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DSE Index 823.71 (+0.93%)  
Market capitalisation Tk 39.78 billion  
Turnover in volume 86345.25  
Turnover in value Tk 18.66 million

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**NEWS BRIEFS**

**BSC seamen call off strike**

**From Staff Correspondent**  
CHITTAGONG, Feb 25: The seamen of the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) called off their strike and resumed their duties last night, BSC sources said. The strike, which began Wednesday, demanding increased wages and other facilities was called off after negotiations with the BSC authorities yesterday afternoon.

**Speaker off to London**

Speaker Shaukuzzaman Ali left the city for London in the early hours yesterday. During his stay in London, the Speaker will attend the conference on "People and Parliament" and the 44th parliamentary seminar to be arranged by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. UK branch, reports UNB.

**Pakistan frees 2 Christians**

LAHORE, Feb 25: The authorities today released two Christians here today after their acquittal of blasphemy charges by a superior Pakistani court, prison sources said. Salamat Masih, 14, and his uncle Rehmat Masih, 44, were met by members from the Roman Catholic Church and some other Christian community members, they said.

**Shri, Iftar Timings**

Ram	Feb	Shri	Iftar
25	26	—	6:03
26	27	5:04	6:03
27	28	5:03	6:04

## Khaleda asks Delhi to solve water crisis

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the Indian government to fulfil its commitment to resolve the Farakka problem which has caused serious water crisis in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

"Water is now our main problem. A serious crisis prevails in the northern and western regions of the country due to shortage of Ganges water as its flow now stands at 9,000 cusecs. There is no water in the rivers and the subsoil water table has subsided," she said, venting concern over the situation.

Begum Zia underscored the need for an immediate short-term agreement to alleviate the water problem due to the dehydrational impact of the Farakka barrage.

Farakka is also causing ecological imbalance, affecting the country's agriculture, destroying the mangrove of Sundarbans, while industries in the Khulna area are facing serious difficulties and an overall desertification process has started in the country's northwestern part.

Begum Zia, talking to the outgoing Indian High Commissioner, noted with concern that India was yet to take any effective measure to resolve the outstanding problem.

K Raghunath made a farewell call on the Prime Minister at the PM's office in the afternoon.

Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao had earlier committed to resolve the Farakka problem for alleviating the suffering of the people of Bangladesh.

Begum Zia asked the outgoing envoy to take the water issue up with his government. "You have stayed here for about three years. You have witnessed the water crisis facing the country."

Referring to the trade imbalance between the two closest neighbours, she urged the Indian government to lower the tariff wall to narrow the trade gap.

She, in this context, hoped that India would take necessary steps to make the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) effective.

On the issue of tribal refugees, the Prime Minister sought cooperation for resuming soon the return of the trib-

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The Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh K. Raghunath made a farewell call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday. —PID photo

## Bid for privatising jute mills draw poor response

Government's bid for of-flooding state-owned jute mills is being upset by poor response from the private sector despite offers of unprecedented incentive package, reports UNB.

An official source yesterday said a tender for divesting four jute mills, issued on October 10 last year, drew "extremely" poor response that forced the authorities to extend the tender deadline twice.

Even after the second extension expired on February 6, only one mill in Chittagong — Hafiz Jute Mills — received five valid bids.

No bid was received for the other three BJMC mills — Qaumi Jute Mills (Sirajganj), Jessore Jute Industries (Jessore) and Aleem Jute Mills (Khulna).

The tender was issued as a first step of the Jute Ministry's programme to privatise 10 state-owned jute mills as agreed upon with the World Bank under the 250 million US dollar Jute Sector Adjustment Credit.

Amid poor response for the first batch of four mills, the Privatisation Board floated another tender for the second batch of six jute mills middle of last month. This too has little chance of attracting prospective buyers, the source said.

Although the March 14 deadline for submission of tenders for the second batch is approaching, not a single tender was sold until yesterday although the offered units are among the best performing ones of the BJMC.

The authorities have also communicated the sale offer to foreign buyers through the country's missions abroad, but so far without any result.

A high official attributed the indifference of the entrepreneurs to the deteriorating image of the jute industry, resulting from declining market prospect and volatile labour situation.

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## Tk 613 cr earned from fish exports

The country has attained marked improvements in the fields of fisheries and livestock through increase of export earnings and reduction of imports in the livestock sector, reports BSS.

This was told at a review meeting yesterday on the development projects of the Fisheries and Livestock Ministry held at the International Conference Centre (ICC) with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

It said the country earned Taka 613 crore from fish exports during July-October last year while the import of milk powder came down to Taka 148 crore last year from Taka 204 crore in 1989-90.

At the meeting Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman said fish production stood at about 11 lakh metric tons in 1993-94 as against 8.50 lakh metric tons during the year 1989-90.

The growth rate, he said, also increased to 7.20 per cent in 1993-94 as against two per cent in 1989-90.

The minister said the country's milk, meat and egg production rose to 14 lakh metric tons, five lakh metric tons and 240 crore pieces respectively in 1993-94 as against 13.23 lakh metric tons, 4.35 lakh metric tons and 191 crore pieces during the third five-year plan period.

