

**Businesses propose direct talks between AL, BNP**

Country's business leaders yesterday proposed direct talks between Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil and BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan to end the current political standoff.

The proposal came when a team, led by Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Mir Nasir Hossain, met the BNP secretary general at his office yesterday.

Bhuiyan told the business leaders that the BNP would actively consider holding the dialogue if the proposal comes from the Awami League.

Other members of the team are International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) President

# Israeli jets pound Lebanon: 39 die

Beirut airport, Hizbollah television and Palestinian foreign ministry bombed

AFP, Beirut/Gaza City

Israel's fighter jets bombed Beirut airport, Hizbollah television and Palestinian foreign ministry in a wave of retaliatory strikes over the capture and killing of soldiers by Hezbollah guerrillas, killing at least 39 civilians and igniting fears the conflict with its Arab neighbours could engulf the region.

Israel imposed an air and sea blockade on Lebanon after its warplanes fired missiles at Beirut's international airport, Hezbollah television and other targets in dozens of raids launched before

dawn.

Israeli jets also bombed the Palestinian foreign ministry in Gaza yesterday, causing heavy damage and wounding 10 children, ratcheting up the pressure on the Hamas government over an abducted soldier.

Warplanes fired two missiles into the building, targeting Foreign Minister Mahmud al-Zahar's offices and causing serious damage to the recently renovated five-storey building, the neighbouring finance ministry and 15 other houses.

Israel confirmed the attack on the offices of Zahar, who an army spokeswoman branded "one of the most extreme leaders of the Hamas terror organisation" directly responsible for planning "terrorist attacks".

The attack was ordered just one day after 23 Palestinians, including seven children from the same family, were killed in a series of Israeli air strikes on the deadliest day in the Gaza Strip since the assault began three weeks ago.

Hezbollah retaliated by firing off

**Govt to remove anomalies in pay scale to raise teachers' salary**

UNB, Dhaka

The government has decided to remove the anomalies in the National Pay Scale to increase the salaries of the government primary school teachers.

A meeting of the cabinet committee on salary fixation yesterday took the decision and also approved some recommendations made by a secretary committee to increase the basic salary of the government primary teachers.

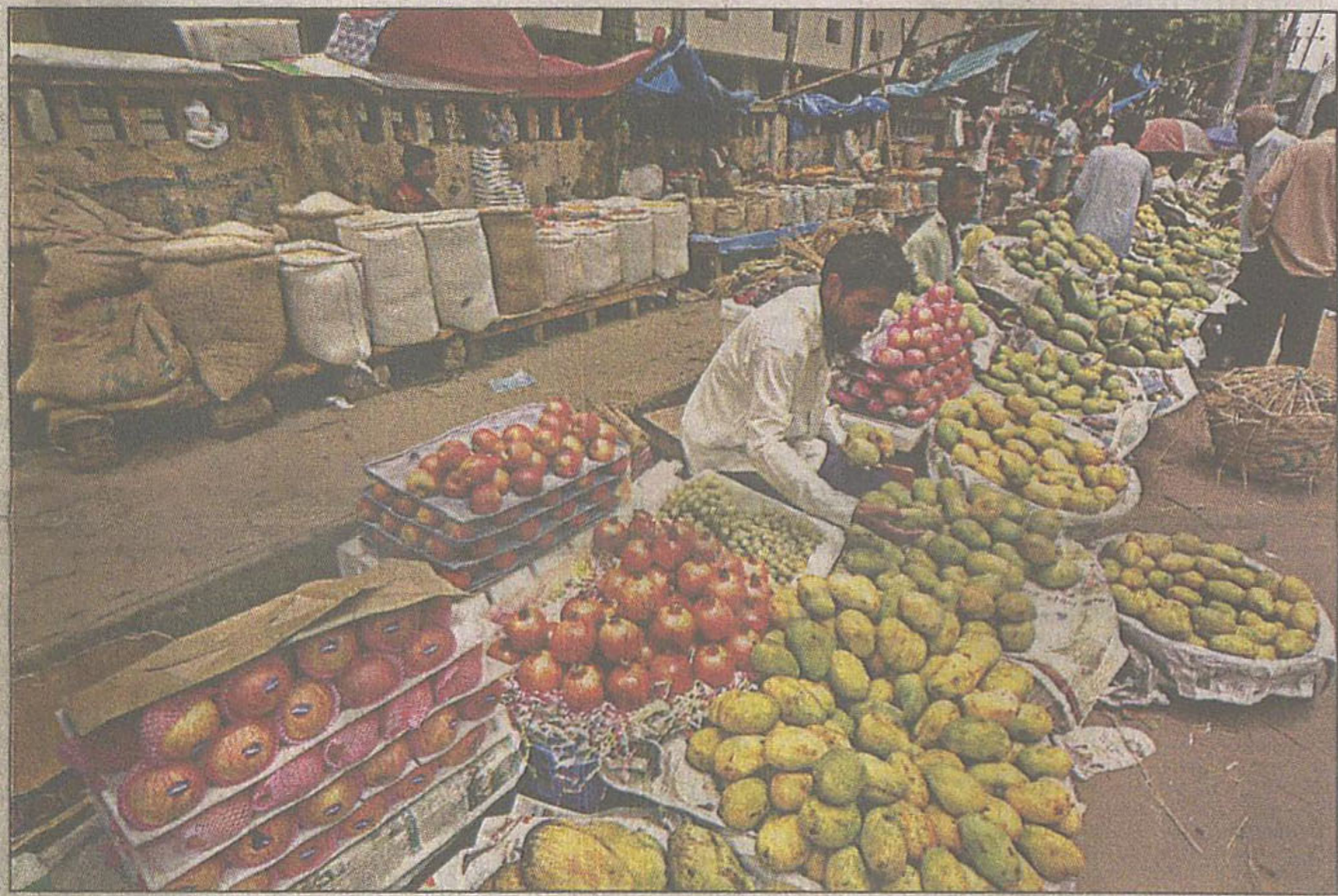
Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman chaired the meeting held at the secretariat.

