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DSE MARKET

DSE price index	900.80 (+1.12%)
Market capital	Tk 56.41 billion
Transactions in volume	300051
Transactions in value	Tk 51.25 million

CSE MARKET

CSE price index	426.28 (+0.07%)
Market capital	Tk 9959172690
Transactions in volume	620
Transactions in value	Tk 163486.00

Supplement

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NEWS BRIEFS

Biswas, Khaleda greet Demirel, Tansu Ciller

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in separate messages yesterday greeted Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Prime Minister Tansu Ciller on the occasion of the National Day of Turkey today, reports UNB.

PM starts N-dist visit tomorrow

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will pay a two-day visit to northwestern districts from tomorrow to see the progress of post-flood rehabilitation programmes. Official sources said she would first fly to Naogaon tomorrow afternoon. Then she will visit Rajshahi, Bogra, Gaibandha and Dinajpur districts, reports UNB.

Gunshots at DU

By DU Correspondent
Some three rounds of gunshots were heard in the TSC area of Dhaka University yesterday evening. Students ran inside the TSC out of fear. The reason of firing could not be known immediately.

BCU observes hunger strike

By DU Correspondent
The Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) staged a token hunger strike in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday demanding an end to the current political crisis. The BCU leaders urged both the government and opposition parties to resolve the crisis in the greater interest of the country.

Khaleda sends letter to Hasina for dialogue

Star Report

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia last night sent a letter to Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina inviting her to sit for a dialogue.

Sheikh Hasina was not present at her residence and the letter was handed over to a staff of the AL chief.

The contents of the letter could not be known immediately.

Sources, however, said that the letter contained an invitation to the former

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament to sit for a dialogue to discuss election issue.

Acting Secretary General of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan went to the AL chief's Dhanmondi residence at around 10 pm to hand over the sealed letter. He was accompanied by a PS to the PM, Mosaddek Ali.

When the news of the long awaited letter from the PM to the AL chief leaked out,

newsmen thronged the residences of Sheikh Hasina and Mannan Bhuiyan, who is also Minister for Food and Agriculture.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mannan Bhuiyan confirmed that he had delivered the letter but could not meet the AL chief. Asked if he had gone to meet her with prior appointment, he replied in the negative. He, however, said they had rang up from the Prime Minister's office intimating that they were com-

ing. But when they arrived, she was not available.

Mannan Bhuiyan said, they waited for sometime and also rang up the AL party office from her residence. After some time, unable to locate her, they left, leaving the letter with a staff.

The acting BNP Secretary General refused to divulge the contents of the letter. When asked if it was a detailed or a short one, he said that what he knew, it was a

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Govt study on GATT suggests Long-term policy for agri subsidy needed

By Sharier Khan and R M Titumir

The country needs to formulate a "comprehensive" subsidy policy, with a special focus on the country's ailing agriculture sector, to secure comparative advantage in the changed global trade regime under GATT.

Suggesting this, a recent Commerce Ministry study has also recommended creation of a cell in the ministry to "formulate the policy and coordinate subsidies in the absence of any defined subsidy policy in the budgetary mechanism." The cell will also help implementation of

the policy and coordinate phasing out subsidies in some sectors.

Although, the GATT rules prohibit 12 categories of export subsidies, the clause on Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM) and the Agreement on Agriculture allow such actions in some cases if those do not create "adverse effects" for the interests of other member states.

The study on the ASCM is part of the ministry's Uruguay Round Study Project for for-

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Transport strike called off

The Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity and Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation yesterday postponed their indefinite strike programme following a meeting with the government, an official handout said in Dhaka last night, reports BSS.

The transport strike was scheduled to begin today.

The handout said the representatives of transport owners and workers postponed their planned strike after a fruitful meeting with Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury and Agriculture and Food Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday evening.

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina leading the party's padajatra which started from Mohammadpur bus stand in the city yesterday. — Star photo

BNP supplies arms to foil agitation, says Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has accused the ruling party of supplying "over one lakh illegal firearms to the identified criminals" who are holding the people "hostage".

"Directive has been issued to use these illegal arms to foil the Opposition agitation as they (those in power) do not want a neutral caretaker government (to hold the next general elections)," she told a gathering prior to leading a padajatra from Katosoor area of Mohammadpur Thana in the city yesterday.

The padajatra was part of

fresh agitation programmes by the major opposition parties including the AL to realise their demand for elections under a caretaker administration.

The AL also organised padajatras in other parts of the capital and held demonstrations across the country on the day. Two other opposition parties — the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami — also organised similar programmes outside the capital.

