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**DSE MARKET**

DSE price index	621.00(+0.21%)
Market capital Tk	5328.00 cr
Transactions in volume	150258
Transactions in value Tk	2394r

**CSE MARKET**

CSE price index	401.00(+0.00%)
Market capital Tk	2418.14cr
Transactions in volume	720
Transactions in value Tk	70479 lakh

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**NEWS BRIEFS**  
**B'baria Mahila Dal body dissolved**  
The Bangladesh Jatiatabadi Mahila Dal, a front organisation of the ruling BNP, has dissolved its Brahmanbaria district committee. The organisation recently formed a convening committee of the district with Begum Hasina Israel as its convenor, reports UNB.

**BCL leader freed**  
Abdul Wadud Khokon, a pro-Awami League Chhatra League leader, was released from the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday. Khokon, General Secretary of the BCL Dhaka University unit, was arrested from Purana Paltan area on November 11, 1995, the first day of the opposition sponsored 6-day marathon hartal, reports UNB.

**41 arms recovered**  
The law enforcing agencies recovered 41 different types of firearms, 23 bullets and an explosive till yesterday morning the 27th day of the countrywide hunt for illegal arms. According to an Election Commission press release, during the period they also arrested 380 people on various charges, including possession of illegal arms, reports UNB.

**8 shops gutted in Sunamganj**  
From Staff Correspondent  
SYLHET, Jan 16: Property worth about Taka 20 lakh were gutted in a fire that burnt eight shops at Govindaganj Bazar of Chhatra thana under Sunamganj district last night. Cash amount of Taka one lakh was also burnt to ashes. The fire broke out at about 8 pm.

## Diplomats meet Khaleda, Hasina

# Rigid stands spoil last ditch efforts

**Star Report**

Last ditch diplomatic efforts to resolve the persisting political impasse apparently did not succeed yesterday due to "deep mistrust and rigid stands" of both the ruling party and the opposition, diplomatic sources said.

They were not optimistic about any solution to the 22-month-old political impasse, the sources added.

Envoys of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Italy and Japan, led by US Ambassador David N Merrill, called on BNP Chief and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and former leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina separately yesterday evening to express their concern at the prevailing political situation.

They stressed the need for narrowing down the differences between the ruling party and the opposition, and participation of all political parties in the general elections, the sources said.

The diplomats spent more than an hour with each of the leaders, trying to persuade them to go for a face to face dialogue to solve the crisis.

Diplomatic sources said that the envoys did not carry any fresh proposal from either of the parties.

"Of course, we hoped for direct talks between the two sides," said a diplomat. "But for some reasons both sides have been very hesitant about it."

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## BDR, police to help clear Aricha jam

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia last night directed the ministry concerned to engage the members of police and BDR to facilitate the traffic movement at Aricha ghat to remove the traffic jam there, reports BSS.

She also asked all concerned to work round-the-clock to prevent any possible traffic congestion at Aricha ghat.

The directives were given at a high-level meeting held to review the traffic jam and transport problem and the price situation of the essentials in view of the coming holy Ramadan.

The meeting, held at the

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## Poor arms recovery in Chittagong

# 3 terrorist strongholds remain untouched

**From Nurul Alam**

CHITTAGONG, Jan 16: The drive for recovering illegal arms, launched country-wide from December 21, moved at a snail's pace in most of the 'terror-hit' areas and 'strong holds' of armed goons in Chittagong, official sources said.

The northern parts of Chittagong — particularly the Razoan, Patikhari and Rangunia areas which are close to the Hill Tracts and some areas in the port city, known as 'clandestine markets' of arms and ammunitions — remained almost untouched by the mop-up operation, they said.

These areas were identified by police and other agencies as 'worst-hit' by terrorism where gunmen, abductors and other anti-social elements reigned at large. Sources alleged that these armed terrorists are being backed by some local political leaders and smugglers.

A gang of terrorists abducted millionaire businessman Taher Ali Fakri along with his car at gun point in broad day light in August last year. They later took Fakri to their sanctuaries at Fatikhari and Razoan where he was held hostage for about four days for a ransom of Tk 2.5 crore.

Though the accused abductors were later hooked in the chargesheet submitted by police, they are reportedly roaming around scot-free here in the city and its surrounding areas at Razoan and Fatikhari, the source pointed out.

