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THE COMPUTERS LIMITED

54, Inner Circular Road, Purana Paltan, Dhaka-1000, Tel: 839091, 837357, Fax: 880-2-839616, Email: agni@dhaka.agni.com

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BISTEC forum  
to be launched  
in Bangkok  
on June 6

NEW DELHI, May 29: Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Pitak Intrawityanunt today announced plans for a "historic" sub-regional trade forum linking South Asia with Thailand and later, other eastern countries, reports AFP.

Intrawityanunt told reporters here that the Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation (BISTEC) forum would be formally launched in Bangkok on June 6.

"It is going to link the (seven-national) South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and ASEAN," he said. They both will be complementary. We hope some other countries like Burma will join later."

Intrawityanunt said some SAARC countries such as Pakistan were not included in the grouping due to geographical reasons as BISTEC was essentially a "Bengal" body.

"We will first look at closer trade ties, more joint ventures and increased investment," the minister said. "Later we can look at other things like lower tariffs or no tariffs at all."

Kobsak Chutikul, director-general of Thailand's Depart-

See Page 12 Col 4

**'3 PMs to launch businessmen's roundtable in November'**

A Foreign Ministry spokesman yesterday described the news item published recently in a section of the local press that Bangladesh has invited the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan for a summit meeting in Dhaka in November as "inaccurate and misleading," reports BSS.

Elaborating further, he said that what was being considered was holding a businessmen's round-table meeting in Dhaka sometime during the month of November this year, which would be jointly launched by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The proposal was mooted

See Page 12 Col 8

**HC judgement on removal of SEC members stayed**

By SC Correspondent

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday ordered stay of the High Court judgement declaring illegal the removal of Dr A K M Sahabub Alam and Alamgir Kabir as full-time members of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Upon a government petition, Justice Latifur Rahman of the Appellate Division yesterday passed the stay order in his chamber and fixed Thursday next for hearing of the petition in the regular bench of the Appellate Division.

The division bench of the HC comprising Justice Md. Moazzamul Haque and Justice Md Hassan Amin on Wednesday last by separate judgements on the writ petitions filed by Dr A K M Sahabub Alam and Alamgir Kabir declared their removal as void and without lawful authority.

See Page 12 Col 8

**Inside Today**

### Article

**America's China Policy: Strategic Issues**

by Brig (Retd) M Abdul Hafiz

Page 4

### Focus

Disaster Mitigation: Structural and non-structural policies

Page 5

### Business

BCI urges govt programmes to revamp industrial sector

Trading continues to rise at DSE

Pages 6,7

### Supplement

One-page supplement on the 16th death anniversary of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman

Page 9

# The Daily Star

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## Govt declares two-day weekly holiday

The government has declared two-day official weekly holiday with effect from May 31, 1997, reports BSS.

A handout of the establishment ministry yesterday said, henceforth, Fridays and Saturdays will be observed as weekly holidays instead of 'only Fridays'.

The two-day weekly holiday will help increase the efficiency and productivity, save expenditures on account of fuel-energy and check environmental pollution resulting from mechanised transports.

The announcement said factories, banks and the courts will fix their own time-tables in conformity with the government holidays.

It said all government, semi-government, autonomous and semi-autonomous offices at the secretariat, divisional, district and thana level offices will

### Banking hours rescheduled

Bangladesh Bank (BB) and all scheduled banks in the country will observe Friday and Saturday as weekly holiday, reports BSS.

In conformity with the government decision, the central bank under rule 25 of the Negotiable Instrument Act of 1881 yesterday fixed the new timeta-

work from 9 am to 5 pm with a thirty-minute break for *namaz* and lunch from 1 pm to 1:30 pm.

This decision according to the handout will not apply to shops and other establishments under the Factory Act 1965, and Shops and Establishment Act, 1965. Those establishments will fix-up their own timeta-

Bangladesh Bank will decide the timetables for the banks in conformity with the official timetables.

The Supreme Court will decide the timetables for itself as well as the courts under its jurisdiction in accordance with its own rules.

The handout said: Before the adoption of the new official work-schedule, it was not possible for the officers and employees of all levels to pay proper attention to their own family affairs and other social activities.

As a result of the two-day official holiday, all officers and employees will be able to give time to their social work and families.

Efficiency, productivity and dynamism will also increase in the performance at government

See Page 12 Col 8

See Page 12 Col 7



One of the rival groups of the Secretariat Employees Association trying to bring out a procession inside the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday. — Star photo

## Development of N-W region \$ 5b likely to be invested in 10 yrs

By Staff Correspondent

An estimated five billion US dollars will be invested in the country's North-West region by donors, private entrepreneurs and the Bangladesh government in ten years after completion of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB) for development of the region, ADB Resident Representative Bhanuphol Horayangura said at a press conference here yesterday.

The JMB will multiply Bangladesh's trade with Nepal, Bhutan and India and also help increase business among the SAARC countries, he said at the press conference held at the National Press Club. The JMB will be considered as a gateway for Asia and Europe," he said.

The press conference organ-

See Page 12 Col 8

## Demonstrations banned inside Secretariat

By Staff Correspondent

The government yesterday banned all kinds of meetings, rallies and processions inside the Secretariat in the wake of tensions generated by past two days' confrontations between two rival groups of government employees.

A government handout said, "The Secretariat is a restricted area and holding of meetings, gatherings and processions inside it is illegal and against public interest." It also warned of stern action against violators of the order.

