commerce Secretary Feroz Ahmed said the millers and wholesalers are blaming each other for the increasing edible oil price.

"We are monitoring how much edible oil was imported during the last couple of weeks, how much was supposed to be available and how much import is in the

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## Commentary

### Nat'l Security Council: Make ideas public

Secrecy is leading to speculations and unhealthy rumours

MAHFUZ ANAM

I begin with an apology to my readers for not having written for some time.

As reported in the media, in a meeting last Monday, the chief adviser, approved in principle, the idea of forming a National Security Council (NSC). It has also been reported that a draft proposal is to be placed before him within a month. No timetable has yet been set for adopting it.

Talks of forming an NSC came up in the rumour circuit soon after the events of January 11, 2007. In fact a seminar at Radisson, a few months into the emergency, did

have some speakers referring to it in passing. Then, we all thought, it died a natural death as nothing more had been heard about it. Over the last few months, rumour mills have been churning it once again with the first ever concrete information of a meeting at the level of the chief adviser. Since the government has not issued any denial about the veracity of the news, we can safely assume that a meeting on the subject was held and that some sort of an NSC is in the formative stage (Or is it in a far more advanced stage than that?).

Since we know nothing about it, it is not possible for us to comment

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### Myanmar rejects Bangladesh request for gas

AFP, Dhaka

Myanmar has rejected a request to sell gas to Bangladesh to help the country meet its growing energy crisis, saying India and China are its top priorities.

Bangladesh's foreign secretary made the request during a visit Myanmar last month, said M. Tamim, special assistant to the chief adviser.

"They said they would sell their gas to India and China but cannot export gas to Bangladesh at the moment. Myanmar would consider selling gas to Bangladesh only after new discoveries are made," he said.

The decision is a blow to Bangladesh which faces a daily shortage of at least 100 million cubic feet (three million cubic metres) of gas. It needs the fuel to help feed its economy which expanded by a strong 6.6 per cent in the last financial year to June 2007.

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### RIGHT TO INFORMATION ORDINANCE Govt asked to bounce it with politicians

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Welcoming the government initiative to enact an ordinance on right to information (RTI), eminent citizens yesterday stressed the need for discussing the matter with political players who will ultimately implement the law.

A roundtable discussion they were addressing yesterday was told that the ordinance is likely to be promulgated within the shortest possible time, possibly in a couple of months, to ensure public access to information for maintaining transparency and accountability in government and non-government levels.

During the daylong discussion on the draft of 'Right to Information Ordinance 2008', speakers suggested changes to the draft to make the proposed information commission truly inde-

pendent, to ensure protection of whistleblowers, to shorten the list of instances when authorities will be exempted from disclosure of information keeping the exemption for national security concerns intact, and to define specifically the term 'public interest'.

They also underscored wider distribution of the draft and more discussions on it.

The information ministry organised the programme in LGED Bhaban in the capital to get recommendations from the civil society, NGOs, intellectuals, lawyers, journalists, businessmen and other professionals.

The draft of the RTI Ordinance 2008 was prepared by an eight-member committee headed by the joint secretary to the development wing of the information ministry, Kamal Uddin Ahmed, having a

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People queue up at a BDR fair price outlet at Shaheedbagh Park in Old Dhaka yesterday to buy edible oil, as its price differs significantly at the city kitchen markets.

## Twin suicide attacks kill 26 in Lahore

AFP, Lahore

Two huge suicide car bombs ripped through a police building and an advertising office in Lahore Tuesday, killing 26 people and posing a fresh challenge to Pakistan's incoming government.

The deadliest blast demolished much of the eight-storey federal police headquarters in the heart of the eastern city, and the other hit an advertising agency several kilometres (miles) away. Two children were among the dead.

Shortly after the attacks the Australian cricket team said they were cancelling an upcoming tour to Pakistan, due to security fears caused by a wave of violence across the country that has killed more than 600 people this year.

Rescue workers in orange jackets frantically clawed through the debris at the site of the blast at the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), which deals mainly with immigration and people smuggling, an AFP reporter said.

"It was a suicide attack on the FIA office and it was the target," Lahore police chief Malik Mohammad Iqbal told AFP, adding that at least 21 people were killed in the bombing and more than 100 wounded.

Lawyer Wali Mohammed Khan,

who was on the second floor of the building when the explosion happened, said the blast was "so intense that I was literally blown off my chair."

"There was blood everywhere. I also saw mutilated limbs and body parts scattered around the reception area of the building," Khan told AFP.

FIA chief Tariq Pervaz said paramedics were "trying to rescue survivors from under the rubble." FIA sources said that at least 10 employees were among the dead.

The building also housed the offices of a US-trained special investigation unit created to counter terrorism, which was possibly the intended target, security officials said.

Pools of blood and small pieces of human flesh lay scattered on the ground outside the eight-storey building, along with clothes and pairs of shoes that were abandoned by people as they ran away.

The explosion tore off the facade of the building, exposing stairwells down which rescue workers could be seen carrying stretchers. Windows up to two kilometres (just over a mile away) were shattered and several cars set ablaze.

The second near-simultaneous

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## OIC needs reform, new vision

Says Iftekhar

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury has called for reform of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), saying the forum requires a new vision for a new age.

The adviser made the call while talking to the media prior to the plenary meeting of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, yesterday.

Iftekhar said the OIC must be reformed to be better able to deal with the issues of the 21st century, such as poverty alleviation, development, climate change, women's empowerment and a need for knowledge-based skills for the youth.

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## 9 DB men, UP chairman sued for 'crossfire killing'

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Nine members of the Detective Branch (DB) of police and a union parishad (UP) chairman of Bhola were sued yesterday for killing a university student in crossfire in July 2005.

Father of Khandaker Iqbal Hossain Masum, a student of Jagannath University, filed the case with the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, accusing the 10 of killing his son in crossfire.

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque received the case but did not pass any order on the issue.

The accused are DB Inspector Nurul Alam, sub-inspectors (SI) Shafuddin Sheikh, Baduzzaman,

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