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Renovation work of the Baldha Garden is going on. — Star photo

## Dawn-to-dusk hartal today

**By Staff Correspondent**

The mainstream Opposition has called a country-wide dawn-to-dusk hartal today coinciding with the last date for filing of nomination papers for the ensuing parliamentary election.

The Opposition agitation programme to press resignation of the Prime Minister and holding of the election under a neutral caretaker administration also includes gherao of Election Commission offices throughout the country including the office of the Chief Election Commissioner in the city tomorrow.

Awami League and Jatiya Party in separate press releases issued here last night called upon the people to observe the hartal and to make the gherao programme successful.

AL general secretary Zillur Rahman and JP general secretary Anwar Hossain Manzu in their statements said the Opposition's agitations are for establishing the people's right to vote.

The Awami League and the Jatiya Party also brought out separate torch processions in the city yesterday evening to drum up support for today's hartal.

The Oppositions' programme came amid the diplomats-brokered parleys between the ruling BNP and the Opposition to end the lingering political crisis.

The Opposition had earlier shifted its hartal programme twice when the EC shifted the last date for filing of nomination papers and the date for their scrutiny.

The Opposition had called a 48-hour hartal on January 8 and 9, the earlier last date for nomination filing and the date for their scrutiny but changed the programme after the EC shifted the dates.

## Talks with written proposals could solve crisis, says Hasina

**Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday said a government-Opposition dialogue with written proposals could evolve a solution to the present political crisis, reports UNB.**

"We sought the government's written proposal with the approval of the Prime Minister and were ready to place our written proposal to find out a solution through discussion. But the government side did not respond to it even after one week," she said.

Addressing a rally of Union Parishad Chairman

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## Ershad, Manju charged with abuse of power

**By Staff Correspondent**

Former President HM Ershad and Anwar Hossain Manju, who was a minister under him, have been charged by the Anti-Corruption Bureau with gross abuse of power.

An official of the Bureau filed the case with Tejgaon thana accusing the two under section 109 of Bangladesh Penal Code and section 5/2 of the Anti Corruption Act.

The official alleged that the Scimitar Oils S.A, an unknown company, was given the contract for drilling and exploration in 1650 square km area of Haripur oil field in Sylhet during 1987.

Manju was energy and mineral resources minister under Ershad.

## Raw jute prices, demand go up

**By Rafiq Hasan**

Prices of all grades of raw jute have gone up in the last few days, mainly due to increase in demand in domestic and foreign markets.

According to the Bangladesh Jute Association (BJA) prices of different grades of Pucca jute have increased by Tk 300 per bale on an average and those of Kutcha varieties by Tk 65 per maund. Prices of Pucca jute rallied over Tk 4100 per bale and those of Kutcha jute were around Tk 500 per maund at Narayanganj and Daulatdia terminal markets a week ago.

The demand is still very high in the market although, the peak season ends in December when public and private jute mills complete almost 80 per cent of their years' buying. Arrival of raw jute at the terminal markets has now come down to 5 to 6 thousands maunds daily from 20 to 25 thousand maunds during the July-December peak season.

Bangladesh Jute Association in an emergency meeting on Sunday re-fixed the indicative prices of all grades of raw jute following the upward trend in the last few days. Reazul Karim, Vice-Chairman of the BJA told The Daily Star yesterday.

Prices of other grades of Kutcha jute like White Tosha, Meshta, and Pucca jute like

Habijabi, Cut Ropes and Cuttings have also increased accordingly, he said.

