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STOCK MARKET

DSE Index	797.90 (+0.21%)
Market capitalisation Tk	38.54 billion
Turnover in volume	43769.50
Turnover in value Tk	8.30 million

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Opposition cold-shoulders Badruddoza's offer

Opposition leaders yesterday gave a cold shoulder to Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury's offer for fresh dialogue, saying that general elections under a neutral, caretaker government was the only answer to the prevailing crisis.

Talking to UNB, Tofael Ahmed of the Awami League, Moudud Ahmed of the Jatiya Party and Maulana Matiur Rahman Nizami of the Jamaat-e-Islami expressed identical views that a dialogue could be held but that should be to work out details for elections under a neutral, non-party, caretaker government.

They said that a pre-dialogue condition could be created only by immediate dissolution of Parliament, resignation of the Prime Minister with announcement of the election schedule and formation of a neutral caretaker government for interim period.

Prof B Chowdhury, at a seminar in Dhaka Friday, proposed

that a fresh dialogue could be held on the basis of the BNP's December 28 proposal which envisaged resignation of the Prime Minister 30 days ahead of elections.

Tofael Ahmed said there cannot be any dialogue until this Parliament is dissolved, the Prime Minister resigns and the government agrees to hold fresh polls.

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There is no question of returning to Parliament, nor of joining any elections under the BNP government, he added. Moudud Ahmed said: "It is too late. This kind of proposal for fresh dialogue carries no substance."

He said there is no scope for any dialogue on the pre-December 28 situation.

"On the night of the 28th, we gave a lot of concessions in order to avoid the resignations. But the government did not respond," he said, adding that

the context and the perspective had changed completely after the submission of the Opposition's resignations.

The Jatiya Party leader said: "Now we go back to our original position and that there will be no political government in office during the time of elections and, for that reason, the Prime Minister should resign as soon as the election schedule is announced, which means about 60 days before the elections."

Moudud added that there had to be a non-partisan, neutral caretaker government for the interim period. "So, any dialogue on the basis of this can take place only to work out the details of elections. But, in principle, these two conditions have to be fulfilled."

Jamaat leader Moulana Nizami questioned the futility of repetition of a 'meaningless' dialogue and said that the present 'problem could be resolved by immediate elections under a caretaker government.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia being explained the dredging work at the construction site of the Jamuna multipurpose bridge at Kalihati in Tangail yesterday. She reviewed the progress of the physical construction of the JMB which began last October 16. — PID photo



The Afghan religious movement called Taliban moves for the frontline on a tank captured from the Hezb-i-Islami faction at Charasyab, 25 km from Kabul yesterday. The Taliban are a student-led militant Islamic force who are based in Charasyab. — AFP photo

Taliban refuse to join Afghan interim govt

KABUL, Feb 18: UN special envoy Mahmoud Mestiri met here today with leaders of a powerful new army of Islamic militants but they refused to join a proposed Afghan governing council unless three conditions were met, reports AFP.

Gulab Borjan, a commander of the Taliban forces now just outside the capital after forcing President Burhanuddin Rabbani's troops to pull back.

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said 12 representatives of the student-led group met for 90 minutes with Mestiri.

He told AFP that they demanded three things: A "neutral" security force composed of their men must be put in place in Kabul, all 30 Afghan provinces must be represented; and only "good Muslims" must be allowed on the council.

This neutral force should be composed of the Taliban who enjoy the support of the Afghan population," the commission said. — See Page 12 Col 4

Work on JMB going on ahead of schedule, PM told

KALIHATI (Tangail), Feb 18: Work on the 720 million dollar Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB) is going faster than the time schedule, the Prime Minister was informed today, reports UNB.

Begum Khaleda Zia was briefed on the work progress when she visited the construction site of the bridge co-financed by the government of Japan, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Briefing the Prime Minister on the eastern side of the under-construction bridge, at Kalihati, Executive Director of the JMB Authority Mohammad Ali said, the gigantic project

was ahead of schedule and expected to be completed by late 1997.

Begum Zia laid the foundation stone of the 18.5-metre-broad bridge on the western side of the project in Sirajganj on April 10 and the work commenced on October 16 last year.

The co-financiers have made their loan effective from August 12 last and Tk 550 crore has been allocated in the current ADP for the implementation of the project.

Funds utilisation, so far, has been 32 per cent of the ADP allocation for the bridge which ultimately will have a two-lane

road, a single metre gauge railway line, a 230 KV electric power line, a high-pressure natural gas pipeline, telecommunication cables.