The meeting reviewed the progress in the implementation of the on-going development project under the Fisheries and Livestock Ministry.

It was told at the meeting that 33 development projects of the ministry were now under implementation in the year 1994-95.

Taka 173.37 crore was allocated for the implementation of these projects, it was told.

The Prime Minister directed all concerned authorities to timely implement the projects under the ministry.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, State Minister for Planning Dr A Moyeen Khan, the Cabinet Secretary, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and the secretaries concerned were present.

## Deadline for US ultimatum to China expires today

### Talks to avert trade war still on

BEIJING, Feb 25: Sino-US trade talks will go down to the wire as negotiations are scheduled to continue Sunday, the deadline for reaching an agreement that would avert a trade war, reports AP.

If no agreement is reached by noon Sunday on stopping Chinese piracy of American movies, music and other intellectual property, punitive US tariffs will be imposed on more than 1 billion dollars worth of Chinese goods. Retaliatory sanctions from China would also go into effect on Sunday.

The Chinese side announced Saturday evening that the talks would resume Sunday.

"The current round of talks has been conducted in an earnest and pragmatic way and common understanding has been reached in some aspects," the official Xinhua News Agency paraphrased an unidentified Chinese negotiator as saying.

But US Embassy officials were unable to immediately confirm that more talks were planned.

US Deputy Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky said Saturday morning that "significant progress" had to be made that day to reach an agreement. She said talks Friday had failed to make headway, and declined to predict an outcome.

The United States has been urging China since 1993 to improve enforcement of laws protecting intellectual property rights. The United States says American businesses lose 1 billion dollars annually to Chinese piracy of American films, software, compact discs and other products.

The punitive sanctions on just over 1 billion dollar worth of Chinese goods represent just a fraction of bilateral trade, which last year totalled 45 billion dollars. About 37 billion dollar of that was in Chinese exports to the United States.

Song Jian, minister of the State Science and Technology Commission, told Barshefsky during a Friday meeting that China has "a firm determination" to crack down on piracy.

He added that foreign investors are not alone in wanting a crackdown. Chinese industries and intellectuals also are demanding tougher measures against piracy, Xinhua reported Song saying.

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## Rajuk project for developing 1000 lanes, by-lanes, road crossings

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Rajdhani Unnayan Karipakkha (Rajuk) has taken up a project for developing 1000 lanes, by-lanes and road junctions to improve the city's traffic system and ease the traffic jam, highly placed Rajuk sources said.

The Rajuk authorities, under the project styled "1000 lane, by-lane and road junction project," would develop lanes, by-lanes and road crossings in the capital and Narayanganj town as well as the approach roads to the city, the sources added.

The project would be implemented with Rajuk's own funds and the authorities have already selected some city traffic points that need immediate attention. They would bring more city areas under the project.

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## 20 shot dead at 2 Karachi mosques

KARACHI, Feb 25: Gunmen burst into two Shi'ite Muslim mosques and fired on worshippers early Saturday, killing at least 20 men in the latest outburst of sectarian violence, witnesses said, reports AP.

The massacres were part of a bitter feud between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim extremists, one of several running battles in the southern port city of Karachi. The killings brought the overnight death toll to 27. Seven people were gunned down Friday night, including two men shot at a Sunni mosque.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government has been powerless to stop the rampant violence in Karachi that has claimed more than 1,000 lives in the past year. Many residents feel the city is sliding into anarchy.

In the first attack at dawn Saturday, six men were killed and several injured when four assailants began shooting with automatic weapons in the Abul-Abbas mosque in the Karachi East district.

Less than an hour later, 14 people were killed and several injured when gunmen executed the victims after herding them into the corner of one room at the nearby Mehfil Murtaza mosque, witnesses said.

The victims were shot from behind and their crumpled bodies fell on top of one another. The walls and the carpet were awash with blood and dozens of bullet cartridges littered the floor.

"This is a peaceful area. Why did they attack here?" said a weeping Ali Haider, whose brother was killed.

Women wailed in agony, and

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The city Awami League held an Iftar party yesterday which was attended by party president Sheikh Hasina and Mayor Md Hanif among others. —Star photo

## AL calls for all-out agitation

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League yesterday called upon the people from all walks of life to wage an all-out agitation to compel the government to accept the demand for elections under a caretaker administration.

The call was made at the emergency meeting of the AL central working committee held with party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair. The two-day meeting concluded yesterday.

The meeting said that the government was not hesitating to push the country towards destruction to retain its grip on power.

There is no alternative to

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## Naga tribals blow up train: 25 troops die

NEW DELHI, India, Feb 25: At least 25 Indian soldiers were killed and more than 30 others injured when two powerful bombs blew up a rail coach reserved for military personnel in northeastern India today, news reports said, says AP.

Separatist tribal guerrillas are suspected to have caused the explosions at dawn as the speeding train, Tinsukia Mail, neared Diphu station in Assam state.

