সাদা সিমেন্ট, মোজাইক, সিংক ও পাডলু
আকর্ষণীয় ও কমমূল্যে
সাদা সিমেন্টঃ জাপান, মালয়েশিয়া
মার্বেল চিপসঃ পাকিস্তান, চায়না, ভারত
কিচেন স্টিল সিংকঃ স্পেন, সুইজারল্যান্ড
ক্রোমেক্স, পাডলুঃ ইংল্যান্ড
মার্বেল ও ব্রোকেন মার্বেলঃ পাকিস্তান ও মালয়েশিয়া
যাবতীয় মোজাইক ও সানমাইকা সমগ্রীর একমাত্র থোক পাইকার
রনী ইন্টারন্যাশনাল

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**STOCK MARKET**

| | |
|---|---|
| DSE Index | 821.55 (—0.65%) |
| Market capitalisation Tk | 39.67 billion |
| Turnover in volume | 34,589 |
| Turnover in value Tk | 7.10 million |

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# Massive quake kills 1681 in Japan

**KOBE, Japan, Jan 17: A massive earthquake pounded central Japan today, killing at least 1681 people and injuring 6334 as buildings, roads and rail lines collapsed and raging fires were ignited, reports Reuter.**

**Police said 1017 people were missing after the quake, the biggest to hit central Japan in nearly half a century, wreaked its worst destruction in the port city of Kobe and caused damage and other deaths in the major business centre of Osaka.**

**Cars were left hanging from overhead motorways, railway lines dangled in mid-air and dazed residents clad only in pyjamas picked through piles of rubble and glass.**

**A stretch of overhead expressway was flipped on to its side, throwing cars to the ground, and trains were catapulted off their tracks by the force of the tremor, which measured 7.2 on the open-ended Richter scale.**

**Kobe residents formed bucket brigades to try to control fires in the city's downtown area which were still burning 13 hours after the tremor.**

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An overview of Neshinomiya shows a collapsed elevated highway yesterday, as a powerful earthquake, measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale, rocked central Japan. So far 2700 people have been reported dead or missing in the country's worst quake in 50 years. — AFP photo

## Govt, Opposition finalising formula to end crisis

Star Report

Negotiators of both the ruling party and the Opposition were giving 'final touch' to a formula which is likely to end the 10-month old political impasse in the country, some sources concerned said yesterday.

"We will get the final word from the Opposition tomorrow morning (Wednesday). You may get something after the Prime Minister returns from Rajshahi," one ruling party negotiator told The Daily Star.

Opposition sources, however, expressed their ignorance about any development for a negotiated settlement.

The ruling party source, however, said that both the sides were still bargaining to gain maximum political points from the negotiations.

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## Opposition's barricade tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The three mainstream opposition parties are scheduled to put up barricades on the roads and railtracks across the country tomorrow to press home their demand for the resignation of the BNP government to pave the way for general elections under a non-party caretaker administration.

Meanwhile, the opposition parties were planning fresh agitations to force the government concede to their demand, opposition sources said adding the new programmes may include hartals for two or three days.

## Writ against MPs' resignation: Hearing today

By Staff Correspondent

The hearing of a writ petition challenging the validity of the mass resignations by 147 Opposition MPs resumes today before a division bench of the High Court.

One Advocate Towfiq Hossain filed the writ challenging the mass resignations.

On the opening day the petitioner's counsel Moksudur Rahman submitted that such *en masse* resignation is not contemplated under Article 67(2) of the Bangladesh Constitution.

The bench comprises Justice M Mahmudur Rahman and Justice M Hamidul Huq.

## Youth shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

A youth was killed and another injured when gunmen opened fire in the city's Rayer Bazaar area near a cinema hall around 7:30 pm yesterday.

Moktar Hossain, 18, was struck by a bullet in the head and died shortly after he was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Details were not available immediately.

The injured, Mahmood, was admitted to the DMCH.

Witnesses said that an armed gang, believed to be outsiders, and a group of local youths clashed for about half an hour. They fired at least 10 shots and exploded over 20 crackers to overpower each other.

Dhanmondi police said, the outsiders carrying guns attacked a group of young men sitting near the cinema hall. Police were investigating the matter until filing of this report around 11:30 last night. They failed to give details.

See Page 12 Col 5

## Party source of strength of a democratic govt: Khaleda

DINAJPUR, Jan 17: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, set to launch a ruling party organisational drive, asked her partymen to further strengthen BNP for ensuring welfare of the people, reports UNB.

Addressing the party activists at Dinajpur Circuit House tonight, the BNP chairperson reminded that the source of strength of a democratic government is its party.

"BNP has its relation with the people and the soil and is always working for the people," she said asking the BNP activists to build themselves as ideal workers of the party.

