

Moudud says no talks with opposition on next CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday said the government will not go for any talks with the opposition parties on recruiting a new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC).
"There is no constitutional obligation to consult with the opposition on recruiting the Chief Election

Jalil observes reforms plan too late

UNB, Dhaka
Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday said the reform proposal of outgoing Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed is too late, perhaps a gimmick to attract publicity.
Responding to queries from journalists at the party's Dhanmondi office in the evening, he said there has not been any formal contact from the government regarding the appointment of a new CEC.

Two closed SoEs turn into EPZs next month

Eye \$1.25b investment

SHARIER KHAN

Two major closed-down state owned enterprises (SoEs) -- Adamjee Jute Mills and Chittagong Steel Mills -- are coming up as export processing zones (EPZs) next month with initial investment prospects of more than \$1.25 billion.

Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (Bepza) says the Chittagong Steel Mills situated on 223 acres of land and closed down in 1999, has been renamed Karnaphuli EPZ.

From next month, about 100 plots in 74 acres in Karnaphuli EPZ will be open to investors. The authorities are considering a local proposal for a modern export oriented steel mill on the remaining land.

The Adamjee Jute Mills, covering 294 acres and closed down in July 2002, has been renamed Adamjee

EPZ. It will initially have 70 plots open to investors from September-October.

Adamjee EPZ will gradually have 200 industrial units. Textiles and garments backward linkage investment will get priority here.

Bepza expects more than \$1 billion investment in Karnaphuli EPZ and \$250 million in Adamjee EPZ.

About 50,000 people lost jobs with the closure of the two SoEs but their conversion into EPZs is likely to create employment for more than 1,20,000 people initially.

Both the SoEs were closed down on the advice of the World Bank International Monetary Fund because they were huge loss-making concerns. The government was supposed to convert them into industrial villages within one year of their closure but it sat on the issue for various reasons.

"We are getting tremendous

response from investors," said Bepza Chairman Brig Gen (ret) Zakir Hossain. "Even before our announcement, we have received 35 applications for the Adamjee EPZ. Some of them are major investors in Canada and South Africa."

In view of a large number of applications from Taiwanese investors for the Karnaphuli EPZ, Bepza has asked Taiwan to submit a consolidated proposal so that the entire zone can be allotted to them.

An important proposal on Karnaphuli EPZ has come from Bangladeshi PhP Group and Abul Khaer Group, who want to build a modern steel mill on 150 acres of land. A decision on their proposal is expected in a month.

"Both the groups are reputed entities. If the prime minister

PROTEST AGAINST CRIMES
Cops club Ctg traders in human chain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
The business community in Chittagong yesterday formed a human chain on Chittagong chamber building premises amid obstructions, lathicharges and abuses by police.
Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) Director Amirul Hoque was injured during police actions in front of the chamber building.

SPEAKER, MOUDUD'S REMARKS
Pro-AL lawyers observe work abstention

COURT CORRESPONDENT
Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad yesterday observed a daylong work abstention across the country protesting derogatory remarks of the Speaker and the law minister in the parliament regarding the Supreme Court (SC) and the lawyers' movement, and the killing of advocate Khorshed Alam Bachchu.
The Parishad, an association of



Businessmen form a human chain in Chittagong yesterday to protest frequent robberies on the highways.

SC Bar chief, secy, Rokan 'unwanted'

Pro-govt lawyers declare; anti-govt ones say they have no authority to do so

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tension ran high on the Supreme Court premises after pro-government lawyers yesterday declared three agitating lawyer leaders "unwanted" in the court, while the agitating lawyers brushed aside the declaration, saying that they had no authority to do so.

Pro-government lawyers under the banner of Jatiyatbadi Ainjibi Forum at a meeting declared "unwanted" Supreme Court Bar

Association (SCBA) President Advocate Mahbubey Alam, Secretary Advocate Enayetur Rahim and former SCBA president and Bangladesh Bar Council Vice-Chairman Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud.

The Supreme Court unit of the Forum held the meeting close to a rally of the anti-government lawyers under the banner of Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad.

BNP lawmaker Barrister Ziaur

Japan to continue talks on financing Padma bridge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Japan's Senior Vice-minister for Foreign Affairs Shuzen Tanigawa has assured Bangladesh of continued Japanese assistance for communications and infrastructure development.

The visiting minister gave the assurance when he called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the launch of Khanjahan Ali Bridge over the river Rupsha in Khulna yesterday. Tanigawa also formally invited Khaleda to visit Japan in the near future.

Briefing journalists on the meeting at the National Press Club last night, Yutaka Kikuta, director, South Asia Division of Japanese foreign ministry said the meeting was held in a "very cordial and friendly atmosphere".



PHOTO: STAR

Coffins wait by the Jamuna as rescue vessels in the background make another failed attempt to salvage the sunken launch.

Tax holiday for only 15 sectors in next FY

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will limit tax holiday facilities to industries in 15 sectors in the next fiscal year, sources in the National Board of Revenue (NBR) said.

The NBR has already formulated a draft on tax holiday, which is likely to be finalised at a meeting with the finance and planning minister this week.

The NBR draft has proposed to give tax holiday facilities in the

KARNAPHULI PAPER MILL
China to turn suppliers' credit into soft loan

BDNEWS, Dhaka

China has agreed to convert the suppliers' credit into soft loan to modernise the closed Karnaphuli Paper Mill (KPM) in Chittagong.

However, there was no consensus on selecting the bidder for establishing digital telephone at district level at a cost of US\$ 400 million, provided by China.

Direct power subsidy to farmers suggested

Anwar writes Saifur pump-owners gobble up benefit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The agriculture ministry wants the farm subsidy on electricity to be distributed directly among the farmers, instead of via the irrigation pump-owners locally known as 'water lords'.
This will truly benefit the farmers, not some pump-owners, Agriculture

Minister MK Anwar told Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman in a letter early this month.

The government at present offers 20 percent rebate on the electricity used for agricultural purposes. But, in most cases, its benefits are entirely gobbled up by the irrigation

US probes leakage of Saddam photos

British paper publishes more pictures

AFP, Washington

The US military is investigating how photographs of a jailed Saddam Hussein hit tabloids in New York and London as a British newspaper released a new shot of the former dictator amid an outcry the move violated the Geneva Conventions.

The Sun newspaper -- whose initial pictures prompted the investigation

Prayer Timing		
May 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-40	6-45
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation