

Japanese Boat Purchase Case Ershad says he won't engage a lawyer

Hearing in the Special Judge's Court trying former president H M Ershad for corruption in what is known as the 'Japanese Relief Boat Purchase Case' continued yesterday amidst a statement by the accused that henceforth he would not engage any lawyer to defend him in the case, reports BSS.

When the court was about to resume its proceedings yesterday morning Ershad stood up and sought the chair's permission to make a statement.

Public Prosecutor Abdur Razzak Khan took the floor to protest some utterances by the former dictator and said the accused should submit his views through his lawyer and not make any political statement.

Ershad and a Japanese national K Inoyama are the accused in the case relating to the acceptance of the second lowest bid by the Marubeni Corporation for procuring boats under a Japanese debt relief grant, thereby causing the State to suffer a loss of about Taka 33 crore.

During the hearing, Senior Special and Sessions Judge Abdul Salam said that whatever the accused had to say, he

must express in writing either by himself or through his lawyer.

Khandaker Mahbub Hussain, chief counsel for Ershad, said his client was in power for nine years but his bail petition could not be heard even in three and a half years.

Ershad, in his oral statement, said that six benches of the High Court had expressed their embarrassment to hear his bail prayer.

Judge Salam, commenting on the observations made by both Ershad and his counsel, said there was no point in narrating the happenings of the High Court before a subordinate court.

Public Prosecutor Razzak Khan said that despite the accused's decision not to engage any lawyer, the law would take its own course. He said "We were in the midst of a criminal case when the proceedings were going on normally with the defence cross-examining prosecution witness number one."

Judge Salam said the proceedings of the case would continue, but it would be held in the court of the First Additional Sessions Judge, Dhaka who would fix the next date of the trial.

JP supporters, police

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seven persons, including a police constable, were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital with splinter wounds from exploding cocktails, hospital sources said.

The violence broke out at around 3:40 pm when police intercepted a group of female supporters of the JP who tried to break the police cordon at the Panthapath to reach the rally venue.

When the news of the police interception spread in the areas, agitated JP supporters attacked the police deployed at the SAARC Fountain near Sonargaon Hotel. They threw stones and bricks and also hurled handbombs at police who then resorted to firing teargas shells.

The whole area turned into a virtual battlefield. The violence continued for nearly three hours till dusk.

At one stage the JP activists started breaking the boundary wall of the Sonargaon Hotel. They also attacked the Chittagong-bound inter-city train Purabi Express and the Dhaka-bound mail train Issa Khan at the Sonargaon level-crossing.

The engines and several compartments of both trains were badly damaged. The damaged engine of the Purabi was replaced by a new one before it left for Chittagong later. Train service remained suspended for nearly four hours till 7:30 pm due to the incidents, Railway sources said.

It could not be known how many, if any, passengers and Railway staff were injured in

the incident.

When the situation slightly improved a group of JP leaders including acting party chief Mizan Chowdhury reached the venue of the scheduled rally and briefly addressed, without the help of loudspeakers, a small number of party supporters and journalists on duty there. The JP leaders went there riding a Pajero jeep.

"This is the worst form of autocracy," Mizan Chowdhury told the journalists. He also announced a half-day (6 am to 12 noon) hartal for today and urged party supporters to make it a success.

The acting JP chief was accompanied by Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Sirajul Hossain Khan, Sardar Amjad Hossain, party Secretary General Khaledur Rahman Tito, city unit president Col (ret'd) M A Malek, Razia Fayez, Syed Tarek and some other leaders.

Moudud Ahmed came from the Farmgate area in another jeep and addressed a group of party workers near Kawran Bazar. He said that the anti-government agitation would continue until the ruling party accepted the demand for a caretaker government for holding general elections.

Moudud claimed that the unity of the three major opposition parties in Parliament would last till their goal is achieved.

Sources in different city areas said that unruly people damaged vehicles in the evening following the violence in Kawran Bazar areas.

