

Youth lost to joblessness

One-third workforce find no work, their number rising by the year

MONJUR MAHMUD

An unbridled rise in joblessness is stoking up frustration among the youths, besides snowballing crimes. Experts estimate at least one-third of the country's population is either unemployed or underemployed and their numbers are growing by the year at a breakneck pace, as there is but little opportunity for creating new jobs.

Last year, the country's population stood at about 13.81 crore, of which 6.83 crore constituted its labour force. Experts reckon some 2.72 crore members of that force were either jobless or underemployed. There was another great mass of 3.50 crore economically inactive people comprised of students, retired and income recipients, beggars and the multitudes

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UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN BANGLADESH

YEAR	POPULATION	LABOUR FORCE AGE 10+	UNEMPLOYED & UNDEREMPLOYED 39.9 PERCENT OF LABOUR FORCE
1999-2000	12.98 crore	6.02 crore	2.40 crore
2000-2001	12.99 crore	6.21 crore	2.48 crore
2001-2002	13.16 crore	6.41 crore	2.56 crore
2002-2003	13.34 crore	6.62 crore	2.64 crore
2003-2004	13.81 crore	6.83 crore	2.72 crore

Updated unofficial figures based on annual growth rate. The annual growth rate of labour force between 1995-96 to 1999-2000 was 3.2 percent.

SOURCE: BBS

PM asks opposition again to shun 'conspiracy'

BSS, Rajshahi

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday made a fresh call on the main opposition party to work together with the government for people's welfare, discarding the politics of conspiracy and destruction.

"Let us work together to take the country forward. People will give their verdict in due time," she said while addressing a public meeting at Tanor in Rajshahi.

The prime minister rejected the opposition's demand for resignation of the government and said: "People have given us the mandate to rule the country for five years. So, the question of quitting office before the completion of our tenure does not arise."

She said as the opposition party has lost popular support it is trying to go to power with foreign assistance.

"Foreigners can only play with

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No joint move to check militancy in region

Former caretaker govt chief observes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former chief advisor of caretaker government Latifur Rahman yesterday said there are 'no cohesive or coordinated efforts' by governments in the region to ensure religious tolerance and deal with any form of militancy.

"At the moment, we do not see any cohesive or coordinated effort on the part of governments of the region to come to an accord to ensure religious tolerance and deal with any militancy with a common objective," said Latifur Rahman as chief guest at the concluding session of a seminar on Religious Militancy and Security in South Asia held in the capital.

The four-day seminar was jointly organised by Bangladesh Institute of

International and Strategic Studies (Biiss) and the French and German embassies in Dhaka.

Latifur, also a former chief justice, said, "Religion and violence do not go together." Religious fanaticism largely causes religious militancy because fanatics do not understand the true spirit of their faiths, he added.

Countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have not yet developed adequately strong institutions, and they must maintain religious harmony and tolerance in the interest of internal and collective security, Latifur said.

Marking poverty as another reason for the rise in militancy, he said poverty alleviation is imperative to face the challenge. "But it is

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AL working out caretaker govt reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) is working out some reforms of the caretaker government system to ensure neutrality of the interim government in conducting the next general elections slated for early 2007.

Central leaders of the party yesterday at a meeting discussed the matter and observed the 2001 caretaker government had failed to hold a neutral election because of some loopholes in the system, which needed to be removed.

"This is still at the initial stage... we have just observed that reforms of the existing system is necessary," said AL general secretary Abdul Jalil emerging from a meeting of Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC).

Chairing the first ALCWC meeting after the August 21 grenade attack on an AL rally in Dhaka, party chief Sheikh Hasina asked her party leaders and activists to play a more active role in strengthening the out-government movement.

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Ratan Tata flies in today with \$2b investment plan

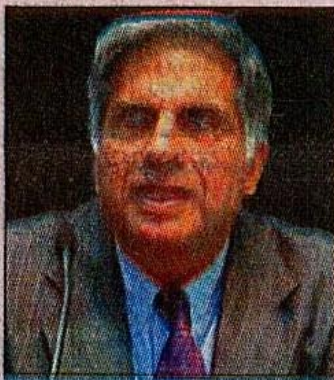
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India's Tata Group Chairman Ratan N Tata flies in Dhaka today to push through his conglomerate's \$2 billion investment plan in Bangladesh, which is likely to shore up foreign direct investment flow.

