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The World on Time

## Down to Earth

## Unwanted Business Activities

By A S M Nurunnabi

A particular business centre in the heart of the city presents an obnoxious spectacle. This refers to the wholesale fish market at Kawan Bazar which is located within five hundred yards of the city's one of the liveliest hotels. The fish market occupies quite a big area. The business transaction at this centre starts from early dawn, but a large number of trucks laden with fish of various kinds begin to assemble at this site over night through various routes from their loading points spread over a wide network covering areas with supplies of fish catches. With the beginning of business transactions from early dawn, the place wears a look of hectic activities, with the wholesalers and retailers jostling to clinch deals. Apart from the crowd of buyers and sellers, there is an overwhelming prevalence of fishy smell which spreads far and wide. Even when the day's transactions are over within two or three hours in the morning, the fall-out of fishy smell hangs on in the area, so much so that passersby, riding on vehicles or just walking along, are not spared this evil smell.

Some may wonder how a big wholesale fish market could be allowed to operate in a select area where there is a liveliest hotel. The Dhaka City Corporation is aware of the circumstances under which such a fish market is functioning and also whether the City Corporation has any plan for shifting the market from its existing site. Whatever be the actual position in this regard, there is no denying that the location of the fish market is utterly unwanted in its present site and the sooner it is shifted elsewhere, the better for its environs, now subject to such obnoxious smell. In this context, it may not be forgotten that there is a

sprawling slum nearby. The existence of the fish market and the slum may be regarded as adverse factors for the environmental degradation of the area. A couple of weeks ago, a large number of employees of the adjacent hotel came down and took up the job of cleaning and painting the long stretch of traffic island in front of the hotel. But it is felt mere face-lifting of such a nature is not enough unless positive steps are taken by the authorities concerned to improve the look of the whole surrounding area. In that case, the beauty of the architecturally impressive fountain at the busy road junction near Kawan Bazar may not be detracted by the existing loathsome scenes created by the fish market and the adjacent city slum.

A source of serious miseries for the residents of Hazaribagh and its adjacent areas of the city arises from the large number of existing tanneries in the area throwing heavy amounts of chemical and other wastes into the low-lying areas near Rayer Bazar outside the Dhaka flood protection embankment. The tannery wastes are polluting fresh areas, involving destruction of a vast stretch of arable land and all kinds of marine life. As reported, the lethal wastes previously flowed into the river Buriganga from the Hazaribagh Sluice further downstream. Now, as per report, the waste materials have to be diverted to the new areas, as the old channel was blocked by a recently built tannery.

According to a study by the Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association, due to the City Protection Embankment, the low-lying lands from Lalbagh to Rayer Bazar Shikder Medical College are filled with poisonous wastes and the toxic chemicals are even polluting

the ground waters, affecting also the grass and shrubs.

The devastating pollution of the waters of river Buriganga caused the Hazaribagh tanneries has been an old story. There has been no dearth of evidence and expert opinion about the impact of the astoundingly high pollution of the river water on humans and marine life in the surrounding areas. An eminent environmentalist of the Dhaka University, Dr K. Nizamuddin, was reported to have said that if immediate measures are not taken to control the environmental hazards at Hazaribagh and its adjacent areas in the near future, all city dwellers would have to suffer from serious air pollution resulting from the use of sulphur dioxide, ammonia sulphate, chlorine and other elements by the tanneries.

In the context of this ominous background, we will be dithering at our peril on the issue of urgent necessity of shifting the tanneries from its present site to any other suitable location outside the periphery of the city limits on the basis of consensus among the various parties involved. The question whether the shifting should be done to Savar or Meghnath or Demra, as proposed at different times, may be settled once and for all, at the same time finalising the connected issues of funding the shifting with such compensation as may be found reasonable. On account of the enormity of the problem, particularly in the context of the profound environmental and public health considerations, it seems to be a fit case for taking it up with an appropriate international agency. We may not forget that at stake is the safety of human lives as well as ecology of Hazaribagh area where at least 30 lakh residents are gasping for improved life in a hazardous environment.

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## 700 doctors' posts vacant at thana, dist levels

By Naimul Haq

The thana health complexes and district hospitals in the country are facing a shortage of more than 700 doctors.

According to Health Information Unit of the Directorate of Health, there are slightly more than 7000 doctors against 7,833 posts sanctioned by the government for those hospitals and health complexes.

The people of northern districts are the worst sufferers due to the doctors, followed by those in greater Khulna district. According to available statistics, there are almost 30,000 doctors in the country, one doctor for every 5,000 people.

