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International

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DSE MARKET

DSE price index: 823.41 (-0.03%)
 Market capital Tk: 5340.39 cr
 Transactions in volume: 191019
 Transactions in value Tk: 2.85 cr

CSE MARKET

CSE price index: 401.28 (-0.42%)
 Market capital Tk: 2416.57 cr
 Transactions in volume: 2570
 Transactions in value Tk: 1.70 lakh

Business

Bourse officials meet
 PM: DSE market capital may rise to \$2.5b this year

Thailand, India, Lanka hope to expand economic ties
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NEWS BRIEFS

PM photographed for ID card
 Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was photographed yesterday for voter's identity card. The photograph was taken by the Election Commission officials at the PM's office, reports BSS.

Nirmul rally Jan 19

A meeting of the Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee Dhaka City unit was held at its Mohakhali office in the city yesterday. The extended meeting reviewed the preparations undertaken for its fourth founding anniversary programmes to be held on January 19. The Committee will hold a rally in the Central Shaheed Minar premises at 3 pm, on the day, reports UNB.

Kazi Zafar seeks blessing

Ailing Jatiya Party leader Kazi Zafar Ahmed, now in Singapore for treatment, yesterday urged the countrymen to pray for his early recovery. The JP leader has been advised to take admission to Gleneagles Hospital today following his lung complaints. Kazi Zafar also called upon the people to gear up the on-going movement against the autocrat BNP, reports UNB.

King of Lesotho killed in accident

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 15: King Moshoeshoe of Lesotho was killed in a car crash on a mountain road in the southern African nation, a western diplomat said from the capital Maseru today.



Shifting of polls date now requires SC opinion

By Morshed Ali Khan

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice AKM Sadeque yesterday reiterated that the 90-day constitutional deadline for holding the general elections could not be extended unless the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court gave opinion in favour after a presidential reference.

Even if the Appellate Division gives its opinion in favour, then also 'anyone can file a case under Article 102 of the Constitution challenging it', the CEC said yesterday. 'In this case, the Supreme Court will eventually have to give a verdict on the issue, and that will be directory,' Justice Sadeque said while talking to some reporters at his office.

If, in case, the matter drags on beyond the February 21 deadline and the Appellate Division then says that it is mandatory to hold the elections within 90 days of the dissolution of the Parliament, then there will be an extra-constitutional situation in the country, Sadeque opined. He replied to questions about possibility of further shifting of the polls, scheduled for February 15.

When asked if he would request the President to exercise his power in this connection, the CEC said that if all the political parties wanted, only then he might consider doing so.

The CEC also appealed to all the political parties to participate in the next general elections, which, he said, would be 'absolutely free and fair.'

'I shall be very, very sad and unhappy to hold the general elections without the participation of all political parties,' the CEC said.

The CEC said he earnestly hoped that all the major political parties would join the general election to make it meaningful. 'Unprecedented measures have been taken to ensure free and fair elections,' he asserted.

'I am sadly time-bound. As far as the Election Commission is concerned, it is acting under a constitutional framework and the time is quickly running out for all of us,' Justice Sadeque pointed. 'There is no scope in the Constitution to take the election date beyond February 21.'

On issuance of voters identity (ID) cards, now lagging far behind the schedule, the CEC expressed his dissatisfaction and said that the EC would seek amendment to the relevant laws.

He also said that the time frame has put tremendous pressure on the EC in printing the ballot papers. He expressed his determination to complete all preparations in time.

BNP, Opposition resume backstage parleys

By Nazmul Ashraf and Mizan Ali

Negotiators of the ruling BNP and the Opposition yesterday held back-stage parleys on the possibilities of sharing of executive powers between the President and the head of the proposed advisory council to oversee the coming general elections, according to competent sources.

The negotiators also exchanged views on deferring the election schedule, seeking judicial reference on the interim administration and shifting of the polls schedule further.

Details of the latest negotiation bids was not available until late last night.

Negotiations between the ruling party and Opposition resumed after diplomats of some friendly countries started mediation efforts in resolving the lingering political crisis.