Accompanied by chief executive officers of the Group's steel, power and chemical segments and other high officials, 68-year-old Tata touches down in his personal jet at Zia International Airport at 11:00am.

The high-profile two-day visit

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Ratan N Tata

9am-3pm office in Ramadan

BSS, Dhaka

The cabinet on Monday night approved a proposal for new office timing during Ramadan for the offices of government, semi-government and autonomous bodies.

The offices of government, semi-government and autonomous bodies will remain open from 9:00am to 3:00pm from Saturday to Wednesday with a 15-minute break from 1:15pm to 1:30pm for Zohr prayers. On Thursdays, the offices will remain open from 9:00am to 2:00pm.

But banks, post offices, telephone, railway, hospitals, state-owned industries, factories and other organisations whose services are essential will follow their own timing considering the public interest, said an official handout.

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Rush of the desperate

As food becomes scarce and jobs even more, people from the north spill out to cities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Driven by a severe joblessness and want of food coupled with skyrocketing prices of essentials, the extreme poor have started rushing into cities including the capital from the northern region affected by an early *monga* (near famine situation).

The *monga* usually prevails in the north from mid October to early December but this year a month-long flooding forced the destitute people of eight northern districts to go to Dhaka and other major cities earlier in search of work.

"I had to leave my village,

because we have no work, no food there," said Abdur Rahim, 40, who came to the capital from Kurigram last week. The poor day-labourer also came to Dhaka in October last year during the famine like situation.

Rahim said the *monga*-hit people in his area are either starving or living on a single meal a day. Most of them want to go to big cities but it is difficult for the penniless people to manage even the bus fare they need, he added.

Ashkan Mian, 42, who came from Rangpur last week, had to sell a tree at his homestead to manage travel

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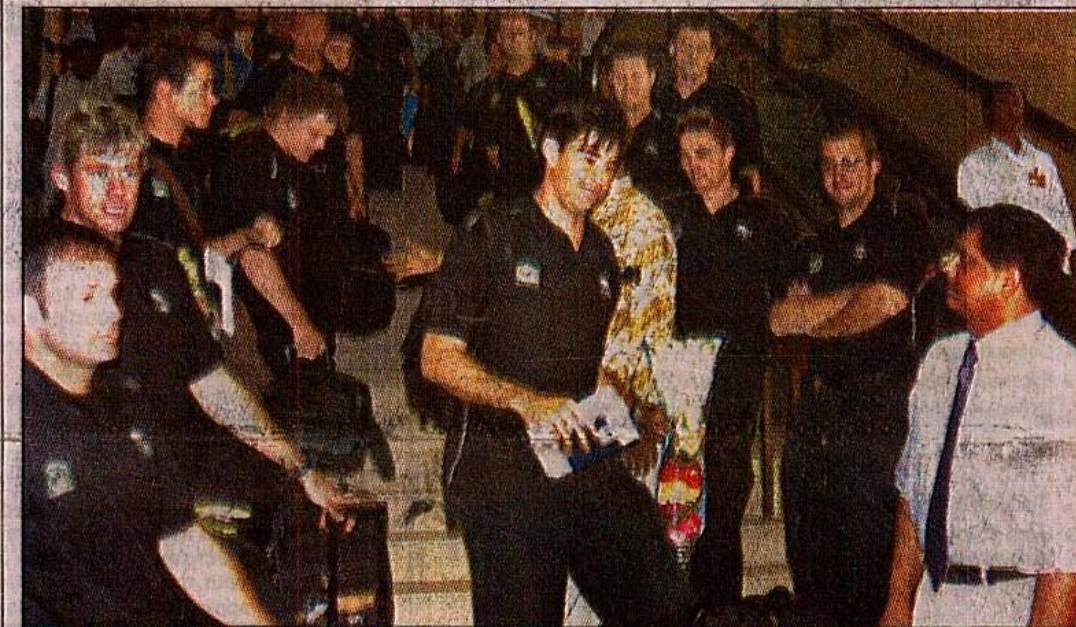


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Captain Stephen Fleming, middle, leads the pack of New Zealand cricketers on arrival at Zia International Airport yesterday. The Kiwis are on a four-week tour to Bangladesh with the first Test beginning in Dhaka on October 19.

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