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STOCK MARKET

DSE Index	87.82 (+4.39%)
Market capitalization Tk	35.99 billion
Turnover in volume	33,147.25
Turnover in value Tk	5.21 million

Travel & Tourism
Bangladeshis are going places; Wildlife conservationist describes the Sundarbans; Pilgrimage in highland
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Metropolitan
Dhaka Day by Day

NEWS BRIEFS
Hasina shocked
Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her shock at the death of passengers in Friday's train disaster in Dinajpur. In a condolence message, she prayed for the salvation of the departed souls and expressed sympathy for the members of the bereaved families. Hasina demanded enquiry into the accident, punishment to the persons responsible and adequate compensation for the victims, reports UNB.

Perry ends ME S Asia tour
NEW DELHI, Jan 14: US Defence Secretary William Perry left India for Washington today at the end of a week-long trip to the Middle East and South Asia. US officials said, Perry left only hours before US Commerce Secretary Ron Brown was set to arrive in the Indian capital at the start of a five-day visit to promote business ties, reports Reuter.

HBFC distributes Tk 105.10cr loan
The House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC) has distributed Taka 105.10 crore as loans during the first six months of the current fiscal. The house building loans distributed from July 94 to December 94 are 42.88 per cent more than those distributed during the same period of the previous fiscal, reports BSS.



Army personnel cordon off the site of the wreckage at Hili railway station in Dinajpur yesterday. A train collision left at least 25 people dead. — Star photo

Faulty signalling system caused train disaster

By **Morshed Ali Khan**
Friday night's fateful train crash in the remote border town of Hili in Dinajpur reportedly occurred amid an 11-day blackout of the railway's ultra-modern telecommunication system, highly placed sources told The Daily Star yesterday.
Bangladesh Railway (BR), however, officially attributed the accident to human error.
The high frequency microwave telecommunication system had reportedly remained cut off for 11 days, according to the sources who declined to be named.
They said that BR officials had even apprehended that the pointsman were absconding (ill writing of this report last night).
According to the source, the Khulna-bound Shimanta inter-city express collided head-on with the Parbatipur-bound local train stationed on the loop-line of the Hili station. The local train was running three hours behind schedule.
The Shimanta Express, which was to have passed through the station without making a stop, sped along the tracks because it was given a green signal to proceed.
BR officials said the workers responsible for the signals. See Page 12 Col 4

PM orders stern action

HILI (Dinajpur), Jan 14: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today ordered proper compensation for dead and the injured of last night's tragic train accident here and drastic actions against those responsible for the mishap, reports BSS.
The Prime Minister gave the directives while visiting the spot of the accident which left at least 26 people dead and over 100 injured.
UNB adds: A pall of gloom descended on the little frontier town where hundreds of relatives of the accident victims, many of them wailing, assembled around the wreckage as Begum Khaleda Zia. See Page 12 Col 3

Gen Fu meets Khaleda

The visiting member of the Central Military Commission and Chief of General Logistics Department, People's Liberation Army of China General Fu Quanyou paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office in the city yesterday evening, reports BSS.
The Chinese General appreciated the warm hospitality accorded to the members of his delegation by the people of Bangladesh.
Describing the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries as historic and traditional one, the Prime Minister hoped that the current visit would further strengthen the ties between Bangladesh and China.
UNB adds: General Fu Quanyou also met with the chiefs of See Page 12 Col 7

Minister denies any food shortage

Open market sale of cereals from tomorrow

By **Staff Correspondent**
The government yesterday denied reports of a shortage in the foodgrain stock but announced it would launch a country-wide open market sale (OMS) of rice and wheat from Monday.
Besides, the government also announced some measures to contain, what is described as, the manipulated price-hike of rice and wheat.
There is no shortage of foodgrain in the country and the government has sufficient stock until the next harvest, Food Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told a crowded press conference at the Food Ministry in Dhaka.
The present stock of foodgrain in government godowns is 6.39 lakh tons while another 5.14 lakh tons, now in the pipeline, are expected to reach the country by March next, he said.
The immediate steps taken by the Food Ministry include lifting of duties from the import of foodgrains, a relaxation regarding radiation tests of rice imported from Asian countries, priority to the movement of transport carrying foodgrain, formation of committees to monitor OMS at the thana and district levels.
Mannan Bhuiyan, who took over as food minister after a cabinet reshuffle last week, brushed aside newspaper reports on foodgrain shortage in the government godowns, saying those were confusing.
However, he admitted that the price of rice has shot up and he blamed the hoarders and middlemen in the rice trade for the increase.
Poor harvest of aman paddy during the last season and a drought like situation in the northern region of the country also contributed to the price hike, he said.
The price of rice under See Page 12 Col 8