Suicide in city

By DMCH Correspondent
Farida Hossain, 35, a housewife committed suicide at her residence at East Rayer Bazar in the city early yesterday. Dhanmondi police said Farida hanged herself with the ceiling fan in a room at 114 East Rayer Bazar sometime between Monday midnight and 3 am yesterday.

Apprentices

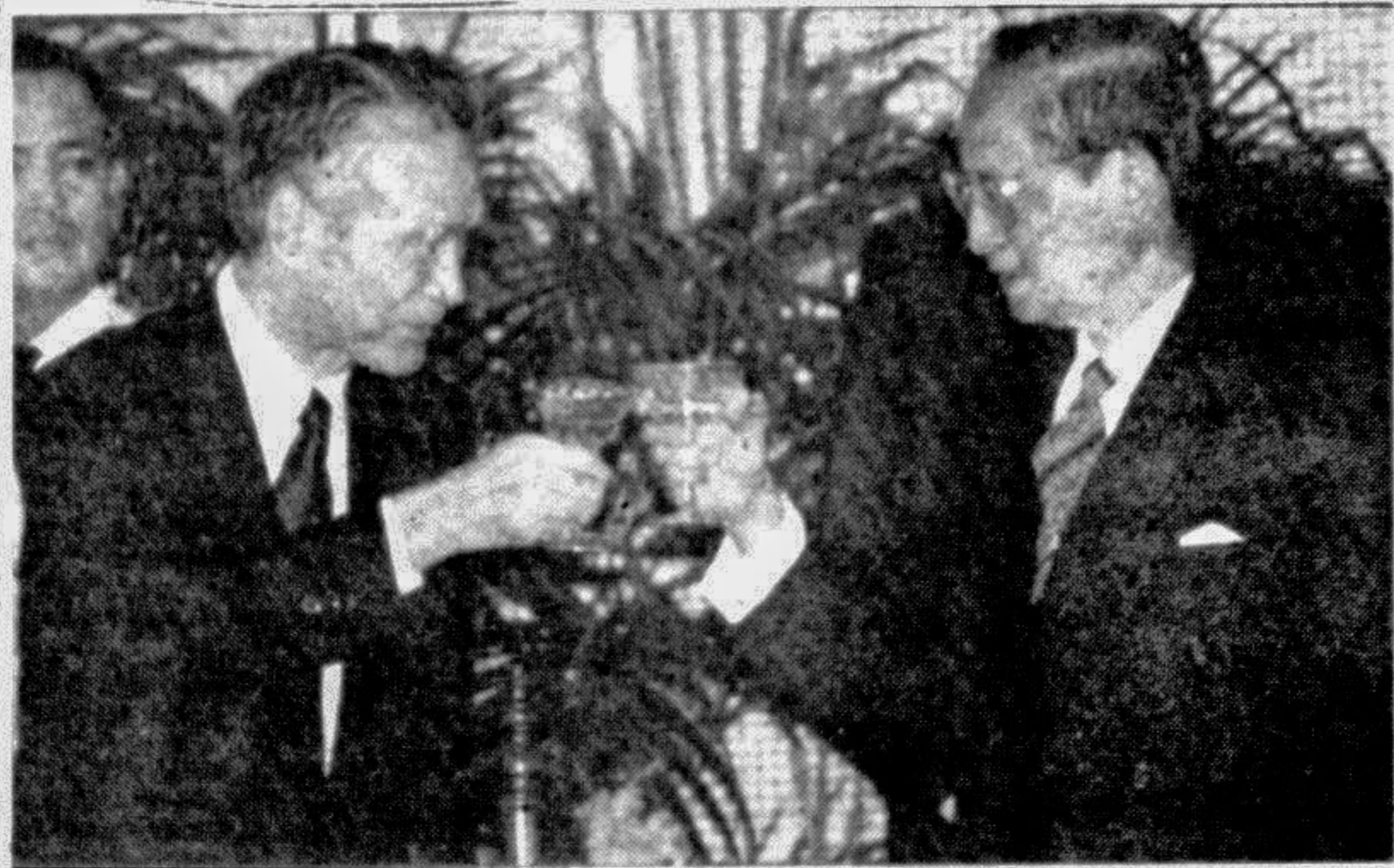
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A number of committees constituted with the representatives of the government, the employers, the workers and the NGOs scrutinised the draft and finalised it.