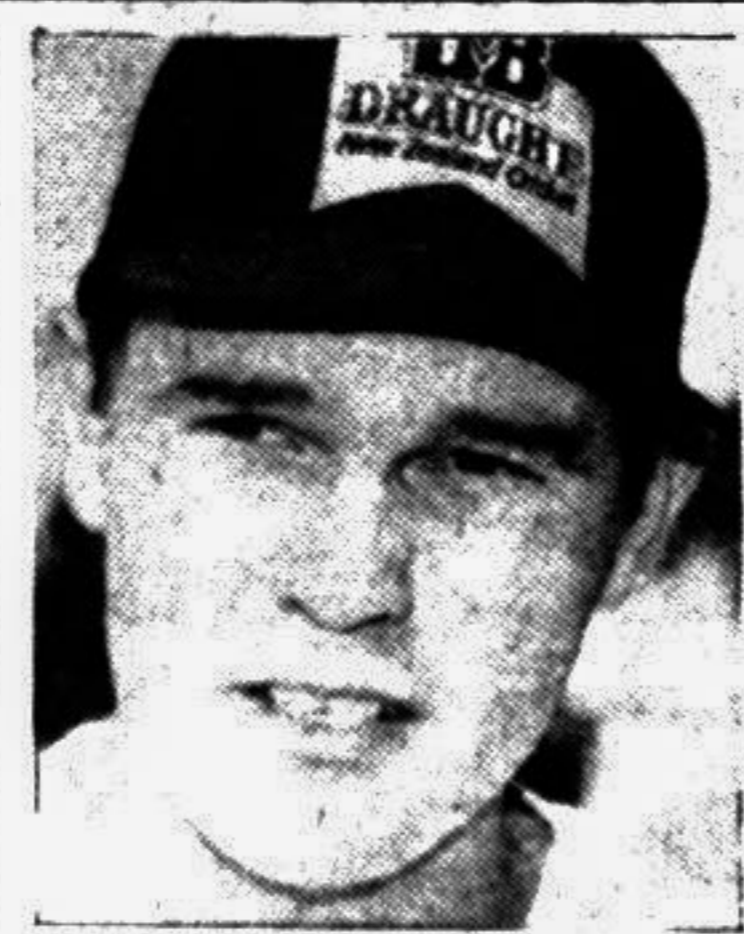
According to the Directorate of Jute, about 26 lakh bales of raw jute were traded at Narayanganj and Daulatdia terminal markets till December 31. The mills under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) bought 11 lakh bales, while those under Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA) bought 3 lakh and mills under Bangladesh Jute Spinners Association bought 4 lakh bales. Jute traders and exporters purchased about 8 lakh bales of raw jute. More 11 lakh bales of raw jute are expected in the market during the remaining period of this year's jute season.

The government, in October last, had imposed a temporary restriction on raw jute export through land route fearing smuggling and abnormal price hike of the item due to production shortfall. The restriction was however withdrawn on January 3. The Directorate of Jute estimated this year's production at 37 lakh bales.

Production shortfall was also reported in other jute producing countries like India and China this year.

The country earned Tk 160 crore by exporting 5

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## Curtain falls on Crowe's career

**HAMILTON (New Zealand), Jan 16:** Master batsman Martin Crowe, one of New Zealand's greatest batsmen who has scored more runs and centuries than any other compatriot Test player, announced his retirement from international cricket on Tuesday, report agencies.

Crowe, one of the most stylish batsmen of this, has been bothered by a long-standing knee injury which has kept him off the field for long periods in recent seasons.

Crowe 33, made his Test debut in 1981/82 and was recognised as one of the world's premier batsman through much of the 1980s. He scored 5,444 runs, including 17 centuries, in 77 Tests at an average of 45.36.

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## HC rejects FBCCI writ

**By SC Correspondent**

The High Court Division yesterday rejected the writ petition of the FBCCI challenging the ordinance debarbing the bank loan defaulters from contesting the parliamentary elections.

While three other writ petitions on the same matter filed by three leaders of Jatiya Party have been kept standover for further hearing tomorrow.

The division bench of the HC, comprising Justice Mahmudur Rahman and Justice KM Hasan, dismissed the petition filed by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and Vice-President of the SAARC Chambers of Commerce AKM Shamsuddoha on the grounds of maintainability as well as on merits.

It was decided in the order that the FBCCI had no locus standi to present the writ petition.

The FBCCI is neither a person alive nor a person aggrieved, as the objectives laid down in its Memorandum of Article is to promote business not to fight in the election, the court observed.

In the order the court said that ordinance making power is vested in the President and Ordinance-5 of 1995 has been promulgated with the satisfaction of the President under the power given him in the Constitution.

Regarding making any

any Ordinance so made shall, as from its promulgation have the like force of law as an Act of Parliament."

In regard to the submission of Barrister Rafiqul Huq, Advocate for the petitioner, that the amendment is malafide because on the very day of declaration of election

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## Fierce battles in Dagestan

# 30 more kidnapped, fate of hostages unclear

**PERVOMAYSKAYA, Jan 16:** Russian troops and Chechen rebels engaged in fierce battles today among burned out houses as federal forces tried to destroy the separatists and free their hostages in this ruined village, reports AP.

The boom of tank rounds rang out across the frost-covered fields on the second day of street fighting. Despite snow, helicopter gunships went up and rocketed the village to wipe out remaining pockets of rebels.