Opposition plans fresh agitation

By **Staff Correspondent**
The Opposition is contemplating fresh agitation programmes like hartals in the last week of this month to mount pressure on the government to realise the demand for holding general elections under a caretaker administration.
Sources in the Opposition camp said there had been no response until last night from the ruling party to Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina's latest proposal, made Tuesday, urging the government to hold elections under a neutral advisory council headed by the President.
There were some behind-the-scenes parleys between See Page 12 Col 1

Death toll 25, says BR

By **Staff Correspondent**
The tragic train accident near the sleepy frontier town of Hili in Dinajpur left behind a trail of dismembered bodies and crumpled coaches.
According to Bangladesh Railway (BR), 25 people lost their lives. Local people, however, said scores died in the accident and their bodies were taken away by trucks.
The BR officials said 100 people were injured in the mishap, many of them seriously.
Nineteen people died on the spot while three died at Birampur hospital, one at Dinajpur, one at Joypurhat and one at Rangpur hospital.
Railway officials said that 37 injured people were admitted to Hakimpur health complex, 30 to Birampur health complex, 14 to Dinajpur hospital and one to Fulbari health complex. The others were taken to different clinics, they added.
Hundreds of relatives thronged the spot waiting for the victims trapped inside the wreckage while those injured were rushed to nearby hospital and clinics, witnesses said.
Six coaches and engines of the two trains were smashed like matchboxes when the Khulna-bound Shimanta inter-city express approaching from the opposite direction rammed into a Parbatipur-bound local train waiting at the station, they said. See Page 12 Col 4

S Arabia masses troops along Yemeni border

SANAA, Jan 14: Saudi Arabia has massed forces near the border with Yemen, including warplanes and missile launchers, Arab diplomats here said today, reports AFP.
They said the build-up started earlier in the week, was focused on the Saada and Mahara provinces on Yemen's northern border.
In Riyadh, Arab diplomats also said the situation on the border was "very tense" on Saturday, following several incidents on the two countries' disputed frontier.
A six month programme to improve the management and healthcare delivery system at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital is being launched today, according to Health Ministry officials.
Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Hossain Yusuf is expected to inaugurate the "Centre for Management Excellence and Quality Assurance" programme at the DMCH.
Under the programme, the hospital director will be given full administrative and financial powers while the administrative power in the hospital will be decentralised upto the unit head level, said one health ministry official.
The programme is being initiated on the basis of recommendations of a WHO funded study on "strengthening the existing administration and management of hospitals with improvement of healthcare quality assurance," completed last year by a team of Bangladeshi experts.
Under the programme increased attention would be given to reduce waiting time for the patients and improve the hygienic conditions, the quality of the diet and the overall management of the state-run hospitals.
A joint monitoring team would also be set up under the programme.
The government is planning to replicate the programme in 11 other district hospitals.

DMCH launches healthcare improvement drive today

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Fertiliser export prohibited

The government has prohibited the export of fertiliser until further order with immediate effect, reports BSS.
The decision was taken at an inter-ministerial meeting on price controlling and proper marketing of fertiliser held at the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday.
Agriculture and Water Resources Minister M. Majidul-Haq presided over the meeting.
Secretary, Ministry of Industries, AHM Abdul Hal, Secretary Ministry of Agriculture, M. Akhtar Ali, Chairman of BCIC, chief of Fertiliser Dealer Society and his colleagues and other officials concerned were present.
The meeting discussed the ways and means of identification of stockists and black marketeers and also discussed the measures to check their activities.
Availability of fertiliser in the mill gate and providing fertiliser to the common farmers at the minimum cost also See Page 12 Col 8