Earlier, a top leader in the Opposition said that if the discussions on power-sharing and other issues progressed, the leaders of the Opposition parties, which had representation in the Fifth Parliament, might go for a formal dialogue with the ruling party to reach an accord on the interim government and other related matters.

An influential minister, when contacted, confirmed that they were in contact with the Opposition. The BNP negotiators were assigned to make fresh attempts for a negotiated settlement with the Opposition on the basis of the idea of power-sharing in the interim administration.

In another development, some representatives of foreign missions and the donor agencies are likely to meet Prime Minister and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia and AL chief Sheikh Hasina today to discuss the political developments.

UNB adds: Informal contacts between the ruling party and Opposition negotiators continued yesterday without any headway in resolving the crisis over a caretaker government to conduct the next general elections.

The back stage parleys are being mediated by US Ambassador in Dhaka David N. Merrill who has learnt to have separate meetings yesterday with Commerce and Information Minister Shamsul Islam and Amir Hossain Amu, the key negotiators from the two sides.

Shamsul Islam, a key negotiator from the government side, said he is still hopeful of a solution.

Replying to a query about the ruling party's written proposal on the formation of

Govt firm to introduce uniform question sets

The government last night reiterated its decision to introduce uniform question papers for the HSC examination of 1996 for five education boards of the country, reports BSS.

The decision to this effect was taken at a review meeting in the conference room of the Education Ministry here yesterday with Education Secretary Irshadul Haque in the chair.

The meeting was attended by Mohammad Shahidul Alam, Additional Secretary of Education Ministry, Rashida Begum, Director General of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Prof. Moizuddin Ahmed, Chairman, Dhaka Education Board and about 40 principals of different colleges in Dhaka city, an official 'handout' said.

The meeting observed that the examiners for the current HSC examination would not face any problem as question papers would be set on the basis of the old question papers of the five boards.

The meeting was further informed that no question paper would be set outside the usual trend of question papers of the respective boards.

It further said that apart from having uniform results, the new system would also check leakage of question papers. At the same time there would not be any scope for undermining the merits of the talented students, it added.

Members present at the meeting praised the decision and expressed their firm conviction that the decision would not be changed.

The meeting also decided that all educational institutions, teachers, guardians and the examinees concerned would give active support for implementation of the government decision.

The meeting was further told that the government had



The Bangabazar, which was completely gutted November 27 last, reopened yesterday. — Star photo

JP may join polls if Ershad freed

By SC Correspondent

The hearing on the writ petitions challenging the ordinance disqualifying the bank loan defaulters from contesting the parliamentary elections may be held today.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) and Vice-President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce, A K M Shamsuddoha, Jatiya Party leaders Nurunnabi Chand, Maudud Islam and S M A Rab filed the writ petition separately.

Barrister Rafiqul Huq and Maudud Ahmed, advocates for the petitioners, waited in the court-room of the division bench of the HC comprising Justice Mahmudur Rahman and Justice K M Hasan till rising of the court, but could not get the serial for the hearing.

It has been stated in the petitions that qualifications and disqualifications for election to Parliament enumerated in Article 66 of the Constitution can only be amended or altered by way of

Star Report

Begum Raushan Ershad yesterday said that the Jatiya Party (JP) could take part in the ensuing elections if her husband H M Ershad, the party chairman was released from jail.

The JP presidium member, however, hastened to add that the party leadership would take a decision in this regard.

Talking to the Daily Star over telephone Raushan said that there was no problem in her party's joining the polls if her husband was released unconditionally. 'But the decision must be endorsed by the JP leadership,' she said.

Earlier, in an interview with the Reuters news agency, Raushan had said that the JP would go for the polls after release of her husband, a former president of the country.

She avoided a question on any move to negotiate Ershad's release saying, 'I don't know... may be some leaders are trying to get him freed.'

Recent press reports said that a section of JP leaders were trying to negotiate a deal with the ruling BNP for Ershad's release in exchange of JP's participation in the polls. JP leaders Anisul Islam Mahmud, Kazi Feroz Rashid and Tajul Islam Chowdhury started the negotiation.