"Further strengthening the party will ensure more welfare for the countrymen," she pointed out.

The Prime Minister said

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## 82 houses gutted in Comilla: 50 injured

From Our Correspondent

COMILLA, Jan 17: At least 50 persons were injured and some 1000 others rendered homeless when a devastating fire broke out in the Afizabad Colony in the town early today.

Sources said, some 82 kutcha and semi-pucca houses of 98 families were gutted in the fire which broke out at around 3 am. According to unofficial estimate, the extent of damage could be several lakh taka.

Fire Service personnel brought the blaze under control at 6:45 am. Police reached the spot around 5 am, by which time most of the recoverable goods and valuables had been looted by local thugs.

A number of cattle and goats were burnt to death. The inmates could hardly shift their belongings as the fire quickly engulfed the entire area.

According to eyewitnesses, the fire originated from a candle, but sources in the district administration said an electric short circuit was the cause. The Fire Service, however, is yet to find out the actual cause.

Some neighbours, however, did not rule out arson.

The Deputy Commissioner of Comilla rushed to the area and gave Tk 300, one lungi and one saree to each affected family.

The Mahila Station Club and local Awami League leader A K M Bahauddin donated Tk 10,000 each for the victims, while the Bangladesh Private Medical Practitioners' Association, the Lions Club, Red Crescent Society and the Bang-

See Page 12 Col 4

## *Blow to Japan's confidence in quake-resistant architecture*

TOKYO, Jan 17: One casualty of Tuesday's killer earthquake was Japan's confidence in its ability to build structures able to stand through such violent rocking, reports AP.

Many specialists here predicted that newer buildings and structures, subject to tough quake-proofing standards and built with advanced techniques, would not suffer the kind of damage seen in recent US quakes.

But the western port city of Kobe turned out to be just as vulnerable as Los Angeles or San Francisco. Several modern buildings were among those knocked down, and several sections of major highways collapsed.

"I was one of the ones who said Japanese architecture is

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## Small enterprises dev project in limbo

By Krishna P Roy

The fate of the Small Enterprises Development Project (SEDP) has become uncertain since the donor agency concerned is reluctant to provide further fund because of poor performance of the pilot phase of the project, Planning Ministry sources said.

The Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) suspended the operation of the Tk 15.75 crore SEDP in July last year and formed an inter-ministerial committee to evaluate the progress of the project.

The committee, in a report submitted in November, recommended continuation of the project activities to December last. But there has been no other development in the regard till now.

A project official told this correspondent that they were yet to get official approval to begin the main phase of the project. "The project activities, however, are now going on unofficially which will be adjusted later on," he said requesting anonymity.

But an official of the Planning Commission, who was a member of the evaluation committee, said there is little possibility of getting further fund since the donors are not satisfied at the progress of the project during last four years.

The pilot phase of the SEDP began in August, 1990, following an agreement between the Bangladesh government and Norwegian donor agency NORAD with the objective of creating employment opportunities for the poor and helping

See Page 12 Col 6

## Armed attack on shopkeepers at Gopalganj: 50 hurt

From Our Correspondent

GOPALGANJ, Jan 17: At least 50 people were injured when a group of youths launched an armed attack on the shopkeepers of Gatepara market in the town today.

Of the injured, 20 were admitted to Gopalganj Adhunik Hospital while seriously injured Habibur Rahman, Kamal, Alam, Amir Sheikh, Swapan and Ansar were admitted to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital.

A group of armed youths entered the market from nearby area and opened fire indiscriminately in the morning following an earlier altercation between a shopkeeper and a buyer over the price of pulse.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control in the afternoon. They also arrested a youth from madrasha area along with a machete and one round of bullet.

## Shab-e-Barat observed

By Staff Correspondent

Shab-e-Barat, the night of fortune of the Muslims was observed in the country Monday night amidst night-long prayers, recitations from the Holy Quran, *milad mahfil*, *zikir* and other religious rituals seeking divine blessings of the Almighty.

Millions of devotees offered prayers in mosques and homes for peace, progress and prosperity of Bangladesh as well as of the Muslim *Ummah*.

Many visited the graveyards of the city and offered fateha for the salvation of the departed souls of their near and dear ones.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina in separate messages sought divine blessings for the continued welfare of mankind.

A 45-day long book fair began in the city to mark the occasion.

Muslim devotees at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque seek divine blessings during yesterday's Fazr prayers after having prayed night-long on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat. — Star photo

## Fireworks in city despite ban

By Staff Correspondent

Despite warnings of arrest and punishment by the authorities, firework frolic on the occasion of the holy Shab-e-Barat continued across the capital Monday night with children and youths setting off crackers and going for other forms of fun.

