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STOCK MARKET

DSE Index	829.56 (-0.64%)
Market capitalisation Tk	40.06 billion
Turnover in volume	37,559
Turnover in value Tk	7.94 million

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NEWS BRIEFS

ALCWC meets today

By Staff Correspondent
 An emergency meeting of the Central Working Committee of the Awami League (ALCWC) will be held today at 3 pm at the Dhanmondi office of the party. Acting party president Abdul Mannan will preside.

Old man beaten to death in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent
 SYLHET, Feb 5: An old man was allegedly beaten to death by his nephews at village Tilakpur under Kandiganon union of Sylhet Sadar thana this morning. The victim, Iskandar Ali, 60, had a long-standing dispute over the boundary of his house with his nephews Batullah and Raushan Ali, who are both absconding.

3 killed in Feni

FENI, Feb 5: Three people including an engineer were killed and 10 others were injured when a Dhaka sound air conditioned coach 'Green Line' collided with a truck today. Shamim Morshed, 30, a computer engineer of Halishahar, Kamal Pasha Nayan of West Mubarakghona of Chittagong and a guide of the bus, Mubarak, died on the spot.

Sehri, Ifar Timings

Ram	Feb	Sehri	Ifar
5	6	—	5:51
6	7	5:16	5:52
7	8	5:16	5:53

Speaker to contest writ

By Supreme Court Correspondent

In a surprise move, Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali appeared before a special bench of the High Court Division through his counsel yesterday during the hearing on the writ petitions regarding *en masse* resignation by 147 opposition members of Parliament.

Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Khandaker filed the *Vokalatnama* (power of attorney), on behalf of the Speaker and the Secretary of Parliament, to the three-member special bench at 1:05 pm.

The Speaker and the Parliament Secretary, who were made respondents 1 and 2 in the writ, appeared before the court in response to the *rule nisi* issued earlier by a two-member division bench of the High Court. Both respondents are also expected to file their replies to the show cause notices soon, sources con-

cerned said. The two-member HC bench on January 18 issued the rule asking the Speaker to explain within seven days the delay in taking action on the resignation letters of the Opposition MPs. The Speaker so long had refrained from giving any reply to the show cause notice.

On the third day of hearing yesterday by the special bench comprising Justice A M Mahmudur Rahman, Justice Kazi Ebadul Huq and Justice Md Abdul Karim, lawyers of the petitioner Towfiq Hossain continued their submission.

Barrister KS Nabi, counsel for Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, placed his arguments challenging the maintainability of the writ.

Barrister Nabi said that the court would have to decide

first about the maintainability of the writs — whether there is any cause of action in filling the case.

He argued that the petitioner, who is demanding declaration of the MPs' resignation as illegal, had no *locus standi* for filing the petition. The petitioner was in no way aggrieved by the resignation of an MP, who can resign at his will, as empowered by the Constitution, he added.

Intervening, the court referred to the petitioner's point that he (petitioner) was affected as orderly life of society has been severely affected by the *en masse* resignations, and by doing so the Opposition had 'created an anarchy.'

In reply, Barrister Nabi said if the petitioner thinks that he is affected by the aftermath of the resignation, he should

come up with a separate writ. The petitioner has no right to question the resignations and this act has got no relation with the street agitation.

Quoting from the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure, Barrister Nabi told the court that the Speaker had got nothing to do with the resignation letters, and had no right to check or re-check the signatures.

Turning to the petitioner's contention, Nabi said the petitioner was mistaking an MP's constitutional right as his own right.

He went on saying, citing clause 67 (2) of the Constitution, that resignation is not a matter between the Speaker and an MP, rather it is between 'me and me.'

The hearing resumes today at 10 am.

'Decision on MPs' resignation delayed due to writs'

By Staff Correspondent

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali told Parliament yesterday he had decided to refrain from giving his decision on the resignations of 147 opposition MPs because two writs regarding the matter were lying with the High Court.

"Since two writs are in the process of hearing in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court and the matter is complicated, involving national and constitutional questions, I decided to put off my decision regarding 147 honourable MPs for the time being," the Speaker said.

He was replying to a 'point of order' raised on January 29 by Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain. Khandaker Delwar asked for the Speaker's ruling that the issuance of rule on the Speaker by the HC had infringed the sovereignty of Parliament and the authority of the Speaker himself.

Razzak Ali said it is the Speaker's exclusive constitutional jurisdiction to give decision on the resignation letters of opposition MPs. The question of sovereignty of Parliament is also involved in the issue, he added.

