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# The Daily Star

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## BISTEC forum to be launched in Bangkok on June 6

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

Intrawitayant 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-nation) 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."

Intrawitayant said some SAARC countries such as Pakistan were not included in the grouping due to geographical reasons as BISTEC was essentially a "Bay of 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 Department of Trade, said.

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## '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.

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## 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 Mozammel 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.

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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 transportations.

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

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 time-tables.

## 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 time-table.

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bles. Bangladesh Bank will decide the time-tables for the banks in conformity with the official time-tables.

The Supreme Court will decide the time-tables 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 offices.

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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 Bhanupol 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 organized

## 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 some time 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 rival groups were warned.

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

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, May 29: Another batch of 801 Bangladeshi deportees from Saudi Arabia arrived here this morning on board a Honduran flag carrying vessel 'Mecca-1'.

The ship took anchor at jetty no 1 of Chittagong Port at 6 am and later the officials of local administration here received the deportees. They were released after due formalities.

Earlier, five other batches of Bangladeshi deportees from Saudi Arabia arrived here and with today's figure, the deportees totalled 8,515, according to officials. Today's batch is the second one to arrive here under the present government.

During the previous government, the first batch of deportees numbering 1998 arrived here on March 17, 1995.

Officials said these deportees 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 Buihi, 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 Khalidur Rahman said, "I went to Saudi Arabia with

proper 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 *hafez* by profession, 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."

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## 'Business in Bangladesh facing constant, unvaried constraints'

Businesses in Bangladesh are facing "constant and unvaried" constraints, lack of fund, data and business skill, poor infrastructure and regulatory and policy difficulties, reports UNB.

The constraints to development of private enterprises were identified in a study carried out by the Aid Management Office of British High Commission in Dhaka.

British High Commissioner David Walker disclosed the findings at a meeting with the members of Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in Dhaka yesterday saying the constraints faced by the businesses are relatively constant and unvaried.

He said the study looked at five types of private businesses — household business with one worker, micro enterprises with less than five, small enterprises with less than 100, growth businesses also with less than 100 and medium to large businesses with more than 100 workers.

The main issue for the small businesses is their lack of access to finance while the large units have a few difficulties in

## 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, if its attention 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 after

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## PM approves Wage Board Award

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday approved the Fifth Wage Board Award for the journalists and staff of newspapers and news agencies, an official handout said, reports BSS.

The government had earlier constituted the Fifth Wage Board under the Newspaper Employees (Condition of Service) Act of 1974 to determine salaries, allowances and other benefits of all categories of people employed in newspapers and news agencies.

The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman enacted the law in 1974 for the welfare of all classes of people employed in newspapers and news agencies.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ), Bangladesh Sangbadpatri

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## No decision yet to revise service quota system

By Aminul Islam

No decision has yet been taken to revise the existing quota system in government services despite specific proposals and repeated requests by the Public Service Commission since 1990. The PSC said in its annual report published recently.

Raising some questions on the system of appointment on quota basis, the report observed "Maintaining the importance of the quota system for the tribals and women, the regional distribution of quota should be reduced."

According to the PSC, there is no logic for 30 per cent quota for the freedom fighters. Suggesting distribution of the 30 per cent quota, it observed that the quota for merit and that for

## 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

the public sector and ensure people's participation in project formulation and implementation," she said.

The prime minister said a huge amount of resources had been wasted in the name of allocation for development of the public sector. A major portion of this had been misused for inefficiency in project implementation and corruption.

As a result, she said, "We did not get the desired benefits from the foreign assistance whereas the burden of foreign debt has gradually been increased."

She said one of the major drawbacks of the country's economy is the lower rate of savings and investment. "The foreign assistance on which we were very much dependent are gradually decreasing," she added.

"We have to take formidable

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## 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

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## Anniversary of Zia's death today

The 16th death anniversary of President Ziaur Rahman will be observed today, reports UNB.

On this day in 1981, Zia was assassinated by a section of army officers at Chittagong Circuit House.

In a message on the occasion, President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed paid tributes to late President Ziaur Rahman, a valiant freedom fighter who played a glorious role in restoring multiparty democracy in the country.