Some regulations of the draft law stipulate that the recruitment of apprentices for the industrial units will be made by tripartite committees formed with the representatives of the government, the employers and the workers.

Besides practical training, the apprentices will be provided with theoretical knowledge about the vocation under curricula prepared by the authorities. The Bureau of Manpower will conduct periodical inspections of the industries or factories to monitor the training programmes. Certificates will be given to the apprentices after the examinations.

Duration of the apprenticeship period will be determined as per rules to be framed under the Act. The training period will vary from trade to trade. The authorities have already listed 130 trades for such training programmes and the number is likely to increase further.

The employers will also get benefits from the government for arranging training for the workers. These may include reimbursement of 50 per cent of the allowances of workers by government, income tax relief to a certain limit and exemption of Customs duties for training equipment used for training



Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama (L) and President of the Philippines Fidel Ramos toast champagne goblets during a state banquet at the Malacanang Palace yesterday. — AFP photo

Diana denies affairs, plans legal action

LONDON, Aug 23: Britain's tabloid newspapers, revelling in a scandal surrounding Princess Diana, today gave their opinions of her denials that she had made nuisance telephone calls to a millionaire art dealer, reports Reuter.

"It doesn't ring true, DL" proclaimed the top-selling Sun in a banner headline across two of its inside pages.

The rival Daily Mirror asked "If Di didn't do it, who did?" A Sunday newspaper reported that anonymous rui-



source calls to art dealer Oliver Hoare had been traced to the private lines of the Princess, the estranged wife of heir to the British throne Prince Charles.

Hoare is a close friend of Diana and her estranged husband.

The Princess denied the report in an interview published on Monday in the daily Mail.

She told reporter Richard Kay it could not be true as some of the calls were reported to have been made when her diary showed she was occupied elsewhere.

Rival newspapers said despite strenuous efforts, they had failed to confirm the alibis the Princess gave.

The Sun invited readers to call in to register their views in a telephone poll on the question: "Is she telling porkies?" (cockney rhyming slang for lies).

The Today newspaper declared: "You're on your own."

The Times said Diana was considering taking legal action over press allegations. The Princess will consult Lord Mishcon, here lawyer, in the next few days," it said. Mishcon declined comment.

'Mother-child fortnight' from tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The national Mother and Child Survival Fortnight begins tomorrow across the country with a promise to save some eight lakh children and 28 thousand mothers from early death.

During the fortnight, a special drive would be launched to raise the level of awareness among the people about the mother and child health care.

Some eight lakh children under one year of age would be immunised with measles vaccines while another 51 lakh would be given vitamin-A capsules.

During the fortnight, all pregnant mothers would also be immunised and an estimated 11 lakh school children would be given tablets for eradication of intestinal worms.

Besides, some 79 lakh mothers would be made aware of the benefits of breastfeeding, family planning and the use of iodised salt and oral re-hydration saline.

Speaking at a press conference in the capital on this occasion, Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf called upon the health professionals and service delivery personnel to generate health consciousness and make health facilities available to the common man. He mentioned Bangladesh's

achievement in the expanded programme of immunisation (EPI) and oral rehydration treatment (ORT) but pointed out that the rate of mother and child death was still very high.

Deputy Minister for Health and Family Welfare Serajul Haque, Director General of Health Prof M Nurunnabi, Director General of Family Planning Muhammad Kamruzzaman Chowdhury, WHO representative in Bangladesh Wit Jac Sono and UNICEF representative Dr Dilwar Ali Khan also spoke at the press conference.

Director of different health projects under the Health and Family Welfare Ministry were present.