"I think giving decision on

the so-called resignation letters of the 147 members of Parliament is exclusively in the Speaker's constitutional jurisdiction and it involves the question of sovereignty of Parliament," the Speaker said, giving his ruling at 1-15 pm.

Razzak Ali said "From my part, the question of compromise with any authority does not arise in protecting the sovereignty and responsibility of Parliament envisaged in the Constitution. At any cost, I am determined, like you, to protect the dignity and sovereignty of Parliament."

The Speaker said "it is unconstitutional to infringe — either by the judiciary or the administration — the authority and responsibility of the Parliament, the MPs and the Speaker."

He, however, observed that court ruling did not curb the jurisdiction of the Speaker. The restriction on the Speaker was imposed to ensure that the ruling would not become ineffective.

On January 18, an HC division bench, in a ruling, asked the Speaker to show cause within seven days why actions should not be taken, as re-

quired by the Constitution, regarding the resignation letters of 147 opposition MPs. The bench also asked the Speaker to refrain from giving his decision for an indefinite period.

Razzak Ali said there are examples of confrontation and misunderstanding between the judiciary and the Parliament in many countries in the world. Sometimes, 'on some occasions, Parliament and Speaker sharply reacted to such court rulings. In some particular cases, Speaker and Parliament chose the path of compromise.'

In his two-page ruling, Razzak Ali quoted Justice Raghav Rao of India as having said: "The powers of each one of the three organs have to be exercised as fundamentally subject to the provisions of the Constitution relating to the organs individually as well as to the provisions relating to other organs... it is the respect that is accorded by one organ of the state to the others that ensures a healthy working of the Constitution which is the acid test of its merits whatever the paper value of its provisions."

He also quoted Justice Mostafa Kamal as saying "The

Tk 11300 cr direct loss due to Farakka, JS told

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh suffered a direct loss of Tk 11,300 crore because of unilateral withdrawal of Ganges water by India since the commissioning of the Farakka Barrage, Irrigation and Water Resources Minister Majidul Huq told Parliament yesterday.

"The country incurred a loss of Tk 100 crore as the farmers failed to cultivate *kharij* crop in 1.20 lakh acres of land under the Ganges-Kobadak (GK) project areas," the minister said, adding that the total loss stood at Tk 11,300 crore.

He was responding to a call for attention on public importance raised by treasury bench MP K J Hanida Khanam on the formulation of a national water policy.

The minister said besides the financial loss, agricultural land in 105 thanas of the Ganges basin is faced with severe damage due to lack of irrigation, reduction of land moisture and increased salinity.

He said because of the Farakka Barrage a desertification process has started in the northern part of the country.

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Mirza Hafiz fails to table bill amid opposition

By Staff Correspondent

In the face of opposition from the Treasury Bench members, Minister for Law and Justice Mirza Gholam Hafiz yesterday failed to table a bill relating to the voters' identity card.

Immediately after the Law Minister proposed to introduce the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 1995, ruling party MP Abdur Rob Chowdhury raised objection saying the bill should specify the time by which the issuance of ID cards for voters would be completed.

Almost all the Treasury Bench members supported Chowdhury by banging tables.

The bill was being placed to keep in abeyance a Bill passed last year to give voters ID card. After passage of the Bill, it was not possible for the Election Commission to hold any elections before issuing ID cards. So it became necessary to amend the Bill further, to hold the by-elections without ID cards.

