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# THE DAILY Star ON FRIDAY

Plus Star Weekend Magazine

REGD. NO. DA 781 VOL. XVIII No. 39 DHAKA FRIDAY FEBRUARY 22, 2008 FALGUN 10, 1414 BS SAFAR 14, 1429 HJIRI 24 PAGES PLUS MAGAZINE PRICE: TK. 10.00

## DRAFT LABOUR FORCE SURVEY REVEALS Employment growth shrinks by half

**INAM AHMED**  
 Employment growth rate has shrunk by half while underemployment swelled by about 50 percent in three years since 2003, reveals the Labour Force Survey (LFS) Report 2005-06 of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) still in its draft form.  
 Paid employment has grown little, and whatever increase it has seen was for the female population.  
 The survey findings include some puzzling indications like a

decline in female employment in manufacturing sector (-8.7 percent) and a negative male employment growth in construction sector (-0.1 percent).  
 Besides, economic dependency ratio, which is measured by inactive people depending on those economically active, being higher in urban areas than rural presents another teaser.  
 According to LFS, annual employment growth was 2.2 percent during 2003 to 2006, compared to 4.4 percent in 2000-2003.

Year	Total	Male	Female
<b>Unemployment rate</b>			
1999-2000	4.3	3.4	7.8
2002-2003	4.3	4.2	4.9
2005-2006	4.3	3.4	7
<b>Underemployment rate</b>			
1999-2000	16.6	7.4	52.8
2002-2003	34.2	23.1	72.3
2005-2006	24.5	10.9	68.3

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## Hasina sent back to jail after medical check-up

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
 Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, who has been suffering from several health related complications, was taken to a city hospital yesterday for medical check-up for the first time since her arrest.  
 She was taken back to the special jail on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises after about three hours of check-up by a 10-member medical team at Square Hospital amid tight security.  
 The former prime minister and eldest daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was arrested on July 16 last year, has been suffering from high blood pressure and other conditions.  
 The condition of her health deteriorated in the last couple of weeks and doctors and the jail authorities recommended

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## Zardari, Sharif agree to form coalition

### Agree to reinstate sacked chief justice; Sharif to contest by-election

**AFP, Islamabad**  
 The party of slain Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto will form a coalition government with ex-premier Nawaz Sharif after their crucial election victory, the parties announced last night.  
 The announcement came after their parties trounced allies of President Pervez Musharraf in parliamentary elections Monday. This poses the former general with a severe challenge to his weakening grip on power.  
 "We have agreed on a common agenda. We will work together to form the government in the centre and in the provinces," Sharif told a news conference after talks with Bhutto's widow Asif Ali Zardari.

Zardari's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is set to be the biggest party in the new parliament, followed by Sharif's.  
 "The sooner he [Musharraf] accepts the verdict, the better it is for him," Sharif told reporters.  
 The move brings them closer to the two-thirds majority they would need to seek Musharraf's impeachment, leaving him in the most precarious position since he seized power in a 1999 coup.  
 Pakistan Muslim League (N) leader Sharif said the two parties had overcome their differences over his demands for the immediate restoration of the country's chief justice, whom Musharraf sacked in November.  
 "In principle there is no disagree-

ment on the restoration of the judiciary. We will work out the modalities in the parliament," said Sharif.  
 The move comes despite what party officials said were efforts by Musharraf to try to divide Zardari and Sharif and persuade Zardari to form a coalition with his own party.  
 Bhutto—who was assassinated in a suicide attack in December that the government has blamed on Al-Qaeda—had been in talks with Musharraf on a possible power-sharing deal in the months before her death.  
 Zardari said the coalition would not involve any parties from the alliance that backed former general Musharraf during the last parliament from 2002 until

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The Central Shaheed Minar is flooded with flowers placed by thousands of people as homage to the Language Movement martyrs yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