A senior official of the Health Directorate explained that the 'vacant posts are created' when doctors are sent for training after they are hired.

"So in the real sense, a permanent 'vacancy' has been created," he said.

To resolve this crisis, about 800 doctors on special duty (OSD) were recruited recently.

The Directorate had suggested recruitment of 1056 physicians through the 17th BCS examination but only 139 posts of assistant surgeons were accepted," he said.

One source said a good number of doctors are awaiting promotion. Lack of quick decision on the issue has also stood in the way of recruitment of new doctors. When contacted, the official concerned admitted this. More than 1000 doctors were given senior grade last March while another 300 await promotion to that grade, he said.

While talking to The Daily Star, the official said the government is going to appoint about 1000 doctors shortly.

Another 300 may be appointed later.

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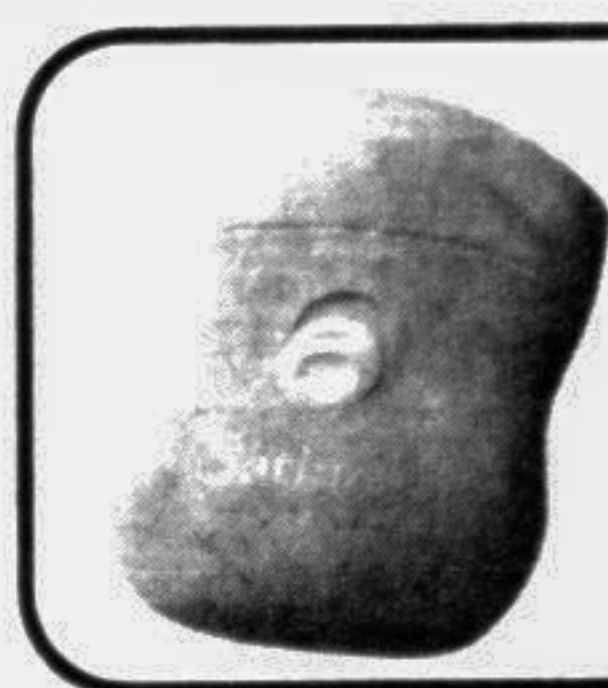
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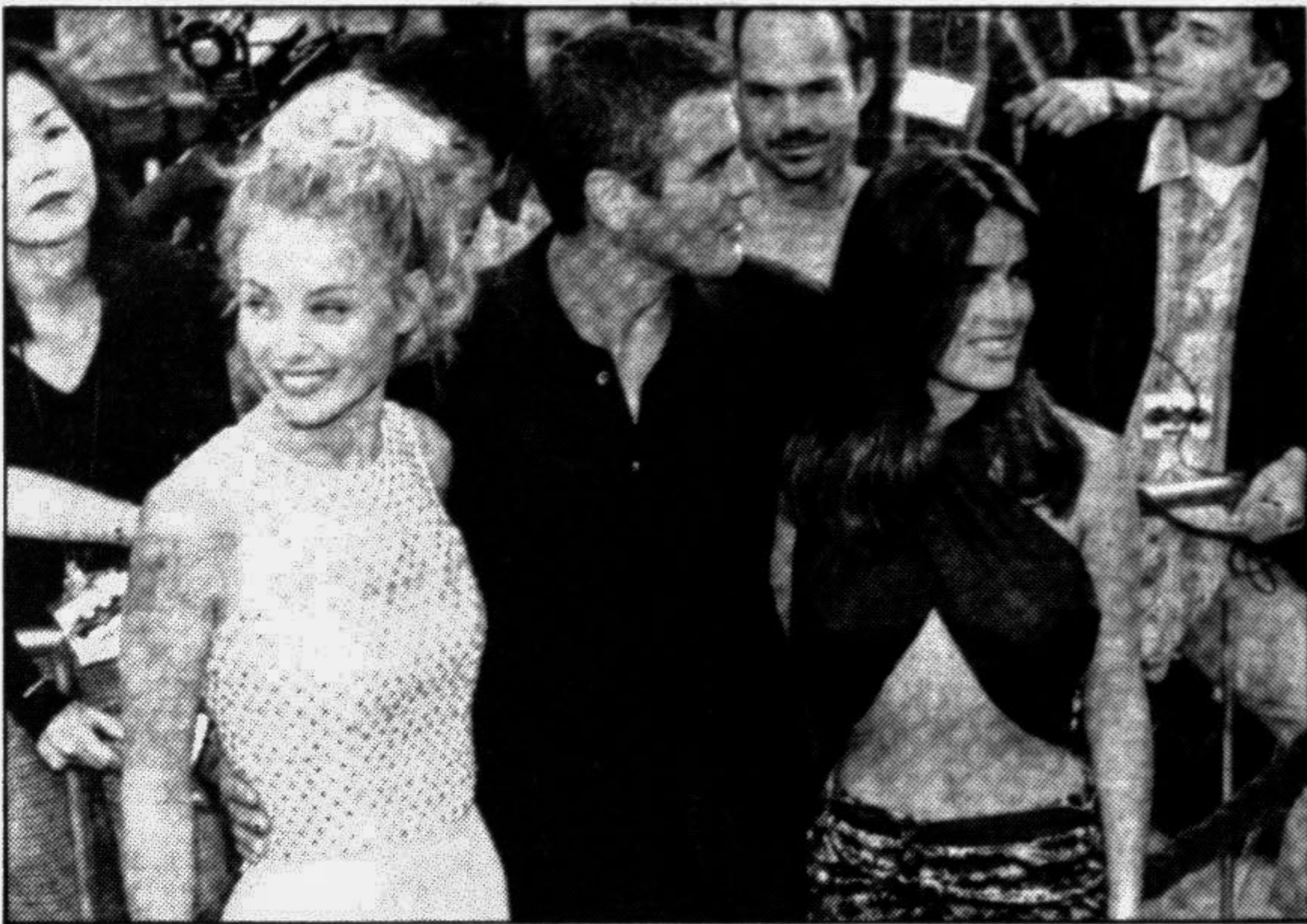
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PHILIPS