Tension prevailed for sometime around the office of the Secretariat Employees Association inside the Secretariat complex in the morning as one group which was defeated in the union elections but formed a rival association, wanted to take over the premises. Both the ri-

See Page 12 Col 7

See Page 12 Col 7

## Another batch of 801 arrives in Ctg Deportees allege indiscriminate arrests by Saudi police

From Nurul Alam

ernment the first batch of de- portees numbering 1998 arrived here on March 17, 1995.

Officials said these Bangladeshis were deported by the Saudi government after its police picked them up from different places of Saudi Arabia on charge of illegal stay.

They had gone to Saudi Arabia through various means to earn a living.

The ship Mecca-1, captained by Al Sayeed Al Buhi, on its way to Chittagong Port also dropped about 1200 Pakistani deportees this time at Karachi Port, shipping agency sources said.

Among today's deportees, one Khalilur Rahman said, "I went to Saudi Arabia with

During the previous gov-

ernment visa, but I was not given work permit (*ekama*) by the Saudi company that led to my arrest by police."

Rahman, who hails from Lohagara thana of Chittagong, added, "now, Saudi police is picking up any one whether he is holding genuine visa or not."

Rahman, a *hafiz* by profes-

sion, said that he had gone there one year ago and used to work in a *madrasa*.

Md Shahjahan of Lalbagh, Dhaka said that he had gone to Saudi Arabia with visa as a tailor seven years ago. "But I was caught by police on my way back to my residence at Makkah".

See Page 12 Col 7

See Page 12 Col 7

## Business in Bangladesh facing constant, unvaried constraints'

### British Aid Management Office study

obtaining funds, but they face serious constraints due to regulatory and policy environment, he said.

The household enterprises mainly get finance from organisations like Grameen Bank and BRAC, but their coverage remains limited and they are increasingly taking the view that they have reached the limits of the present management capacity.

For them, the money lenders are still the most important

### Electoral enquiry committee on Manikganj byelection

A two-member Electoral Enquiry Committee has been formed to investigate the pre-election irregularities and violation of the code of conduct in the by-election to Manikganj-3 constituency scheduled for June 30, reports UNB.

The committee was constituted with district Sub-Judge Idris Alam and Assistant Judge Wahiduzzaman Sikdar under the provision of the People's Representative Order 1972, an EC press release said yesterday.

The committee is drawn to any act of violation to election rules by any candidate, will carry out immediate investigation and submit recommendations to the Election Commission to take necessary steps in this regard.

Any political party or aggrieved person can file complaints before the Enquiry Committee against the violators of election code of conduct. The committee will also submit recommendations to the EC af-

See Page 12 Col 7

See Page 12 Col 7

## Huge public sector loss a burden on economy: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was said there is no alternative to bold and firm steps for economic development and stressed the importance of adopting pragmatic policies through discussions and reviews, reports UNB.

"It is possible to create minimum political consensus regarding these issues through moulding a wide-range of mass opinion. Our government seeks cooperation from all quarters in creating this consensus," she said.

Inaugurating a two-day seminar of the Bangladesh Economic Association at the National Museum auditorium yesterday Hasina said the government will have to ensure the best use of limited resources bringing qualitative changes in implementing projects.

We want to establish transparency and accountability in

See Page 12 Col 4

See Page 12 Col 4

## Govt losing confidence in judiciary: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday alleged that the Awami League government was losing confidence in the judiciary as it was interfering in the dispensation of justice.

Addressing a group of lawyers from Manikganj at her Minto Road official residence in the city, the Leader of the Opposition in parliament also charged the ruling party for pushing the nation back to its post-liberation period when people were robbed of their fundamental rights.

"They (the AL government) are once again out to establish a one-party rule by denying people's democratic rights, detaining them without any charge and repressing those protesting their misdeeds," Begum Zia said.

Former president of the

See Page 12 Col 3

## No decision yet to revise service quota system

By Aminul Islam

women should be further increased by 5 per cent each and 20 per cent of the posts should be reserved on regional basis.

Under the existing system, 45 per cent appointments are made on the basis of merit while 55 per cent posts are filled

### PSC report

through quota system for various districts.

The PSC also observed that the region-wise quota on the basis of population is a hindrance to appointment of meritorious candidates through examinations.

The report said that in the last four BCS examinations, including two special ones, Ra-

jshahi and Chittagong divisions were the beneficiary of the regional quota. Rajshahi Division got 120 more posts than it deserved and Chittagong got 42 more posts.

On the other hand Dhaka, Khulna and Barisal divisions got 47, 92 and 42 posts less than they deserved if the posts were filled on the basis of merit.

Sixteen posts in the Foreign Service Cadre were filled up through the 15th BCS examinations. Of the posts, seven were in merit quota and nine in regional quota.

The last position to qualify in merit quota was 7th while in the district quota the last position was 175th, the report pointed out.

See Page 12 Col 8

## AIDS cases in Bangladesh Govt says 79, WHO says as high as 20000

By Staff Correspondent

Doctors and scientists asked Bangladeshis to "stand as one" against the AIDS epidemic at a conference in Dhaka Wednesday.

The AIDS Awareness Foundation (AAF) sponsored the National Conference on HIV/AIDS. The foundation trains doctors and lab technicians throughout Bangladesh to help prevent the spread of HIV.

The government says presently there are 79 cases of HIV in Bangladesh, but the World Health Organisation (WHO) noted in a 1995 report that the number could be as high as 20,000.

Speakers at the conference included Maurie Bloem, a member of the Christian com-

See Page 12 Col 3

are subject to petty harassment and extortion by *mastans* or by police and minor officials, he added.

For small emergent enterprises, finance remains a constraint as the banks are unwilling or unable to lend them because of the problems they often face in recovering loans. The coverage of leasing also remains pretty small for them.