All expressed his hope that work on the 4.8-kilometre-long bridge over the Jamuna river, would continue to progress according to schedule and be completed by December 1997.

He said mobilisation of plants and equipment, pile load testing, soil investigation, building of harbour, embankment protection work, construction of approach roads proceeded quite satisfactorily.

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Two arrested in Havildar Hashem murder case

By Staff Correspondent

The Lalbagh police on Friday arrested two persons wanted in the Havildar Hashem murder case.

Havildar Abul Hashem, 45, of the Lalbagh outpost at Posta was killed in a bomb attack by unidentified miscreants on February 11.

Acting on a tip-off, the police arrested Nashu alias Naisha, 19, and Sona Miah alias Sonai, 25, from the Kusrir Char under Zazira thana in Shariatpur district.

During interrogation, Nashu said he was injured while he charged a cocktail on Havildar Hashem.

Sona Miah is wanted in seven other cases filed with Lalbagh thana.

Agitating female students of DU call strike today

By DU Correspondent

The resident female students of the Dhaka University will enforce a day-long strike on the campus today demanding amendment to some procedural rules and regulations.

The demands of the students include keeping the gates of the ladies' hostels open in the evening in line with the timings of the central library and withdrawal of the system of monitoring attendance at the dormitories.

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IU Shibir locks up VC's office

ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY, Feb 18: The Islamic Chhatra Shibir today put the office of the Islamic University Vice-Chancellor under lock and key demanding his resignation, cancellation of "illegal" admission and appointment of a neutral registrar, reports UNB.

All-Party Student Unity (APSU) also observed a three-day strike at the university from February 11 demanding the VC's resignation.

On February 14, the APSU also stuck a poster at the gate of the VC's office, that read "The VC office has been locked up."

Since then, Vice-Chancellor M A Hamid did not turn up at his office.

All the student groups brought out processions on the campus and held rallies today on the issue.

Police-hawkers clash leaves 10 hurt in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 18: At least 10 persons were injured in a clash between police and hawkers in front of the Reazuddin Bazar and New Market here this afternoon.

Police said seven persons, mostly footpath vendors, were arrested during the clash.

The clash took place when police went there to evict the roadside hawkers, police and witnesses said.

The agitated hawkers started brick-batting the police and the clash continued for half an hour, witnesses said adding that the mob was dispersed after police resorted to baton charge.

17 killed in Indian road accident

NEW DELHI, Feb 18: At least 17 people were drowned when a trailer they were travelling in veered off a bridge and fell into an irrigation canal Saturday, news reports said. All the victims of the accident in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh were farm workers who were travelling from one village to another. Press Trust of India news agency said quoting the police, reports AP.

Contraband worth Tk 6 lakh seized

RAJSHAHI, Feb 18: BDR personnel of the 20 Rifle Battalion seized Indian current nets surma (antimony), sugar, grapes, brass ware, radio spares, sarees and carbon paper worth over Taka six lakh during anti-smuggling drives at the Rajshahi Court Station, the Padma Kodai Kathi char, Atarpara and Baro Mile today, reports BSS.

58 killed in N Iraq

TEHRAN, Feb 18: At least 58 people have been killed in the latest clashes between rival Kurdish factions in northern Iraq, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported today. More than 30 people were also injured in an attack by the Hezbollah group in the Kurdish-held region and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) on the forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) around the town of Rawanduz, reports AFP.

Huge arms seized in Karachi

KARACHI, Feb 18: The police today seized caches of weapons and ammunition as well as 5,000 rounds of ammunition in a sweep through the city's troubled central district, officials said. Several kalashnikov rifles and handguns were impounded by a joint police and paramilitary task force in a five-hour house-to-house search, they said, reports AFP.

Sehri, Iftar Timings

Ram	Feb	Sehri	Iftar
18	19	—	5:59
19	20	5:09	6:00
20	21	5:08	6:01

Minister decries jute workers' ultimatum

The Jute Minister termed the threatened all-out action by workers after Eid as part of a deep-rooted conspiracy to obstruct the rising export of jute and jute goods expected to fetch over Tk 1500 crore in the current financial year.

Brigadier (Rtd) A S M Hannan Shah noted with deep anguish the labour unrest and dubbed the last week's 96-hour strike and rail-road blockade by jute and textile workers illegal.

Talking to UNB at his Secretariat chamber yesterday morning, the minister said with complacence that this year's record export performance is attributable to hard work of the employees of the 29 public-sector industrial units.