Hollywood actor George Clooney (C) poses with his friend Celine (L) and South American actress Slama Hayek as they arrive at Mann's Village and Bruin Theaters for the world premier of Warner Brother's Batman and Robin in Los Angeles on Thursday.

— AFP/UNB photo

## CPI team due in city today

A delegation of the Communist Party of India (CPI) arrives in Dhaka today on a visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Four members of the five-member delegation are: Shamim Foyez, editor of the weekly New Age, Jalaluddin Ansari, MP, Ramon Majumder, member of the party's international cell and Sunil Munshi, editor of the Dinak Kalaran.

Conrad A B Bardhan, General Secretary of CPI, who will lead the delegation, will arrive on June 16.

During the visit the delegation will exchange views with different political parties and organisations, a CPB press release said in Dhaka yesterday.

## 3-nation cricket Pakistan edge past NZ

HYDERABAD, India, June 13: Pakistan edged past New Zealand today with a 16-run victory to reach the final of the three-nation one-day cricket tournament being played in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, reports AP.

Pakistan lost key batsmen Saeed Anwar, Shahid Afridi, Rameez Raja (captain) and Salim Malik early in the game, but Moin Khan's brilliant 103 off 87 balls and Inzamam-ul-Haq's 79 off 72 balls helped them to score an imposing 306 for seven.

New Zealand lost three wickets in the first two overs to paceman Azhar Mahmood.

Mark Greatbatch led the Kiwis' fightback with a knock of 102 off 106 balls. However, New Zealand were all out for 290 in 48 overs.

India and Pakistan who have both won a match each against New Zealand will play the last round robin league match tomorrow and then meet in the final to be played on Monday.

## Surcharge to alleviate poverty

enhanced duties on paper, for example, has been proposed to help the local paper industry.

Tariffs on a number of items have been rationalised and nearly 200 items will be out of quantitative restrictions that will boost exports.

When his attention was drawn to the possible effect on textile industry following withdrawal of zero duty on raw cotton imports and reduction of yarn import duties, Kibria agreed that there could be discussions with the textile sector.

Asked on the missing target of GDP in the coming fiscal in his budget speech on Thursday, Kibria said: "The growth has been targeted at 6 per cent. Current year's growth is being computed and we expect it to be around 5.7 per cent."

Kibria reacted sharply when asked how many people are coming under the expanded tax net. He said newspapers have misinterpreted the proposal on making it mandatory for people owning buildings more than one storied, motor vehicles and subscribing telephones. "If you do not have any income to report, you can state that. It has been done to bring more people under the tax net."

NBR Chairman Shah Abdul Hannan was told to provide the figure that the new measure would bring 3/4 lakh people under the net. "We should have four million tax payers in the country. But there only seven lakh people enlisted as taxpayer, of whom only three to four lakh actually pay tax," he added.

Kibria said that people owning buildings, vehicles and subscribing telephones are required to submit tax returns in India and Pakistan. He assured that the rationalisation and simplification of taxation system would not harass anyone.