The site is near Nagaland state, the main theater of battle for an independent nation for the Naga tribesmen.

The region, the easternmost strip of India, is about 2,500 kilometers east of New Delhi.

The soldiers were returning from neighbouring Manipur state after helping local authorities in conducting legislative elections.

The explosions ripped apart the car in which the soldiers were travelling and derailed three other rail coaches. Officials could not immediately say how the explosives were planted inside the coach.

Only eight bodies could be identified. The others were mutilated beyond recognition. Press Trust of India said quoting railway officials at the site of the explosion.

Fifteen soldiers died instantaneously, while eight others

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## Kazi Zafar's threat

CHITTAGONG, Feb 25: The Jatiya Party (JP) will launch an out- government agitation along with the workers if repression on the community continues, JP leader Kazi Zafar Ahmed said here today, reports UNB.

The government is pursuing a policy of carrot-and-stick policy towards workers, Kazi Zafar said while addressing as chief guest a workers' gathering at Paharlati here this afternoon to protest countrywide workers' killing.

He also condemned the Speaker's role towards the resignation of the opposition members, terming the ruling BNP "politically dead" after the resignation of opposition MPs on December 28 last year.

## G-7 readies information super-highway draft

BRUSSELS, Feb 25: The world's top industrial nations are set to agree a text on the information superhighway this weekend that touts the significance of the new technologies while offering a broad blueprint for further cooperation, according to a draft obtained by Reuters.

"The smooth and effective transition towards the information society is one of the most important tasks that should be undertaken in the last decade of the 20th century," say the draft.

"Conclusions" for a group of seven meeting in Brussels.

The text endorses eight core principles for promoting the new computer, telecommunications and media networks, among them encouraging private investment, defining an adaptable regulatory framework and promoting equality of opportunity to the citizen.

It says "universal service" — or widespread access to the networks — is a top priority, saying policies must "avoid the emergence of two classes of citizens."

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## Khulna ward commissioner shot dead

KHULNA, Feb 25: A ward commissioner of Khulna city, Moslemuddin Khan, was shot dead in broad daylight here today by unidentified assailants, reports UNB.

Police said a group of miscreants shot him point-blank with a revolver while buying Zakat cloth at Mominagar Cloth Store at the Powerhouse crossing around 5 pm.

Khan, 43, also a labour leader, was rushed to a nearby clinic where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Commissioner of Ward No 15 of the city corporation, he was a former JP leader and joined the Awami League recently.

His body was taken to Rupsha Ghat No 7, a labour area. Hearing the news of his killing the ghat labourers staged angry protests, damaging several vehicles on the Jessore-Khulna road.

KMP Commissioner Abdur Rahim visited the spot.

## Humayun Zahir murder Cross-examination of approver begins

By Court Correspondent

Mohammad Alam, the approver in the sensational Humayun Zahir murder case, yesterday told the court that he did not know Humayun Zahir until the principal accused in the case Akhteruzzaman Choudhury Babu showed him a photograph of Zahir on April 4, 1993.

A leading businessman of the country, Zahir was murdered at his Dhanmondi residence on April 8.

Alam also denied having been hired by the local political or business rivals of Zahir to kill him when the state-appointed defence counsel cross-examined him for nearly two hours in the court of the Second Additional District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka yesterday.

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## Nurses postpone programmes

The Bangladesh Diploma Nurses' Association and Bangladesh Diploma Student Nurses' Union yesterday announced the postponement of their on-going agitation with effect from 8 am today, reports BSS.

In separate press releases, the two associations said they have taken the decision considering the holy month of Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr and suffering of the critical patients.

Two associations have advised their members to join their duties immediately.

However, the two associations have decided to hold council conference on March 10 to plan next course of programmes.

## Shibir enforces hartal in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Feb 25: An eight-hour hartal beginning at six in the morning passed off peacefully in the city today, reports BSS.

The Chittagong city chapter of the pro-Jamaat Bangladesh Islam-e-Chhatra Shibir enforced the hartal to protest the alleged killing of Khairul Islam, claimed to be a Shibir activist.

Khairul Islam, a madrasah student, was kidnapped from a shopping complex and later shot dead by some unknown miscreants near the Almas cinema hall on Wednesday last. Shops and other establishments were closed.

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## Indian goods seized from post parcels

By Staff Correspondent

The Customs intelligence seized Indian goods from post parcels at Posta post office yesterday.

Acting on a tip, the customs men seized 235 pieces of Indian silk and synthetic sarees and 40,000 pieces of Indian Super-Max blades from ten packages.

The estimated value of the goods is about Taka three lakh 49 thousand.

The parcels were sent to different individuals in Dhaka at different addresses.

According to sources, organised gangs of smugglers are involved in a racket of dispatching smuggled Indian goods from the country's border.



Frenchman Jacques Delors (L), former president of the European Commission, chairs the round table of business leaders while German EU Commissioner Martin Bangemann (R) prepares his papers at the Group of Seven most industrialised countries (G-7) meeting about cooperation on information "superhighway" technology. —AFP photo