BNP and its front organisations have drawn up an elaborate programme to observe the death anniversary of Zia, the founding Chairman of the party.

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## Death in wheel carriage: probe report delayed

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Biman committee, probing the recent mysterious death of a young man in the wheel carriage of a Biman Airbus, could not submit its report yesterday.

The five-member committee will submit its report in a day or two, official sources said.

However, the sources said Biman's investigation was substantiating its suspicion that the young man, Mahbub, had got into the wheel carriage of the Riyadh-bound Airbus when it waited for few minutes on the runway the Zia International

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## Certificate case against Ershad declared illegal

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday declared the proceeding of the Certificate Case filed against former president H M Ershad for recovery of money spent in the use of helicopters for going to Atrashi 80 times between 1982 and 1990 as illegal and without lawful authority.

The division bench of the HC comprising Justice Md Mozammel Haque and Justice Md Hassan Amin made the verdict on the writ petition filed by Ershad.

Treating the former president's visit to Atrashi as private visit the government instituted a certificate case under the Public Demand Recovery Act before the Certificate Officer, Dhaka for realisation of Tk 16,41,375/= incurred in the use of helicopter.

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## HSC exams on Saturdays to be held on schedule

By Staff Correspondent

The Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations scheduled for Saturdays will remain unchanged although the government has declared Friday and Saturday as weekly holidays, according to official sources.

Muhammad Abdul Latif, Controller of the Dhaka Board, talking to The Daily Star last night said that the decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of officials of education boards and the Ministry of Education.

The schedule for three examinations on May 31, June 7 and June 14, all Saturdays, will remain unchanged, the Controller said.

## Judgement on writ against Mohiuddin Alamgir Monday

Hearing of a writ petition challenging delegation of power to State Minister for Planning and Civil Aviation Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir concluded at a High Court division bench yesterday, reports UNB.

The High Court bench comprising Justice Md Mozammel Haque and Justice Md Hassan Amin decided to deliver the verdict on Monday.

Barrister Nazmul Huda MP filed the writ challenging a gazette notification empowering Dr Alamgir to make statement on matters relating to the Prime Minister's office besides his own ministries.

The writ, moved by Barrister

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## Blue Panel sweeps election of teacher representatives to DU Senate

By DU Correspondent

The pro-Awami League Blue Panel swept the election of teacher representatives to the Dhaka University Senate yesterday.

The Blue panel captured 27 seats out of 35. The pro-BNP White panel got five seats while the left leaning Pink panel won three seats.

The Blue panel candidates elected to the Senate are: Dr Abul Hashem, Dr RIM Aminur Rashid, Dr Iftekar Gani Chowdhury, Dr AZM Nowsheer Ali Khan, Dr ATM Zahurul Haq, Dr ABM Mahmud, Dr SM Immanuel Haq, Dr SM Mahfuzur Rahman, Kazi Afroz Khan Ali, Dr Khondkar Niza

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## 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 Maurice Bloem, a member of the Christian com-

mittee for development in Bangladesh, Dr Myo Thwe, a senior medical officer with WHO, and Dr Hasan Mahmud, director of the STD control programme.

A large crowd, including students from Dhaka University, packed into Sasakawa Auditorium at the ICDDR,B premises. Many wanted more information on the risk of contracting the virus and its symptoms.

Ruhafin Rajia, 18, studies English at the university. She says she learned a lot about AIDS at the conference, but adds the country has a long way to go.

"Our people are mostly uneducated. They have no concept of

See Page 12 Col 3

and port infrastructures.

There is a severe problem on the policy and regulatory environment side — outdated and inappropriate laws, slowly and badly functioning legal processes, law and order breakdowns during hartals, extortions by *mastans* and abuse of power by trade unions.

These are the constraints also faced by the medium and large businesses, Walker said and mentioned the colossal losses by the state-owned enterprises, which have to be borne by the tax-payers.

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## 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

source, he said, adding lack of technical and business skills, minimal information about the market and technology limit their ability.

Micro enterprises are "too big" for most NGO credit schemes and have a very little access to bank credit because they lack the "collateral security" required by the commercial banks, Walker said.

Besides problems relating to business skill and infrastructures, these types of enterprises