Giving his reaction on the jute mill workers' ultimatum, Hannan Shah said the government-owned jute mills had fully implemented the recommendations of the Minimum Wages Commission.

"As a matter of fact, the managements of all 27 jute mills and two carpet mills in the public sector have implemented to the letter and in spirit the agreement they have concluded with their respective bargaining agents," he said.

Naturally, therefore, the workers of public sector jute mills have no grievance which may incite them to strike or blockade. All their arrear wages and allowances have been cleared. Therefore, the public sector jute mill workers have no cause for strike or hartal.

The minister noted with satisfaction that during their four-day strike last week, most of the public-sector jute mills remained operational and the workers therein worked in full swing.

"Only a few in the public sector, including the Adamjee Jute Mills, was tempted to strike work."

The minister alleged, the four-day strike was engineered by quarters which could not view with equanimity of Bangladesh's rising volume of jute and jute goods export.

He complained that large funds were doled out to make last week's strike in jute mills a success. Their conspiracy was designed to disrupt production loss in jute mills leading to their loss of export earnings.

Hannan Shah, who called the four-day strike illegal, made it unmistakably clear that the government was not

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'Leave her alone,' replies Arjun

GUWAHATI, Feb 18: 'Leave her alone,' was the reply expelled Congress (I) leader Arjun Singh gave when questioned whether he had the support of Sonia Gandhi, reports PTI.

At a meet-the-press programme in the Guwahati press club here, Singh said on several occasions Sonia had personally wanted to keep aloof from politics. "She should not be dragged into any controversy," he said.

He described his successor, Madhob Rao Scindia, as 'an able leader who can deliver the goods,' while speaking about the development of human resources in the country.

Zia-ul-Haq's son held

ISLAMABAD, Feb 18: Mohammad Ejaz-ul-Haq, an opposition leader and the eldest son of late dictator General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, was arrested today for brandishing a Kalashnikov rifle at a public meeting, police said, reports AFP.

Newspapers carried pictures of Ejaz-ul-Haq waving the rifle from the platform during a rally held in nearby Rawalpindi Friday, to protest alleged victimisation of conservative opposition members

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Hasina meets WB, US State Dept officials

By Staff Correspondent

The economic policy of the Awami League was explained to the World Bank by party chief Sheikh Hasina in Washington yesterday.

The AL chief had a meeting with World Bank Director for South Asia Poul Eisenmann at the bank's office.

Hasina briefed Eisenmann on her party's economic policy and discussed other related issues, according to an AL press release.

The prevailing 'crisis in investment, poverty alleviation, See Page 12 Col 3

ALCWC meet seeks dissolution of Sangsad

By Staff Correspondent

An emergency meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) yesterday reiterated the demand for immediate dissolution of Parliament and general elections under a neutral, caretaker government.

Chaired by acting president Abdul Mannan, the meeting said the BNP government should resign after dissolving the "illegal parliament" to overcome the present political crisis.

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CSE body meets

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Feb 18: The executive committee of the newly floated second stock exchange of the country in the port city held its first meeting here today.

Of the 12 members of the committee, eight including its Chairman Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury attended the two-hour meeting held at Agrabad.

The meeting chaired by Amir Khosru was attended by, among others, Salman Ispahani of Ispahani group, Salauddin Kasem Khan of A K Khan group of companies, Qamrul Islam Chowdhury of James Finlay Plc, Abul Kalam, president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry and A K Chowdhury, its General Secretary.

Later, talking to The Daily Star Amir Khosru said "We discussed today how to get things move very fast as we are trying to start operation of Chittagong Stock Exchange

Mother forced to watch executions of four sons

KARACHI, Feb 18: A mother was forced to watch Saturday as gunmen bound and executed her four sons, all Shiite Muslims, police said, reports AP.

Authorities believe the executions were in retaliation for the shooting death earlier Saturday of a Sunni Muslim activist.

The incidents raise concerns about increasing violence between militant Shiite and Sunni Muslim groups.

Police have not arrested anyone in the execution killings of the four sons of Begum Agha, nor has anyone taken responsibility for the killings. However, Pakistan's militant Shites are blaming their Sunni Muslim enemies.

"They are indiscriminately killing Shites," said Hussein Turabi, secretary general of a militant Shiite group, called

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Palestinian children play on a Jerusalem Old City street where Israeli security was on high alert for the third Friday-noon prayers in the holy month of Ramadan. The number of Muslims attending the Jum'a prayers in the Old City has dropped as the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip are still closed. — AFP photo