The Deputy Minister pointed out that maternal mortality in Bangladesh was 150 times that of any developed country.

Every year, between 85 to 90 children out of every 1000 live births die in the country, he said.

Serajul Haque said 11 programmes have been taken up in observance of the Mother and Child Survival Fortnight to boost EPI acceptance rate to 80 per cent.

Serajul Haque appreciated the role of the UNICEF, World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank regarding observance of the fortnight.



Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf (R) speaking at a press conference on the launching of the Mother and Child Health Fortnight '94 at the EPI conference room at Mahakhali in the city yesterday. Also seen are Deputy Minister for Health and Family Welfare Mohammad Sirajul Haq (C) and WHO Representative Wit Jak Sono. — Star photo

'Stalemate hurting investment flow'

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term work in agriculture, agribusiness, financial and industrial productivity, along with population and health.

"Macro-economic stability has been achieved. Inflation is very low, exports and remittances are up, the regular budget is in surplus, and reserves stand at US 2.8 billion dollars — five times the amount a few years ago."

Observing that Bangladesh is now virtually self-sufficient in rice production, Merrill pointed out that the reasons for increased food harvest were mainly due to privatisation of fertiliser distribution and increased water pump sales.

"Food production is keeping up with the population growth, as well. This is no accident," he said and added: "Bangladesh is an emerging success story in family planning due to the wise policies implemented over the last twenty years."

The Ambassador, however, stated that there was no room for complacency as Bangladesh will still have some 225 million people by the middle of the next century.

"What life would have been like if these food and population successes had not been achieved?" Merrill asked.

"We could be talking about famine today, as people die here 50 years ago, instead of having the luxury to talk about political dialogue."

Merrill said, "The lack of consensus makes it more difficult for the government to carry out essential economic policy reforms for fear of criticism," and added, "One would hope for some arrangement that would permit important economic measures to move forward."

He posed a question: "What can the US government do to help increase investor confidence and foster more foreign investment?"

Merrill, who read a written text, then added: "First, we continue to encourage the government and the Opposition to engage in a more productive dialogue. We believe this is essential to resolving the current crisis."

He stated that the next critical ingredient of investor interest in Bangladesh is a supportive policy environment along free market lines.

The Ambassador said the US government, since the independence of Bangladesh, has been working for economic growth and poverty alleviation.

"We are continuing our long

medium-term obstacles," the envoy observed.

Merrill expressed the hope that the technical assistance to the banking sector and in commercial law reform provided by his country will help in place the underpinnings of enforceable contracts and transparent procedures for getting business done."

The US Ambassador observed that Bangladesh can be proud of its economic accomplishments since the early

Student leaders from Sylhet meet PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday asked her party and student workers to strengthen the organisations by proper utilisation of people's support to the party, reports UNB.

"You have to acquaint the people with the development works implemented by the government," she said.

Begum Zia was addressing the newly elected members of the student unions of different colleges and the Sylhet Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, who made a courtesy call on her at her Hare Road office last night.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Education Minister Jamiruddin Sirar, DUCSU VP Arifullah Aman MP, BNP central leader Haris Chowdhury, Jatyatabadi Chhatra Dal leaders also spoke.

Gear up one-point agitation: Hasina

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the people to gear up the one-point agitation to force the government to resign, reports UNB.

She was addressing a group of people from Kurigram who recently deserted the Jatyta Party and expressed allegiance to the Awami League leadership at her official residence in the afternoon.

The Awami League chief told the newcomers that the objective of the current agitation against the government was to ensure the voting right of the people and safeguard democracy.

Making a dig at the ruling party she said the BNP does not want elections under a caretaker government. It wants to cling to power and make money through corruption and abuse of power.

Rly track on JMB

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MP, Syed Abul Hossain, MP, Acting Mission Chief of the World Bank Sayed Rana, Van der Linden and high officials participated in the dialogue.

