

## Gram Sarkar abolished

Advisers okay ordinance

UNB, Dhaka

The council of advisers of the caretaker government yesterday approved the Gram Sarkar (Rescission) Ordinance 2008 abolishing the much-debated Gram Sarkar, the lowest tier of local government.

The Gram Sarkar Act 2003 that introduced the village government will be scrapped through the new ordinance.

The council of advisers at its regular weekly meeting with Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair also gave final approval to the Bangladesh University of Professionals Ordinance 2008 to bring all educational and training institutions of Bangladesh Armed

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## A dangerous livelihood

At steel re-rolling mills, workers' safety is last on the list

PINAKI ROY

The men and women wrap up old tubes, cloth, thick polythene sheets and whatever they have around their legs every day before entering workplace because they know a moment's carelessness might make them disabled forever.

They know very well their 'precautionary' measures would come to little help if a splash of melting metal falls on their feet, but these are everything they could manage.

One of them, Suruj Mia, risks severe burns every day when he along with fellow workers goes near the furnace of the factory.

Pointing to his feet in frustration, he says, "This is all we can do

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



PHOTO STAR

Wrapping their feet with pieces of cloth, polythene sheets and rubber tubes, workers of a steel re-rolling factory at Kadamtoli of Shyampur in the capital gear up for work.

## Release of two top leaders to be discussed in formal talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The issue of release of the former prime ministers Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia will come up during the formal dialogue between the caretaker government and the political parties, LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal said yesterday.

"It (the issue of the two ex-PMs' release) will be on the agenda (of formal dialogue), though it is not being discussed in the pre-dialogue talks," he told reporters while replying to a query at the Secretariat.

At the moment, however, the advisers are working to set the modality of the formal dialogue,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## 5 BNP standing body members back Delwar for EC talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five out of eight BNP standing committee members, who are neither in jail nor expelled by its detained chairperson, asked the Election Commission (EC) yesterday to invite Khandaker Delwar Hossain as the legitimate representative of the party to the electoral reform talks with it.

The request came in form of an official letter to the EC from the five standing committee members on the last day of deadline set by the commission for two feuding factions of the party to reconcile.

A delegation of the faction loyal to Chairperson Khaleda Zia handed over the letter signed by the five to the EC yesterday afternoon, as the 72-hour deadline for reunification came to an end.

The delegation at a meeting with the EC argued that their faction is now the mainstream of BNP deserving the commission's invitation to the electoral reform talks, since five out of the eight available undisputed standing committee members endorsed Delwar-led pro-Khaleda faction as legitimate.

Out of the 12 members of BNP standing committee, six who are

not in jail including Delwar are Khaleda loyalists; three are in jail accused of corruption and other crimes; and three are the top leaders of the rival faction led by former finance minister Saifur Rahman, with one of them being expelled by the detained chairperson right before her arrest.

Yesterday's letter of Khaleda loyalists also urged the commission not to portray BNP as divided, although the delegation leader Nazrul Islam Khan said after the meeting that a discussion is on for reunification, adding that it is

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## MIG-29 CASE

Charge-framing hearing deferred to Apr 27 as Hasina still sick

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Special Court yesterday deferred the hearing of charge framing in the MIG-29 purchase graft case against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and six others to April 27 as she was not produced before the court because of illness.

Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina was admitted to the city's Square Hospital on Saturday for the second time. Earlier, she was admitted to the same hospital on March 12 and discharged on March 30.

At the beginning of court procedure yesterday morning, Chief

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## Rail line to link Dhaka with London by this year

STAR REPORT

Rail enthusiasts with a sense of adventure and 23 days to spare will be able to travel by train from London to Dhaka, the Bangladeshi capital, when a new link opens later this year, reports The Sunday Times yesterday.

The 7,000-mile Trans-Asian railway will follow one of the old Silk Roads through Istanbul, Tehran, Lahore and Delhi.

It is already being described by train buffs as "the world's greatest railway journey" and will be longer than the Trans-Siberian railway, which spans 5,772 miles.

Under a United Nations-sponsored scheme, Pakistan and

Iran will link up their lines in the coming months to join the sub-continent's track to that of Europe for the first time.

The UN said the link would open up new trade routes within Asia and give the former Soviet republics of central Asia rail access to Iran's strategic seaport at Bandar Abbas on the Gulf.

The route was extended when the Calcutta [Kolkata] to Dhaka line reopened earlier this month, more than 40 years after it was blocked during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965.

Last week, senior Indian officials met their Iranian counterparts in Tehran to discuss progress. India has already earmarked £90m

to extend its vast rail network towards its border with Burma. From there just 218 miles of missing track stands in the way of an overland rail journey from London to Singapore.

An intrepid traveller will soon be able to leave London for Brussels, Cologne, Vienna, Bucharest, Istanbul, Tehran, Quetta, Lahore, Amritsar, Delhi and Calcutta before reaching the end of the line in Dhaka.

The prospect has caused excitement among Britain's rail enthusiasts. Mark Smith, whose website Seat61.com promotes rail adventures around the world, was planning his first London to Dhaka itinerary.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## AL central body to take decision on polls participation

HASAN AHMED TUSHER

Awami League (AL) faces a dilemma of whether to participate or not in the ninth parliamentary election if its detained chief Sheikh Hasina is convicted in any of the graft cases against her.

Besides, it has yet to decide what it will do if she is not sent abroad for treatment immediately.

The dilemma has also left the party confused about whether to join in the proposed electoral dialogues with the military-backed caretaker administration.

Recently, some AL leaders were 'conveyed' a message that the government will not show any

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

## MIRZAPUR-JAMUNA BRIDGE

## Highway turns into death trap

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

A staggering 1,344 people have been killed and 2,995 others injured in 1,110 road accidents on the stretch of narrow highway between Mirzapur and the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge since the inauguration of the bridge in 1997.

Number of casualties on the highway has been rising steadily due to manifold problems -- traffic too heavy for the two-lane highway, reckless driving and other forms of traffic rules violations, hazardous bridges, absence of patrolling by law enforcers and lack of trauma and medical emergency facilities, said experts.

Tangail police superintendent's office sources that provided the casualty data said among the injured, over 1,000 have been physically disabled for life.

In Kalihati upazila, the highway recently witnessed two back-to-back fatal accidents only three days apart. On Saturday, 18 people were killed and 55 injured as a drowsy driver of an overcrowded and speeding bus lost control of the vehicle and slammed into rail tracks nearby.

Three days back during the early hours, only five kilometres away, another 17 people lost their lives and 25 sustained injuries when the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## BAIL UNDER EPR

## SC rules today on HC's jurisdiction

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court (SC) delivers its crucial judgment today on a government appeal challenging a year-old High Court ruling that the High Court has the jurisdiction to dispose of petitions by persons seeking bail in criminal cases under the stringent Emergency Power Rules (EPR) 2007.

On April 22 last year, a High Court (HC) division bench comprising Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice SM Emdadul Huq in its verdict affirmed that it has the jurisdiction to dispose of petition filed by any person seeking bail in EPR cases.

The HC verdict came following

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



Stay Close

| The real joy of life is in togetherness. That's why we help 1.8 crore people stay close every day. |

 grameenphone