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STOCK MARKET

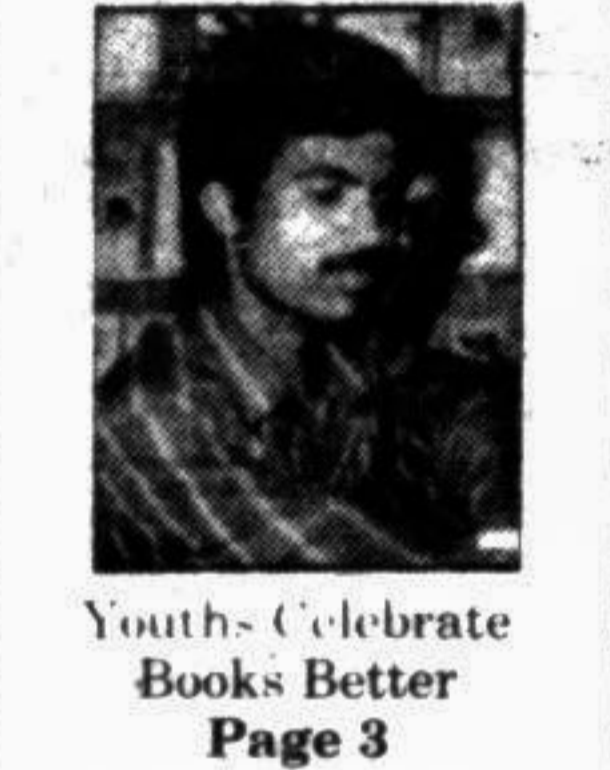
DSE Index 802.37 (-0.90%)
Market capitalisation Tk 38.75 billion
Turnover in volume 4898
Turnover in value Tk 9.12 million

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NEWS BRIEFS

Transport strike in southern zone

BARISAL, Feb 14: Road communications of southern zone via Barisal broke down from this noon as angry motor workers halted buses following an attack on them by some passengers. The District Motorjan Sramik Union sources said a number of students and passengers attacked them at Shikarpur ferry ghat this morning, reports UNB.

BCS viva time rescheduled

The viva-voce examination of the 15th BCS scheduled to be held at 9:30 this morning has been shifted to 1 pm today. All concerned have been requested to appear before the examination as per rescheduled time, reports UNB.

NZ minister due Feb 17

Sir Robin Gray, the New Zealand Minister of State for Foreign Affairs will visit Bangladesh from February 17-18. He will be accompanied by a four member delegation, reports BSS quoting official sources.

APSU calls hartal in Pabna today

PABNA, Feb 14: The All Party Students' Unity (APSU) has called a day-long hartal in the town from 6 am tomorrow to protest the killing of a Chhatra Bhaitree leader, Debashish Bhattacharya Rupam, a student of the Rajshahi University was stabbed to death allegedly by the Shibir activists on Monday on his way to his home district Pabna, after the closure of the university on Sunday, reports UNB.

Sehri, Iftar Timings

Ram	Feb	Sehri	Iftar
14	15	—	5:57
15	16	5:11	5:58
16	17	5:11	5:58

Further cut in advance income tax Garments factories to be taken out of city

By Staff Correspondent
Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said yesterday an industrial estate outside the capital for relocation of the garments factories would be set up soon to reduce the pressure on the stretched resources of the crowded metropolis.

He made the announcement at a reception accorded to him by the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA) yesterday at the Hotel Sonargaon.

The proposal for a separate industrial estate was made by BGMEA president Redwan Ahmed, MP. He said such a move would markedly ease the traffic problem, which is becoming acute by the day because of an ever-increasing workforce migrating to the capital for employment.

Appreciating the proposal, Saifur Rahman said the government would consider the proposal in all earnestness and necessary steps would follow soon.

He agreed the traffic problem had become unbearable and that with the relocation of the garments industries the problem could be reduced remarkably.

Redwan Ahmed said about ten lakh workers are presently employed in over 2000 garments units spread all over the city. A relocation of the factories would greatly reduce the serious pressure on the city's limited public utilities.

The Finance Minister also announced that the advance income tax deduction for the garments sector would be reduced to 25 per cent from the existing 50 per cent sometime after Eid-ul-Fitr, especially to help the new entrepreneurs.

He said a reduction of the value added tax for the sector was also being considered. The matter was taken up at a high-level meeting on February 19, he informed, and assured that he would speak in favour of the proposal.

The Finance Minister said the problems faced by the garments sector were not the problems of the entrepreneurs alone, because the government, too, was in partnership with the private sector to promote trade and industrialisation.

The government was in constant touch with the private entrepreneurs and not a single problem would remain unresolved, he assured, adding that the entrepreneurs must, however, keep in mind the limitations and extend their cooperation in the smooth running of the state.

MPs' resignation Hearing of second writ begins

Supreme Court Correspondent
Hearing in the writ petition challenging the Speaker's withholding of the resignation letters submitted by opposition MPs began before a special bench of the High Court yesterday.