The decision to raise the salaries will be effective from the current month and the teachers will enjoy its benefits from next month. An additional amount of Tk 75 crore will be required for the purpose.

Grade wise basic salary for



Shikkhak Karmachari Oikya Jote activists block the road from Purana Paltan intersection to Zero Point in the capital yesterday as they form a human chain demanding nationalisation of their jobs.



Grocers and fruit vendors encroach on the road and pavement in front of the National Board of Revenue office at Segunbagicha in the capital causing difficulty for pedestrians and vehicles.

**CEC hopes to make flawless voter list**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz yesterday said the Election Commission (EC) would be able to present a flawless voter list to the nation before the next general elections.

While addressing a meeting, the CEC also thanked Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina for her Tuesday's speech urging people to make sure that their names are on

VOTER LIST

# Top officials seek extension of time limit for updating

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Top brass of the central and local administrations yesterday urged the Election Commission (EC) to extend the time limit for updating the voter list, saying it is difficult to accomplish this task by making door-to-door visit in only 21 days between July 21 and August 10.

At a high-level meeting with the

EC, they sought to justify their suggestion on a number of grounds that include the ongoing rainy season, fund crisis for remuneration of field level officials for the job and indefinite strike by teachers and employees of non-government high schools, colleges and madrasas across the country.

Meeting sources said Cabinet Secretary ASM Abdul Halim also

favoured extension of the time limit. "I think, the time limit is short for the task. It should be extended," he was quoted as saying.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz told the meeting the time limit might be extended again, if necessary, the sources said.

He also assured that he would

**State minister for power at loggerheads with PMO, its high-powered committee**

SHARIEF KHAN

Like his predecessor Iqbal Hassan Mahmood, State Minister for Power Anwarul Kabir Talukder is having conflicts with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and its so-called high-powered committee headed by the principal secretary, which interferes with the activities of the power ministry.

Sources said that ever since Anwarul Kabir Talukder took over the charge of the power ministry as the state minister he has been trying to assert his power. He has been resisting interference by the PMO and its high-powered committee, which has been muddling

decisions in the power sector since the four-party alliance government came to power.

However, the interference by the high powered committee and the PMO remains unchanged. From the recently okayed skid-mount power project deals to the tender bidding for the Siddhirganj 240mw peaking power plant projects, the high powered committee is giving directions in all power projects creating confusions.

Talukder recently met Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to the prime minister, and expressed his unhappiness over the interference saying that it is hindering

**GPA-5 GALORE IN SSC Tough fight ahead for college admission**

SURANJITH DEABNATH

Admission crisis is looming large as most of the brilliant students achieving the highest GPA-5 in this year's SSC examinations will be denied admission in their 'first choice' colleges due to shortage of seats, while hundreds of colleges in the rural areas will not get sufficient students.

Students under the science group will face serious admission problem as 1,54,208 science students who passed this year's SSC examinations will have to compete for a total of 98,000 seats for science group in the colleges across the country.

As many as 56,208 science students may be forced to switch over to commerce or humanities group.

Renowned colleges like Dhaka College, Notre Dame College, Viharunisa Noon College, Dhaka City College, Motijheel Ideal College, and Holy Cross College have already started selling admission forms, resulting in heavy rush of admission seekers with good SSC results.

Of 135 colleges in the Dhaka metropolitan area, around 10 colleges with some 10,000 seats in total have traditionally attracted the top scorers in the SSC and

**US envoy terms Bangladesh a Muslim state with modern outlook**

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Patricia A Butenis has said Bangladesh is an exceptional moderate Muslim state in South Asia.

The envoy made the remark during a visit to the Islamic Foundation at Baitul Mokarram yesterday.

Director General (DG) of the Islamic Foundation Mohammad Fazlur Rahman and Director of Imam Training Academy Mohammad Abul Khair were, among others, present.

Butenis said every Muslim in Bangladesh is a true Muslim with

**BNP wants Ershad in 4-party, Jamaat opposing move**

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The ruling BNP has taken steps to expand the existing four-party alliance by having onboard former president HM Ershad-led Jatiya Party (JP) in a bid to ensure victory in the upcoming general election.

The party's main ally Jamaat-e-Islami however disapproves of the move, fearing that it might cut its influence on BNP, said sources.

There are differences of opinion even within JP as well over joining the BNP-led alliance. But a section of JP leaders has taken a strong stance on allying themselves with

the ruling alliance.

Jamaat expressed dissatisfaction over the plan of BNP high-ups to have JP in the coalition. A faction of BNP leaders too is not pleased with the initiative. But the party's young leadership led by Tarique Rahman is eager to see JP as the coalition partner before handover of power to the caretaker government in October, added the sources.

Joint secretary general of Jamaat Muhammad Qamaruzzaman said there is no initiative till now to have JP in the four-party fold. "I don't know anything about it. We did not

**NOTICE**

Channel 1 will telecast a special programme today at 5:30pm on "Regional Dialogue on National Election 2007: Civil Society Initiative for Accountable Development" organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue, The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and Channel 1 in Ranganati on July 7.

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