Textile workers put off today's programme

By **Staff Correspondent**
The textile workers and employees have postponed their planned rail-road blockade programme scheduled for today following fruitful discussion with State Minister for Textile Abdul Mannan, says a press release.
The talks were held at the conference room of the Textile Ministry where leaders of the Textile Workers and Employees Federation of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Textile Workers League were present.
The meeting discussed the demands of the workers which include implementation of the wage board award, stopping denationalisation, payment of arrear salaries and 10 per cent See Page 12 Col 7

Mercury drops to 4.07 degrees in Rajshahi

RAJSHAHI, Jan 14: Rajshahi is now under the grip of severe cold as the mercury dropped to 4.07 degrees Celsius today, the lowest of the season, reports BSS.
The mercury dropped by about seven degrees Celsius within twenty four hours. The lowest temperature in the area was recorded 11:02 degrees Celsius yesterday, according to Met office.
The shivering cold with chilly wind virtually paralysed normal city life here today.

Govt move on to get compensation for Gulf returnees

The government is continuing its efforts to realise compensation for the Bangladeshi citizens who were compelled to return home from Iraq and Kuwait in 1991, reports BSS.
An official handout said last night that as soon as the government receives any amount of money as compensation, the concerned people would be informed immediately and measures would be taken to distribute the money in a proper manner.
The handout said the government observed that different quarters were trying to create a confusing situation through spreading misleading information regarding the issue of compensation for See Page 12 Col 1

Advice for Hajj pilgrims

Government yesterday announced that Hajj pilgrims who are unable to travel to Makkah for any reason and have already paid the house rent in advance, will be allowed to perform "Hajj-e-Badal," reports UNB.
An official handout said the pilgrims who want to perform Hajj-e-Badal and deposited Tk 18,000 in advance as house rent in October, will have to pay the rest of the amount of Tk 67,815 by January 31.
The amount has to be deposited with the same bank where the house rent was deposited.
A prescribed form duly filled in is also required to be deposited to the office of the Deputy Commissioner of their respective areas, the handout said.

Key Chechen rebel position falls to Russian troops

GROZNY, Jan 14: A key Chechen rebel position in Grozny fell to the Russians in savage hand-to-hand fighting as Russian troops on Saturday continued to relentlessly pound the heart of the city with artillery and rocket fire, reports AP.
The Russian army said troops captured the Council of Ministers building, its deepest advance yet into the city centre. The building is several hundred meters from the presidential palace, symbolic stronghold of the Chechen battle for independence from Russia.
Chechen fighters confirmed that the building had been taken after heavy fighting in which rebels destroyed eight attacking Russian tanks. The rebels staged several counter-attacks on the building on Saturday, but were repelled by the Russians, the Russian military command said.
It said the Chechens mounted "steadfast resistance" despite the loss of some key positions in Grozny and heavy casualties, and brought reinforcements to the southeastern part of the city and its outskirts.
Russia's Independent Television reported a firefight in the presidential palace on Saturday after some Russian troops managed to get into the devastated building. But it apparently remained under Chechen control.
Russian artillery fire was concentrated on the centre of the city, the deep rumble of exploding artillery shells alternating with the pitched battle of Grad rockets.
They're hitting every inch of the city centre," said Shamil Basaev, a rebel commander, who was injured in the fighting.
Russian commanders appeared to be using their massive artillery strength to try to break the Chechen resistance and clear the way for further ground attacks while minimising their own losses.
Russian jets roared over the city, firing rockets into buildings as plumes of black smoke towered hundreds of metres into the sky. Russian helicopters were heard, also apparently attacking targets.
Several extremely large explosions indicated the Russians were using large ground-to-ground rockets. Some people claimed the Russians were using rockets with multiple warheads.
Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev appeared on Chechen television Friday night with an urgent appeal for more infantry to "clear out the city" of Russian troops, a rebel officer said.
The officer, who did not give his name, was leading a group of about 25 fighters toward the city centre, but only five or six of them had guns.
"Freedom or death," one young rebel said.
Although the rebel forces appeared to be holding the presidential palace, Chechen fighters said it was increasingly difficult to bring supplies and reinforcements to the building.