Addressing the gathering at Mohammadpur, the AL chief alleged that the gov-

ernment had released 200 identified criminals including the killers of police inspector Farhad from jail in the past few days to implement its design of clinging to power by rigging votes and resorting to violence in the next elections.

"Our agitation aims at ensuring people's fundamental rights including their right to vote and food, institutionalising democracy and establishing an accountable and transparent government and a corruption-free society," Hasina told the rally.

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Another Ctg businessman kidnapped

CHITTAGONG, Oct 28: Unidentified gunmen kidnapped a local businessman from Modunaghat Bazar in Hathazari thana today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Jogendranath, 42, owner of Roop Jewellers in the bazar's Rashidbari area, was forcibly taken into a private car by a gang of five armed men when he was preparing to go home by a motor cycle at about 7 pm.

Jogendranath, son of late Nishi Chandranath, hails from Burishchar village in Hathazari thana.

Local people said a shop was looted in the bazar, some 500 yards from Hathazari thana, two days ago.

Short-term political goals negate reforms: Saifur

By Staff Correspondent

The concept of short-term political gains has set the clock of the reform programmes backward, said Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday.

"If economic soundness and imperatives are sacrificed for the sake of short-term political gains, we will be following a reform agenda on the backward gear," said Rahman.

He was inaugurating a day-long workshop on "Institutional Support to Ministry of Finance Technical Assistance Project: Establishing a Policy Reform Evaluation System in Bangladesh", jointly organised by Ministry of Finance

and the Asian Development Bank, in a city hotel.

"While coming across different ministries and agencies' reform agenda, I find even harmless reforms are facing unnecessary reservations," Rahman said.

Lack of conviction and courage on the part of appropriate quarters could not permit us to carry forward reforms leaving us in the half way, the Finance Minister added.

Questioning the "integrity of purpose" of the political process, Rahman said, the public sector reform programmes suffered delays due to erroneous assessment of

the adverse political situation in the country.

Taking about the political leaders who make populist commitments to gain short-term benefits risking the reform process, the Finance Minister said, "Wastefulness arising out of political commitments is a malice in the Third World economies."

Noting that "all reform programmes are still incomplete", the Finance Minister said: "A lot of things are to be done in the fields of financial sector, public enterprises, labour market, trade policy and legal sector."

He, however, added: "We

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'Lending rates kept high artificially'

Lending rates in Bangladesh are artificially kept high to offset the impact of default loan hangover on the Nationalised Commercial Banks as a result of government-directed credit, reports UNB.

This was observed in an evaluation report, presented at a Finance Ministry workshop in the city yesterday.

"The onerous burden of government-directed credit to losing public enterprises borne by the NCBs leading to their huge non-performing money has required lending rates to be maintained at artificially high levels to make provision for such loans," says the report.

The situation, it views, has largely prevented finan-

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BNP leader at JCD rally PM can't hand over power to unelected person

The leaders of ruling BNP and its student wing yesterday blasted the opposition, mainly the Awami League, for their "politics of destruction" and urged them to resolve the current political crisis through dialogue, reports UNB.

They also called upon the opposition parties to withdraw their planned marathon hartal from November 11 as "this elected government cannot be unseated by hartals which only leads the nation to destruction."

Addressing a students' rally in the city's Democracy Square at Gulistan, the BNP and JCD leaders called the opposition demand for election under a neutral caretaker government "unconstitutional, illegal and undemocratic."

They vowed to protect the Constitution and the hard-earned democracy at any cost.

"People elected the BNP government to protect and uphold the Constitution...the Prime Minister can't hand over power to any unelected person because people did not empower her as such," Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain told the rally.

Dhaka city unit of the Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) organised the rally, as part of its street protest.

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Indo-Bangla border confce begins today

The annual border coordination conference between Bangladesh and India begins here today to work out ways of dealing with frontier problems, reports UNB.

An 11-member Indian delegation led by Director-General of Border Security Force (BSF) D K Arya will arrive in Dhaka today to attend the five-day border conference, officials said.

Formal discussion will be held at the BDR headquarters tomorrow (Monday).

Matters relating to smuggling, drug trafficking, child kidnapping and trafficking, illegal arms trafficking, land dispute, miscreants' activities in the border areas, violation of guideline and allied matters will be discussed in the

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Fate of 5,600 Bangladeshi workers in ROK uncertain

By Reaz Ahmed

The fate of some 5,600 illegal Bangladeshi workers in South Korea remain uncertain with only two days left for the deadline for all illegal immigrants to report before the immigration department there.

Officials concerned in Dhaka told The Daily Star yesterday that a planned visit by an official team to South Korea to persuade the authorities there over the issue was dropped at the last moment due to time constraint.