Military planes dropped flares all night illuminating Pervomayskaya so soldiers could hunt for the rebels and their captives. Heavy machine gun fire could be heard throughout the village.

Tension was high as well

in the Chechen capital Grozny, where a group of about 30 workers at an electric power plant were reportedly seized by unknown assailants today, the ITAR-Tass news agency quoted a security service spokesman as saying.

Alexander Zdanovich of the Federal Security Service said a special task force was investigating the report that the workers had been captured and taken away in buses to an unknown destination.

The fate of the majority of the more than 100 hostages held by the rebels in Pervomayskaya remained unclear.

Maj. Gen. Alexander Mikhailov, a spokesman for the Federal Security Service, said Russian troops had brought out 24 people from the village since fighting began Monday.

The rebels, estimated to number between 150 and 250, put up fierce resistance with small arms and rocket-propelled grenades, and managed to knock out several Russian armored personnel carriers.

Much of Pervomayskaya, a village in the southern Russian republic of Dagestan on the border with Chechnya, was destroyed.

The Interior Ministry in Moscow said 60 rebels were killed, 15 seriously wounded and an unspecified number of others captured.

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## Earnings from EPZs increase by 65 pc in six months

**By Govinda Shil**

Export earnings from the country's Export Processing Zones (EPZs) has soared by 65 per cent during the first six months of the current fiscal, according to official figures.

During the July-December period of the current fiscal export earnings from the Chittagong and Dhaka EPZs have increased by Tk 252 crore or 65 per cent higher than the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year. The earnings during the first six months stood at Tk 640 crore as against Tk 388 crore of the same period of the previous fiscal.

Some 64 different industrial units at the Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) exported goods worth of Tk 495.20 crore while 13 industrial units at the Dhaka

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**সুদের হার কমেছে**  
**বেড়েছে ইনসেনটিভ**

অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়ের অনুমোদনক্রমে ১ জানুয়ারী '৯৬ থেকে ঢাকা ও চট্টগ্রাম মহানগরীতে এইচবিএফসি'র সুদের হার কমেছে ১১% এবং অন্যান্য অঞ্চলে ৯% করা হয়েছে।

১লা জানুয়ারী থেকে ইনসেনটিভ ৫০% বৃদ্ধি করা হয়েছে

নিয়মিত পরিশোধকারীদের বছরান্তে প্রাপ্য ইনসেনটিভ বর্তমানের ১০% থেকে ১৫% এ উন্নীত করা হয়েছে। ফলে মেয়াদ শেষ হবার অনেক আগেই ঋণের দায় শোধ হয়ে যাবে।

কিন্তু তরুর মেয়াদ (ময়েটরিয়ারাম) বাড়ানো হয়েছে

কিন্তু পরিশোধ শুরু হওয়ার বর্তমান মেয়াদ ২ মাসের স্থলে ১২ মাসে উন্নীত করা হয়েছে।

বর্তমান পদ্ধতির পাশাপাশি গ্রাজুয়েশন পদ্ধতিতে কিন্তি পরিশোধের সুযোগ চালু করা হয়েছে

গ্রাজুয়েশন পদ্ধতিতে প্রথম ৫ বৎসর প্রচলিত কিন্তি হতে ২৫% কম হারে কিন্তি পরিশোধ করা যাবে। পরবর্তী ৫ বৎসর প্রচলিত কিন্তির সম পরিমাণ এবং শেষ ১০ বৎসর ২০% বর্ধিত হারে কিন্তি পরিশোধ করতে হবে।

প্রথম থেকে কিন্তি পরিশোধ নিয়মিত থেকে আপনিও ইনসেনটিভ গ্রহণ করুন এবং ভবিষ্যতের আইনগত সমস্যা এড়িয়ে চলুন।  
কিন্তিরিত তথ্যের জন্য কাউন্সেলিং কাউন্সিলে যোগ করুন।

এইচবিএফসি বর্তমানে ৬ প্রকার ঋণ দিচ্ছে।  
এর যে কোন একটি আপনিও বেছে নিতে পারেন

সময়মত কিন্তি পরিশোধ করে নিজে লাভবান হোন,  
অপরকেও ঋণ পাবার সুযোগ দিন।

**বাংলাদেশ হাউস বিল্ডিং ফাইন্যান্স কর্পোরেশন**

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