This second writ related to the en masse resignation by 147 opposition members of Parliament, was filed by Advocate Alauddin Khaled while his counsel Advocate A B M Nurul Islam initiated submission highlighting major points of the prayer.

Advocate Islam pleaded that Parliament should be regulated by the Rules of Procedure under which the Speaker should bring the facts of resignation to the notice of the House. "But he (Speaker) had till now not done so, in violation of the Constitution", he said.

The counsel mentioned that under constitutional provisions, by-elections to the vacant seats of Parliament should be completed within 90 days after the seats fall vacant. After the resignation by 147 MPs on December 28 last, 90 days' time from that date remained allotted for holding by-elections, but the Speaker had obstructed statutory functions of the Election Commission by withholding the resignation letters, Advocate Islam said.

In his submission, the counsel said that he would make his reply controverting the 12 points raised in the affidavit filed for the Speaker by his counsel Barrister Asrarul Hossain yesterday.

The speaker's affidavit states that the writ had no...



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia exchanging pleasantries with invitees to an Iftar party she hosted at her 30, Hare Road official residence yesterday evening —Star photo

'Exemptions from VAT should be minimised'

A fiscal expert yesterday strongly advocated that exemptions from Value Added Tax (VAT) be squeezed to the minimum to avoid distortions and cascading effect in the taxation modality, reports UNB.

If exemption is given, the system gets distorted. Some distortions have already appeared in the system, said Shah Abdul Hannan, Deputy Governor of the Bangladesh Bank.

Presenting a paper on VAT at a seminar, he said it is very necessary that exemption from the VAT system is kept to the minimum level despite a pressure for leaving aside many items.

Once exemption is given, tax on tax reappears, real tax incidence on even VAT-able items due to non-availability of credit, transparency of the system is lost, the audit trail is disturbed, increasing the scope of evasion and export suffers.

It is very urgent that after introduction of VAT, its benefit is not lost by distortion of the system, said Hannan, also a former member of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) who pioneered the system in the country.

He felt that the country should have a VAT with the broadest base with no exemption except for basic food, essential agricultural inputs and on processed agricultural produce.

For the small industry, the central bank deputy governor advised not to allow any benefit except on the basis of a turnover.

One exemption is creating pressure for another exemption, Hannan said, noting that some industries are facing serious disadvantage due to exemption on substitute industry.

He said these were also creating serious difficulties for administration. These distortions have to be removed as soon as possible for effective administration of VAT and success of the system.

In addition to the above...

US ready to fund child workers' edn programme

A visiting team from the US Labour Department indicated that the United States is ready to finance any comprehensive programme for education of under age workers in Bangladesh's garment industry, reports UNB.

The offer was made yesterday during its meeting with local and international organisations on education programme for child workers in garment sector.

Representatives of garment exporters, human rights organisations, labour groups, international organisations like the UNICEF and ILO, and NGOs were present in the meeting at the US embassy.

The two-member team, comprising Associate Deputy Under-Secretary Andrew J Samet of the US Department of Labour and Child Labour Study Director Sonia A Rosen, began a three-day visit here Monday to assess programme...



This picture, of riot police beating up the daily Al-Mojadded's photographer Asif, was taken by The Daily Star's Emran Hossain seconds before he himself became the target for the policemen's wrath during yesterday's violence involving Islami Chhatra Shibir activists at the Bangla Motors crossing in the city. Emran now lies critically injured at the Pangu Hospital.

Third day of workers' strike passes off

By Staff Correspondent
The third day of the 96-hour strike in the jute, yarn and textile mills and the railroad barricade programme passed off peacefully, barring a clash at Adamjee, yesterday.

The labour leaders, however, claimed that two more workers, hurt in Monday's clash, succumbed to their injuries at the Narsingdi Hospital.

Soliman, a worker of the Janata Jute Mills at Ghorashal, was killed and 100 others were injured in the clashes on Monday. Of the injured, several were rushed to the Narsingdi Hospital.

Joint convener of the Pat-Bastra-Suta Kal Sangram Parishad Shah Alam said, Tajul Islam and another worker of the Janata Jute Mills died at the hospital yesterday.

The Deputy Commissioner's office at Narsingdi, however, did not confirm any death in the hospital.

The Sangram Parishad, a combine of four trade union bodies and federations of the workers of jute, yarn and text...

50 hurt as Shibir goes on rampage

By Staff Correspondent
Unruly activists of the pro-Jamaat Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) went on the rampage in the city yesterday, creating havoc for an hour, damaging about a hundred vehicles and injuring scores of people.

At least 50 persons including 17 constables were injured in clashes between the police and the ICS activists who seemed hell-bent on creating a situation by unleashing terror on hapless passers-by.

Four journalists including a minister's wife and Editor of a Bengali daily Tahmina Shawkat were also injured during the hour-long clash that began at around 12:30 pm near the Bangla Motors crossing.