Earlier this month South Korea's Ministry of Justice asked some 60,000 illegal immigrants, mostly Filipinos, to report by October 31 or to face legal actions.

"Instead, we asked our

embassy in Seoul to remain alert and ensure a concerted follow-up of the steps the South Korean authorities take after October 31," said a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Labour and Manpower.

"It is, in a sense, a very delicate issue from our part to bargain with, when an ever-increasing number of workforce is being exported legally to South Korea."

Some 2,300 Bangladeshis went to South Korea legally last year with jobs while some 3,500 more are due to leave the country in the current year, said sources in the Manpower Ministry.

"We are expecting that South Korea will take over

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SC reopens today after vacation

By SC Correspondent

Both the divisions of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh are going to open today after about a two-month-long vacation.

The Supreme Court went on autumn vacation, the longest vacation in the year, on September 1 last.

During the vacation there were vacation benches of the HC for hearing and disposal of only urgent matters.

For the same purposes Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf of the Appellate Division sat in his official chamber and he passed only adinterim orders which is to be placed before the regular bench of the Appellate Division.

The single vacation bench of the HC also passed adinterim orders in division bench matters till hearing or disposal of the matter by a regular division bench.

Bomb attack on JP procession in Barisal: 15 hurt

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Oct 28: At least 15 supporters of the Jatiya Party were injured, eight of them seriously, when the BNP activists hurled bombs at a JP procession at Hizla Bandar today.

According to sources, the procession came under attack when the JP activists went to gherao the TNO office in the morning.

Critically injured Delwar Hossain, Zahir, Nehal, Takir, Mahboob, Harif, Sahabuddin and Alamgir were admitted to Hizla thana health complex.

Mob attacks RMC hostels, ransacks 136 rooms

RANGPUR, Oct 28: Angry people stormed and ransacked two hostels of the Rangpur Medical College after the death of an old man in a bomb explosion in the nearby Dhap area today, reports UNB.

At least 13 medical students were injured critically in the mob attack amidst a massive violence. Ten other people, including a magistrate, were also wounded in a series of clashes between the protesters and the medical students.

Witnesses said the mob ransacked 136 rooms of the two dormitories of the college in an instant protest

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Miss Bangladesh Sathi Yasmin Bilki posing for photographs at Jamuria beach in Dubai, UAE during a week-long film session with some other contestants for the Miss World Pageant '95 to be held in Sun City in South Africa November 18. — Star photo by A K M Mohsin

High level of arsenic found in groundwater in N'ganj

Arsenic, a chemical element which was almost hundred times more than the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommended level of 0.05mg per litre. It has reportedly infected four members of that particular house.

Official sources told UNB that the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), responsible for ensuring supply of safe drinking water, collected 40 samples from the border districts and found the toxic substances recently.

They said Arsenic found from a tubewell water of a house in Palpara of Narayanganj is 1.01mg per litre wa-

ter which was almost hundred times more than the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommended level of 0.05mg per litre. It has reportedly infected four members of that particular house.

Though the Arsenic found was still within a limited level except in Kushtia, the officials said expressing concern that the acceptable level might cross any time in the border areas. The problem should be addressed immediately, the cautioned.

Officials of the Department of Environment also confirmed the dangerous level of Arsenic in that par-

ticular house of Narayanganj and submitted a report to the higher authorities suggesting to take steps immediately "to find out the root cause of the toxic substance in the water."

Officials of the PHED said that they had already advised people to stop drinking tubewell water at certain places of some border areas where the level of Arsenic is believed to have crossed the acceptable or Environmental Quality Standard (EQS) level.

Referring to Kushtia town, where the level of Arsenic is far more than the acceptable level, officials said groundwater

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Kidnappers kill leather trader in city

By Staff Correspondent
Police recovered the body of Abdul Jabbar, 35, a small leather trader, from the river bank at Basila under Mohammadpur thana yesterday.

Jabbar, a resident of Gajmahal under Dhanmondi thana was kidnapped allegedly by a group of extortionists on the night of last Thursday, police said. He was missing since then.

HK-based firm to invest in power sector

Hopewell Holding, an internationally reputed private electricity-generation company, has initiated large-scale investment in the country's power sector, reports UNB.

The Hong Kong-based firm is expected to start its first project in next six months.

"My house is very much interested to invest in the power-generation sector in Bangladesh soon," said the visiting Managing Director of Hopewell Holding, Gordon Wu, when he called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

The company is due to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the government on its proposed investment in power generation.

Wu also told the Prime Minister that his company was eager to involve in coal exploration in Bangladesh for coal-fired power generation.

While apprising Begum

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