The efforts were reportedly made without the knowledge of three key JP figures - Acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Secretary General Anwar Hossain Manju and Kazi Zafar Ahmed.

When asked if the move for negotiating with the ruling party had caused any rift in the JP leadership, Raushan said that Ershad was very much in control of the party.

'There is no confusion about the fact that Hussein Muhammad Ershad is the Chairman of the JP. No body is trying to take control of the party,' she said.

Resist unilateral polls: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

KANCHAN (Narayanganj), Jan 15: Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the countrymen to resist unilateral elections.

Addressing a public meeting here at the Kanchan High School ground, the former leader of the opposition in Parliament said that the opposition political parties have taken its pledge not to take part in the February 15 parliamentary elections until the people could exercise their right to franchise under a neutral caretaker government.

Giving a call to the people to enforce the January 17 hartal, Hasina said that the people could not cast their votes freely under the BNP rule.

She charged BNP leaders with widespread corruption and resorting terrorism across the country to cling to power.

'Today, there's no guarantee of safety to people's lives,' she pointed out, adding that the ruling party had failed to ensure the basic necessities of the people.

Earlier, Mujibur Rahman Bhuiyan, the local BNP leader and chairman of the Kanchan Union Parishad, joined the Awami League along with a number of his colleagues.

Sheikh Hasina, while welcoming the new member, pointed out that the 'BNP atrocities' have reached such a height that its own activists have begun to leave the party.

After taking over power, the BNP has killed the farmers who were demanding fertilizer at a fair price, industrial workers who were demanding better perks and pay, and the Ansars who were demanding better pay scale, she alleged.

'The people of the country

Opposition warns People will foil voterless polls

Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday warned that people will foil a voterless, one-party farcical election, reports UNB.

The three major opposition parties, which held a meeting at the residence of Awami League presidium member Abdus Samad Azad, called for joining the countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on January 17 and the gherao of election offices on January 18.

The meeting urged the Election Commission to preserve the respective election symbols of the recognised political parties and not to distribute those symbols among the political groups which have mushroomed overnight.

Abdus Samad Azad and Tofiq Ahmed of Awami League, Moudud Ahmed and Anwar Hossain Manju of Jatiya Party, and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, Abdul Qadar Mollah and Sheikh Anwar Ali of Jamaat-e-Islami said.

Goods worth Tk 1 crore rotting at Aricha

MANIKGANJ, Jan 15: Perishable goods worth nearly a crore taka on stranded trucks started rotting at the traffic jam at Aricha ferry ghat continued to aggravate, officials and businessmen said, reports UNB.

In view of the situation, traffic police started this noon halting the Aricha-bound trucks near Manikganj bus stand, about 40 km from Aricha.

Witnesses said nearly 3,000 trucks and 300 buses and other vehicles remained stranded at Aricha, Nagarbari and Daulatdia ghats owing to the traffic impasse at Aricha. Some 8,000 passengers also were stranded.

BRTC sources said the situation had arisen because of indisposition of three ferries and arrival of a large number of vehicles at a time.

Meanwhile, perishable items worth an estimated Tk 1 crore on the stranded trucks were reported to be on the verge of perishing.

The goods include onion, potato, green chilli, banana, and other vegetables and fruits.

Some 2,512 vehicles were ferried through Aricha terminal during the last 24 hours till this afternoon.

All-out Russian assault on Chechen rebel bases

PERVOMAYSKAYA, Russia, Jan 15: Russian forces using artillery, mortar and helicopters Monday blasted a village where Chechen rebels held more than 100 hostages after the fighters began killing some of their captives, reports AP.

Gunfire cracked and explosions could be heard every second. Helicopter gunships rocketed the village, and artillery and mortar shells thundered.

White flashes and smoke poured from the village, where several buildings were on fire. A rocket destroyed a school, where some of the hostages had been held. The ground shook in the nearby village of Sovetskaya.

There was no word on the fate of the hostages or on casualties in the attack, though loss of life appeared inevitable.