As the Treasury bench MPs demanded specifying the time

See Page 12 Col 2

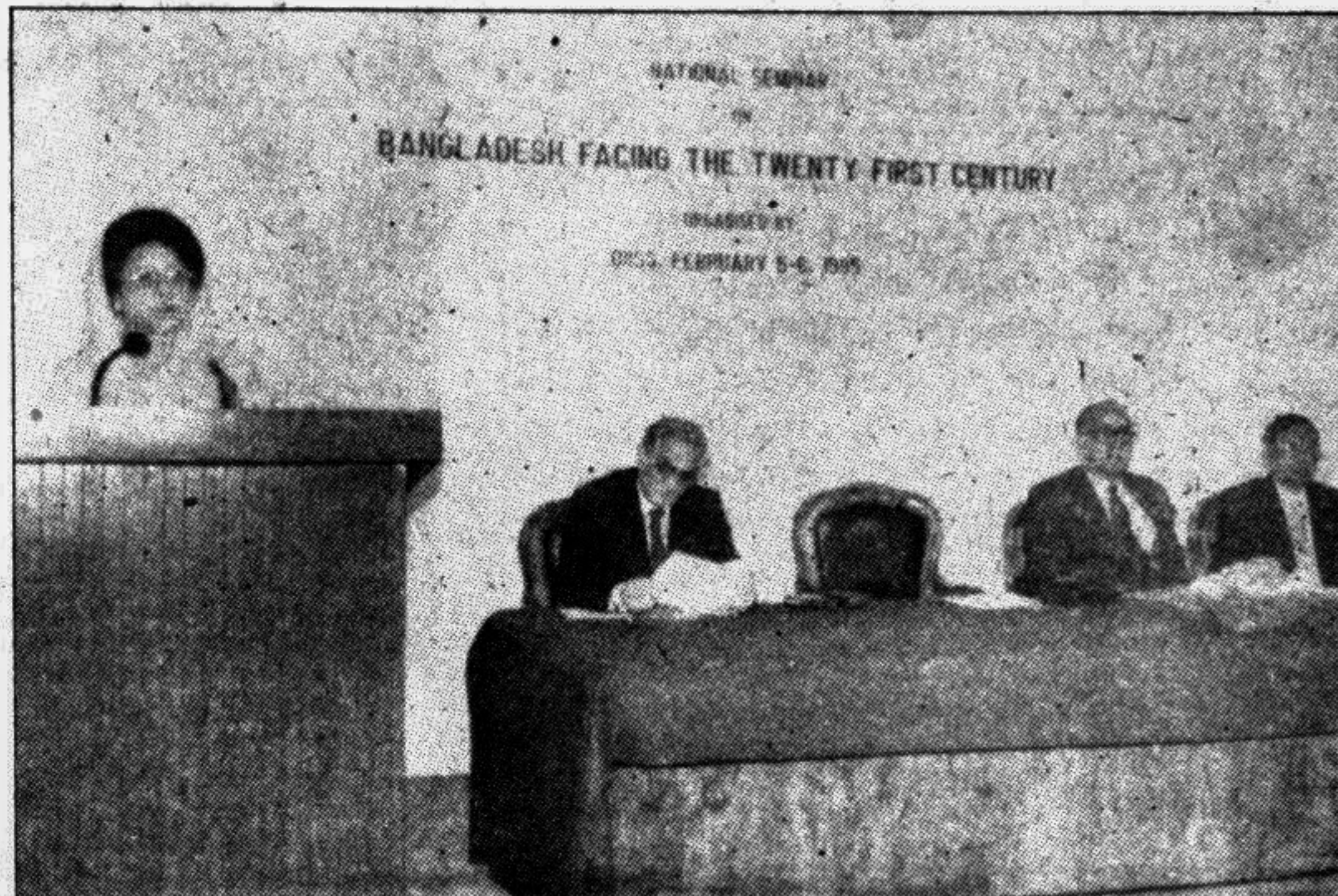
PM's *dal-bhat* plan has become a farce, says AL

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League yesterday said the lives of the people have become unbearable because of unbridled price spiral of the food items and other essential commodities.

Acting president of Awami League Abdul Mannan and General Secretary Zillur Rahman in a joint statement said the Prime Minister's promise for *'dal-bhat'* for the common people has become a 'farce' in the face of the recent price-hike.

Prices of commodities continued to rise at a time when the harvesting was over and the prices were supposed to be at the lowest level, they pointed out.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the national seminar on 'Bangladesh Facing the Twenty-First Century' organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies in the city yesterday — PID photo

PM tells BIIS seminar in city

Consensus and commitment needed for development

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday called for a national consensus and commitment among the socio-political forces to face the challenges of the Twenty-first Century.

"Let us all analyse the problems and potentials of Bangladesh in the coming century and devise the best course of action for our progress and growth on the basis of national consensus," she said.

Consensus and commitment, Begum Zia added, would ensure peace and stability and accelerate the process of development by upholding the present trend of foreign investment, industrialisation and export trade.

The Prime Minister was addressing the inaugural session of a two-day national seminar on 'Bangladesh Facing the Twenty-first Century', organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIIS) in its auditorium.

The inaugural session was also addressed by Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur

Rahman, Chairman of the Board of Governors of BIIS, and Major General Golam Qadir, Director General of the institute.

Begum Zia identified socio-economic development of the country, poverty alleviation and democratisation as the greatest challenges in the coming century.

"We are pledge-bound to achieve the multiple objectives of people-based and people-oriented politics, rapid growth, flourishing of people's creativity, administrative transparency and accountability," she asserted. "I can say from experience that the road to democratisation is rough, but irresistible."

Describing the last few years of the Twentieth Century as eventful for the country, the Prime Minister pointed out that during the period a new dynamism has been infused in a foreign aid dependent decaying economy and a despondent and stagnating society has found ways toward regeneration of social values.