Of the injured, a photographer of The Daily Star, Emran Hossain, was admitted to the Pangu Hospital and one Babul Hossain to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital with serious injuries, medical sources said.

Witnesses said, the ICS activists became angry when the police on duty prevented them from moving towards the PM's office.

Police at one stage started indiscriminately baton-charging the ICS activists and...

Police do it yet again

By Staff Correspondent
Three press photographers, including a Daily Star man, were severely assaulted by the police while on professional duty in the city yesterday.

The Daily Star's Emran Hossain landed at the Pangu (orthopaedic) Hospital with two fractured vertebrae just below his neck while the two others — Asif of the daily Al-Mujadded and Ruhul of the daily Sangram — were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Emran was also admitted there before being shifted to the Pangu Hospital where he was put under traction and sedation.

The Islami Chhatra Shibir, student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, brought out a procession which wanted to march towards the Prime Minister's office, ostensibly to submit a memorandum regarding Monday's violence on the Rajshahi University campus where it claimed two of its activists had been killed by pro-BNP Chhatra Dal activists.

Witnesses said the unprovoked, indiscriminate police assault on the photographers started immediately after the Shibir activists, halted by police near the Bangla Motors crossing, started stoning the policemen and passing vehicles.

Police opened fire and used batons and teargas to disperse the rioters, they said. A few riot policemen then overplayed their hand by swooping on some press photographers who were taking photographs of the police action against the Shibir men.

Witnesses said that the police first beat up Asif of the Al-Mujadded.

When the young photographer...

City's digital telephone exchanges overloaded

By Sharier Khan
Digital telephone services in different areas of the capital have become troublesome in recent months due to imbalance and overloaded systems, according to Telegraph and Telephone (T & T) Board sources.

Although digital telephone lines are supposed to be free from cross connections and should have optimum services capability, many such phones under the Maghbaraz and Nilkhet exchanges have become infested with problems previously attributed to the old analogue system.

From November to December last year most digital phones under the Nilkhet and Maghbaraz exchanges have been giving delayed dialtones. According to telephone users, sometimes they have to wait for minutes to get a dialtone or sometimes their phones would simply go dead for a couple of hours.

During daytime, many phones remain cross-connected with more than two lines, according to telephone users in Motijheel, Dilkhusha, Shahjahanpur, Maghbaraz, Dhanmondi Green Road and other places.

When contacted, Additional Divisional Engineer of the Nilkhet exchange Javed Rabbani told The Daily Star that such problems would continue in his exchange for at least another two months. However, the T & T Board has already taken measures to improve the digital services, he said.

In the Nilkhet exchange, two central processors (CP) control 9,300 digital lines. But the number of lines was not distributed equally among the two CPs. One CP controls some 3000 lines and the other 6000 lines. As a result the telephone lines in the second CP have been gradually developing various problems.

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PM honoured by IAAE of Moscow

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has been conferred the highest honorary degree and academic gown by the International Academy of the Authorised Education (IAAE) of Moscow for her contributions in the field of education in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

The certificate of the degree was handed to Begum Zia at her office yesterday.

The International Academy of the Authorised Education of Moscow External University of Humanities (MEUH), the largest and most popular institutions of higher education in Russia, also elected Begum Zia as its honorary member.

"You are world renowned for your dedication and achievements towards attaining the programmes of universal primary and secondary education by the year 2000," the president and secretary of IAAE said in a letter of commendation to the Prime Minister.

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Nurses' strike continues

By Staff Correspondent
Suffering of the patients mounted on the second day of the three-day nurses' strike in government hospitals yesterday.

A good number of patients left the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday due to the strike, our DMCH Correspondent reported.

However, an emergency squad of the striking nurses were attending serious patients at the hospital, he said.

Bangladesh Student Nurses Union gave the strike call on Sunday demanding immediate realisation of their eight-point charter of demands.

The nurses union is also opposing the recruitment of assistant nurses on the plea that while they have to study four years other candidates were becoming nurses after completing only a six-month course.

110 held in Rajshahi

RAJSHAHI, Feb 14: Police rounded up 110 people from the city early today in a bid to pacify the situation following widespread violence, reports UNB.

Nine of them were picked up from the Islami Chhatra Shibir office at Hetemkhan area. Huge bows and arrows and cocktails were also recovered from the ICS office in the pre-dawn swoop.

Police said 32 people were arrested for burning the university hall, 9 held under the Explosives Act and 60 for unleashing violence on the RU campus, where three students have been killed and more than 100 injured in the last three days.

They said the haul-up was part of the measure to contain the spread of terrorism and subversive activity in the city.

Ten platoons of police led by RMP DC raided different messes and houses of Budhpara, Binodpur, Meherchandi, Mirjapur and Dashmari around the varsity campus, and Hetemkhan in the city, including the residence of a teacher of the university and arrested the 110 people.