Linden disclosed the ADB's position on the rail-track over the Jamuna bridge in response to a question from Prof Rehman Sobhan, Executive Chairman of the Centre and moderator at the dialogue.

Linden was asked about the use of a metre gauge line over the bridge at a time when trans-national railways would become inevitable for regional development.

Sayed Rana said the World Bank is also studying the possibility of financing the installation of rail-track over the Jamuna bridge. The issue of broad gauge, rail-line would also be taken into consideration, he added.

Rana also said the Bank would also look into the matter of financing trans-national railways for regional development.

Emphasising the need for a huge investment for making the Bangladesh Railway commercially viable, Col (Ret'd) Oil said the Railway sector needs complete overhauling as most of the engines and coaches are outdated.

The donor agencies are not, however, giving any support to this sector as they made the support conditional to making certain changes in the operational aspects of the Railway, the minister said.

The Midnight File

Nigerian court rules against govt order

LAGOS, Aug 23: The Nigerian federal high court today suspended for a week a government order dissolving the leadership of the main striking oil union, judicial officials said. The military government in Nigeria last week announced it was dissolving the leadership of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas workers (UNPENG) and replacing it with a military administrator, reports AFP.

France, Germany appeal Serbia to control border

BORDEAUX, France, Aug 23: France and Germany today appealed to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic to allow effective international controls on Serbia's border with Bosnia, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and French counterpart Alain Juppe issued a joint declaration to Milosevic "To accept an effective international control on the borders with Bosnia-Herzegovina, reports AFP."

Russia to compensate victims of Bolshevism

MOSCOW, Aug 23: The Russian government on Tuesday defended its decision to compensate victims of Soviet political repression for their seized property, which earned immediate criticism as ill-conceived and insufficient, reports AP.

The government's order, which was released on Monday, offered a maximum compensation of about 2 million rubles (about dhs 1,000) to former Soviets, foreigners or their children, whose property was sequestered on the territory of present-day Russia since the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

The government refused to return any nationalised property, such as land, palaces,

Sunken launch

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Laxmpur district, some 50 kilometers south of Chandpur.

But the control room at Laxmpur later informed the Chandpur district administration that a search party which had been sent to the Duanighat area could not locate any of the bodies.

Local people in the area believed they were swept away further downstream by heavy currents before the search party arrived.

One of Dewan's nephews was an Ansar on duty on board the sunken launch while the other was working as a canteen boy on the same vessel.

Dewan also said that among the corpses he had found a female body, wearing gold ornaments and "mehendi" (henna) on her hands.

Meanwhile, officials in Chandpur said three decomposed bodies were found floating on the river Tuesday. The bodies of two males and a female, were brought to Chandpur thana by an engine boat.

Three days after the disaster, relatives of the missing people were searching for the bodies of their dear and near ones along the river banks stretching from Chandpur to Rangaj.

The IWTA rescue vessels Hamza, backed by at least three search vessels, continued the search for the ill-fated MV Dinar-2.

The Deputy Commissioner of Chandpur and the Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong are monitoring the situation.

BSB's target

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manpower, but have introduced commercial operation," the MD said. "This will increase our profitability. Our aim will be to pay the staff of the BSB from the commercial operation. Later, we will also start commercial operations in our Rajshahi, Chittagong and Kulgna offices."

Chairman of BSB, A T M Alamgir MP, also present at the press briefing said the DFI is free of all political influence in its sanctioning of loans.

However, he later added that a large number of BSB loanees belong to the Jatyta Party and the Awami League or are supporters of these two parties.

Announcement

The Daily Star special supplement on 'Banking' will be published tomorrow, Thursday, August 25, 1994. This eight-page special will include exclusive interviews with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Governor of Bangladesh Bank Khorshed Alam, write-ups by MDs of different banks and special reports by The Daily Star staffers and specialists in Banking.

Therefore, tomorrow's Daily Star will be a 20-page issue at the normal price of Tk. 5 only.

Ask the hawkker for your copy tomorrow.

Management

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