"The gateway to vast possibilities has been opened up," she said. "For flourishing the democratic social order and for long-term socio-economic growth, the principal task before us is to strengthen the political, social and economic institutions."

Sustainability of a democratic society and economic development is achieved through a continuous process, she said emphasising the need to correct the mistakes regularly and to tackle the unexpected hindrances along the way.

"The events of the last few years in our country once again demonstrate that democracy or development cannot be achieved overnight. Dissents, instability and hindrances are the price we have to pay to reach our goal. They cannot be avoided," Begum Zia added.

She said the initial step should be to fully comprehend the nature of possible challenges in the coming century and to analyse them properly in the light of national and international trends.

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Jute accord with Lanka in May likely

Bangladesh is likely to enter into a long term contract with Sri Lanka for supplying jute bags that may fetch Tk 15 crore a year to the country, reports UNB.

Official sources said the two sides reached an understanding on the proposed contract during the recent visit of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to Colombo.

The agreement, proposed to be valid for five years, may be finalised in May when a meeting of the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka Joint Economic Commission is scheduled in Dhaka.

Sri Lanka's annual requirement of jute bags ranges between six and eight million pieces, or six to eight thousand metric tons.

Sources indicated that such an agreement would ensure the country an income of about Tk 15 crore a year from the sales of jute bags to its South Asian neighbour.

Bangladesh has been a traditional supplier of jute goods to Sri Lanka, but lost the sup-

ply contract this year to India. The Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) has recently won a contract for supplying 55,000 metric tons of jute goods worth about Tk 115 crore to Syria.

Kazi Zafar gets ad-interim bail

Former prime minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed was yesterday granted *ad-interim* bail when he surrendered before a district court and prayed for bail in a corruption case, reports UNB.

District and Sessions Judge Md Abdus Salam fixed February 14 to hear the matter.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption on November 11 last year filed a criminal case against Kazi Zafar with Motijheel police for cheating and defalcation.

According to the case, the government suffered a loss of one crore taka due to an order

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21 more killed as gunmen open fire in Karachi

KARACHI, Feb 5: Gunmen killed at least 21 people and wounded 41 in a flareup of violence in the southern Pakistani city of Karachi today, police said, reports Reuter.

Eleven of the victims were killed and 15 people were wounded on a Kashmiri fund-raising camp in central Karachi.

Police said gunmen later fired shots inside a mosque in western Karachi, killing eight people and wounding 25. Two other people were killed in separate shootings in central Karachi.

The attack at the camp set up by a Kashmiri militant group, Harakattul Ansar, took place during a government-called general strike to back a separatist revolt in Indian-

ruled Kashmir. But it was not immediately clear whether the shooting was related to the strike or to the political and ethnic violence that has plagued Pakistan's commercial capital for years.

Thirty-one people have been killed in the city in the past two days. At least 12 people died and 11 were wounded in sectarian and factional violence on Saturday, police said.

Traditional tensions between Sunni and Shiite Muslims have mounted in Karachi, a city of more than 12 million people, with the start of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan this week.

Doctors estimate last year's death toll from ethnic, sectarian and factional violence in Karachi at more than 800 and more than 75 people were killed in January.

Check price-hike of essentials: Ctg Chamber

From Staff Correspondent
 CHITTAGONG, Feb 5: The President of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, S M Abul Kalam, has urged the government and other organisations concerned to take steps to check the price spiral of all essential commodities during the month of Ramadan.

In a press release issued today, the chamber president also called upon the government to ensure the adequate supply of commodities.

Besides, he called upon the traders to help keep the prices of essentials stable for the greater interest of the consumers.

He pointed out that due to shortage of vessels one lakh metric tons of rice could not be imported from Pakistan even after the opening of LCs. This has led to shortage of food, Kalam alleged.

Country experiences light rains

By Staff Correspondent
 The capital and other parts of the country experienced light rains yesterday.

The Met office also forecast light rains or thundershowers at one or two places over Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions during the period ending at 6:00 pm today.

The country is also likely to experience one or two light to moderate nor-westers by the end of this month, it said.

The Met office also hinted that day temperature may fall by one to two degrees Celsius all over the country today.

Trace rains of less than one millimetre (mm) were recorded in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Madaripur, Jessore, Chuadanga and Rajshahi while 3mm rainfall was reported at Ishwardi, 2mm at Bogra and one millimetre at Tangail yesterday.



A man walks among the ruins of a district in Grozny yesterday. Only the southeast of the Chechen capital still remains in Chechen hands. There was a relative lull in the fighting yesterday. — AFP photo