Rather, it would help people to pay tax easily.

On the thorny issue of bank defaulters wriggling their way out, the Finance Minister said they are now realising that they cannot escape. "But I would not like to bracket the people whose industry and business ran aground with the wilful defaulters. We are taking measures against those who resorted to fraud and cheated the banks. We have already realised about Tk 2,000 crore from the defaulters."

In this connection, Tofael Ahmed said the past government had patronised its partisans, providing them with loans liberally that virtually left the banks reeling under liquidity crisis. "Go and look at the banks, you would not find that our Prime Minister had made any request for loans for anyone. The culture of bank loans for partisans began after 1975."

Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir in this connection blasted late President Ziaur Rahman saying "he had introduced this culture and his good disciple Saifur Rahman should be asked to elaborate on the issue."

However, his remarks were interrupted when MD of Rupali Bank Najmul Haq slumped in his chair and had to be carried out of the conference venue apparently suffering heart problems.

Kibria later said that Bankruptcy Court and the relevant Act are taking care of the defaulters. A task force of the Bangladesh Bank is also doing its job in this regard.

Kibria, however, came out heavily on newspapers, one paper in particular which he declined to name, saying it had misinterpreted the revenue expenditures on Defence and Edu-

## Pakistan increases defence spending in new budget

ISLAMABAD, June 13: Pakistan's 13.8 billion dollar budget announced today increases defence spending and cuts out an array of duties and taxes aimed at improving the ailing manufacturing sector and boosting exports, reports AP.

"In this budget we have not imposed any new taxes," Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz said in his budget speech to Parliament.

But the biggest expenditure for Pakistan is the cost of servicing its mammoth 55 billion dollars debt.

According to the budget figures Pakistan will spend nearly half its budget or 6.2 billion dollar to service its debt. Pakistan is going into 1997-98 with a deficit of 6.3 per cent of gross domestic product which Aziz said he hopes to reduce to five per cent.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif earlier said Pakistan's debt was crippling the country.

## 13 dacoits

Mohammad Hanif, Mintu Paul, Abu Nayeem, Hassan alias Rasel, Sajjad Ahmed alias Ripon and Biplob Biswas.

Another team of DB police arrested Ahsan Ullah Chowdhury alias Hasan from North Kauri area and recovered a foreign revolver loaded with two bullets from his possession.

Telgaon police arrested seven alleged dacoits from different parts of the city and from Aminbazar area under Savar thana early hours of yesterday.

Police recovered Tk 3,000 in cash, a gold chain and a watch from their possession.

The arrested are Saber Ali, Shahid, Siraj, Nayan, Delwar, Kamal Hossain and Abu Taher.

Police said the arrested persons looted cash and valuables from a house in Razabazar area on June 6.

A team of Motijheel police arrested Mazharul Islam from Shahjahanpur area and recovered a sawed-off rifle from his possession last night.

## Cultural accord

tion are Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran, Egypt, Nigeria and Turkey.

The cultural ministers of the member countries agreed to hold next D-8 arts and cultural festival in Bangladesh.

As proposed by Bangladesh, they also agreed to hold annual ministerial meetings and arts and cultural festivals on rotational basis.

The Bangladesh State Minister, in a press conference, described Istanbul Declaration as a milestone in the global cultural arena saying that it would open a new era of cultural cooperation among 80 crore people of eight brotherly countries.

## Pay scale

ment on Thursday, earmarked a bloc allocation of Tk 700 crore for meeting the additional expenses for the pay-hike.

Asked whether the allocation would be enough for the pay-hike or additional funds would be arranged later, the minister indicated that the government would implement the Pay Commission report gradually.

He said the government would thoroughly examine the report before its implementation.

The Pay Commission, headed by former Cabinet Secretary Mujibur Rahman, is expected to submit its report to the government within a couple of weeks.

As per the announcement of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the new pay increase would be effective from July 1, the beginning of the coming fiscal year.

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## Economists' reaction

From Page 1  
ally do not understand what will be the benefit of such protection?

Prof. Ahmed criticised imposition of taxes on cottage industries and said the decision contradicts the government's employment generation policy.

Commenting on the proposed budget the Director General of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Abu Abdullah said, VAT base was a correct decision. He also welcomed the pay hike saying, "The new pay scale was necessary for government employees to cope with the private sector salary structure." This may reduce corruption among the low paid officials and employees.

Talking to The Daily Star, Abdullah criticised involving Bangladesh Bank in the lending programme