In the Kremlin, Boris Yeltsin received constant updates on the assault. Presidential spokesman Sergei Medvedev said the decision to attack had been taken when it became clear any delay aggravated the situation and put the life of the hostages in jeopardy.

Gen. Mikhail Barsukov, the head of the Federal Security Service, made contact with the rebels at 8:50 am (0550 GMT) and gave them 10 minutes to come out holding white flags or face an attack, Maj Gen Alexander Mikhailov, a spokesman for the security forces, told reporters.

The rebels failed to appear, and at 9 am (0600 GMT), the Russians began an all-out assault on the village. By midday, government forces were inside the village and there were reports of hand-to-hand fighting.

In a statement, Barsukov said the rebels had started killing hostages Sunday and that such acts were no longer tolerable.

The captives killing Sunday were two Interior Ministry troops, Mikhailov said. The ITAR-Tass news agency, quoting unidentified security sources, said the rebels had shot six more Interior Ministry troops Monday morning.

On the 14th of January at 4 pm (1300 GMT), the terrorists opened fire on federal troops and began to kill hostages. Because the federal powers cannot put up with this illegal act any longer they have been obliged to resort to the use of force to free the hostages,' said the statement, read by Mikhailov to reporters.

ITAR-Tass quoted Alexander Zdanovich, deputy spokesman of the Federal Security Service, as saying the attack was inevitable following the interception of rebel radio communication ordering the killing of hostages.

Two children were killed in separate road accidents in Tongi and Comilla yesterday, reports UNB.

A minor girl was killed and her mother seriously injured as they fell from a bus at Tongi bus stand.

Witnesses said the tragic mishap occurred when Soma, 10 and her mother Firoza Begum, 45, tried to get into a Dhaka-bound bus at 10 in the morning.

2 children killed in road accidents

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DCCI memo to Finance Minister

The newly elected office bearers of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) led by its president Ali Hossain (Hasan) called on Finance Minister Saifur Rahman at his secretariat office yesterday, reports BSS.

DCCI team handed over a memorandum to the minister.

The DCCI president emphasised the role of the private sector as well as of the DCCI to boost trade, commerce and industry in the country. The delegation discussed various issues relating to reduction of duty on importable raw materials to protect local industries, export competitiveness, issues relating to inflation, supportive measures to establish agro-based industries, quick disbursement of project loans, problems caused by port congestion, refixation of tariff values and existing duty back procedure.

Saifur Rahman appreciated the DCCI team's initiative.

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Bangabazar reopens

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday formally reopened four hawkers' markets at Fuibaria in the city that had been gutted in a devastating fire seven weeks ago, reports UNB.

Addressing on the occasion the Prime Minister told the hawkers, traders and shopkeepers that the City Corporation had been instructed to build pucca markets for them.

The inferno that occurred on November 27 razed to the ground some 2,000 shops in the four markets - Bangabazar Hawkers' Market, Adarsha Hawkers' Market, Gullistan Hawkers' Market and Dhaka City Hawkers' Market. Cloths and assets worth about Tk. 200 crore were devoured by the fire.

'We always stood by the distressed humanity and in-sallah we will remain with them in the future,' Begum Zia said. The Prime Minister hoped that the fire victims would be able to begin a new life from the rubbles through hard work.

The function was also addressed by Mayor of Dhaka Mohammad Hanif, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan, leaders of the Hawkers' Markets Associations and others.

Mugger beaten to death

By DMCH Correspondent

An alleged mugger who was beaten up by a mob at Tejgaon Sunday afternoon died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) early yesterday.

The victim was identified as Shafiq, 30. He was caught along with one of his accomplices, Khalil, 28, by the local people and both were beaten up. Khalil was admitted to the Orthopaedic Hospital under police custody.

The two and another persons were fleeing by an auto-rickshaw being chased by the angry people of the GMG road in Tejgaon industrial area. They were caught when the vehicle suddenly overturned.

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Wrists against ordn on loan defaulters may be heard today

By SC Correspondent

The hearing on the writ petitions challenging the ordinance disqualifying the bank loan defaulters from contesting the parliamentary elections may be held today.

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