Offering of prayers by devotees on 'the night of fortune' was seriously hampered due to innumerable cracker blasts and other fireworks in all areas of the city.

The fanfare resulted in injuries to many, particularly children, and scores had to be treated in different city hospitals and clinics.

Besides, incidents of fire took place in at least 21 places in the city on the night, according to an estimate.

In Arambagh, children ignited crackers placing it on a

See Page 12 Col 2

## NEWS BRIEFS

### PM, Hasina shocked

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed deep shock at the death of more than a 1000 people in a devastating earthquake in Japan. In a condolence message to Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama she expressed deep sorrow at the colossal loss of life and property in the terrible earthquake and conveyed her deepest sympathies to the bereaved families. In a similar message, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina also conveyed her deepest condolences at the disaster, report agencies.

### Inquiry at Hili station Jan 19

Government Inspector of Railways Rezaul Karim Khan will conduct spot inquiry at Hili station on January 19 and Parbatipur January 20-21 into last Friday's train disaster. Passengers of the ill-fated trains or witnesses to the accident have been requested to contact the Inspector by 10 am on the dates to testify for determining the responsibilities for the accident, reports UNB.

### 2 held for keeping drugs, gun

Two people were arrested from a city school yesterday on charge of keeping contraband drugs and a gun in their possession. A special Department of Narcotics Control squad on a tip-off, raided the room of the nightguard of H M Ershad Primary School at Khilgaon at 11:30 am and recovered 51 bottles of phensidyl and a single-barrel gun. Abdul Kadir, 30, and nightguard Swapan, 24, were arrested on charge of keeping the Indian drugs and the Pakistani-made gun. Three cases were filed with Sabujbagh thana, reports UNB.

# *Country well-poised for rapid growth: BOI chief*

By Staff Correspondent

The timing of the Bangladesh Investment Conference is just right as the country is well-poised for rapid growth and the flow of investment has also shown a remarkable upward trend in recent months, said M Mokammel Haque, Executive Chairman of the Board of Investment (BOI).

"The investment conference is very important for Bangladesh and I think we are going to reap tremendous benefit from it," Haque told The Daily Star in an interview yesterday. "We have already been able to generate a lot of interest in the conference and the response from the participants has exceeded the initial expectations."

The prevailing macro-economic stability in the country has created a very favourable investment climate in the country and the BOI has registered some 1025 investment proposals worth over 1.6 billion US dollars during the last nine months alone, he pointed out. "Thus, the conference is being held at the right time when there is already a remarkable surge in investment in the country."

The BOI, he said, has registered 2,301 investment proposals worth some 2.2 billion dollars since March 1991 and December of last year. This includes 2,048 local investments amounting to 1.13 billion dollars and 253 foreign investment worth another 1.1 billion dollars.

The 2 day Bangladesh Investment Conference : The Emerging Tiger, the first country-specific conference to highlight the available investment opportunities, is being jointly organised by BOI and the Euromoney Conferences and is scheduled to begin in the capital on January 24.

Euromoney Conferences is a subsidiary of the leading London-based financial journal called Euromoney and it organises high-profile investment seminars around the world, attracting serious potential foreign investors and fund managers. Euromoney is one of the most influential financial journals and is highly regarded by the business community of the developed countries.

The Bangladesh Investment Conference is a follow up of the 'Subcontinent Investment Forum' held last July in London, where the Bangladesh team, led by the BOI Executive Chairman, put up a successful presentation of the investment opportunities in the country.

As of yesterday, Haque informed, 153 foreign participants have confirmed their participation at the conference. "I think the number of foreign participants at the conference will reach around 200, exceeding the initial estimate of Euromoney of about 100."

Another 400 local participants are expected to attend the 2-day conference at the Hotel Sonargaon.

The conference, he said, would play a catalytic role in attracting foreign direct and indirect investment into the country by highlighting the available investment opportunities among a large number of potential investors and would also provide an opportunity for foreign and local investors to interact with each other.

A large contingent of investors from India have also confirmed their participation at the conference. They include top executives from Taka, Maruti Motors, the JK Group, Triveni, Dabur, Aicker Goodearth, the Godrej Group and Larson and Turbo. "I imagine a lot of interest would be

See Page 12 Col 3

## Hartal observed
## Peasant leader murdered in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Jan 17: A half-day hartal from 6 am to 12 noon today was observed here in the town peacefully protesting the killing of a Krishak Sangram Samity leader, reports UNB.

Krishak Sangram Samity called the hartal in protest against the murder of its district unit secretary Anwar Hossain Master, 42.

Master, also a teacher of Sadhupotiram High School, while talking to people at Tetulti'a Bazar, three miles off the town, was shot dead at

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