## Ekushey observed with reverence

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
 The Central Shaheed Minar was flooded with flowers as thousands barefooted, wearing black ribbons and holding bouquets close to their bosoms thronged there to pay homage to the brave sons of the soil who laid down their lives in 1952 for mother tongue Bangla.  
 At 12:01am, President Iajuddin Ahmed led the nation in paying homage to the martyrs placing wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar. Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed followed him.  
 They stood there in solemn silence for a minute paying their respect to the language movement heroes.  
 With daybreak people kept flooding in leaving hardly any space for free movement at the Central Shaheed Minar, symbol of the spirit of not bowing down to repression.  
 The road from Shabbagh intersection to Doyel Chatter turned into a river of people humming the song: "Amar Bhaiyer Rokte

Rangano Ekushey February." The roads from Nilkhet, Palashi and Chankarpool to the Shaheed Minar seemed like a human sea.  
 While different organisations placed bouquets and wreaths, many went there with a single rose or a tuberose, toddlers holding their mothers' hands or riding on their fathers' shoulders.  
 Freedom fighters, language movement veterans, physically challenged people, youths, day labourers, workers, homeless people, academicians, intellectuals, politicians and foreigners walked in queues.  
 Imbued with the spirit of patriotism, people from all walks of life demanded restoration of democracy, trial of war criminals and establishment of a corruption-free society.  
 On February 21, 1952, Salam, Barkat, Shafiur, Rafiq, Jabbar and a few other brave sons of the soil sacrificed their lives to establish Bangla as one of the state languages of the then Pakistan.

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## COX'S BAZAR PICNIC TRAGEDY 14 killed as bus electrified on hitting pole

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg**  
 At least 14 people died and 20 others were injured when a bus carrying picnickers slammed into an electric pole and was electrified in Cox's Bazar yesterday morning.  
 Thirteen of the dead were passengers of the bus while a pedestrian was also killed. The bus was carrying around 50 garment factory employees and their families to their annual picnic in Cox's Bazar from Chittagong, police said.  
 Identity of 11 victims could be known. They are Rehana, 20, Hasina, 17, Parvin, 25, Jasim, 24, Baki, 18, Bithi, 22, Mita, 24, Rokeya, 26, Arif, 25, Keya, 25, and Nabi Hossain, 22. Of the injured, condition of Shimul and Kajal was critical.  
 Over 300 employees and mem-

bers of their families of Trade Scan Apparel Ltd of Askarabad in Chittagong city under Doublenumbering Police Station had set off around 7:30am for a picnic in six rented buses.  
 The accident occurred around 11:00am at Jettyghat in Rashidnagar of Ramu upazila about 25km from Cox's Bazar. The ill-fated bus first hit a small teak tree when it tried to avoid a head-on collision with a fish-laden truck that suddenly jumped into the wrong side of the highway. Pedestrian Nabi Hossain died on the spot when the bus hit the tree. It then went on to hit an 11-kilovolt electric pole. The pole along with live wires collapsed on the bus electrifying the vehicle and starting a fire.

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## EC PROPOSAL ON INFLUENCING POLLS Defence members to face punishment as well

**SHAKHAWAT LITON**  
 The Election Commission (EC) is seeking legal provision for punishing members of the defence services along with polling officials and police personnel for any act calculated to influence parliamentary election results.  
 If the government makes the EC's proposal a law, a member of the defence services like the others, would face punishment of up to five years' imprisonment with fine for trying to influence the election results while on polls duty.  
 The offence includes persuading one to give vote, dissuade one from giving vote, influencing one in any other way as regards voting

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## Loan default shoots 13pc on economic torpor

**REJAUL KARIM BYRON**  
 Defaulted loans in the banking sector increased by 13 percent due to sluggish economy and loans disbursed on political consideration during the last government.  
 According to Bangladesh Bank (BB) statistics, the loans defaulted till December 31, 2007, totalled Tk 2,624 crore, upped by Tk 2,526 crore from the previous year. Of the increase, the four state-owned banks alone accounted for Tk 2,288 crore.  
 "A number of big businesses began defaulting on their loans in

the wake of anti-graft drives last year," said a top official of a state-owned bank, requesting not to be named.  
 Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, Krishi Bank chairman and former deputy governor of BB, however described fears stemming from anti-graft measures as a minor factor. He said, "Many borrowers couldn't continue paying off the debts mainly because of stagnation in business activities."  
 "Besides, most of the loans disbursed on political consideration in the last months of

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Daily	1800	1850	Daily	1915	2005
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