

প্রাণ
এটি সাধারণ পানীয় নয়
এটি পাকা কালের রস তৈরী

Inside Today

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DSE MARKET

DSE price index 850.26 (+0.18%)
Market capital Tk 18623.31 cr
Transactions in volume 30565
Transactions in value Tk 6857405

CSE MARKET

CSE price index 1979.67 (+2.37%)
Market capital Tk 14398.15 cr
Transactions in volume 352767
Transactions in value Tk 9.75 cr

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NEWS BRIEFS

PM hands over cheque for Tk 50000

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday handed over a cheque of Tk 50,000 to the widow of a Flight Sergeant of Bangladesh Air Force, who was killed at the Dhaka Cantonment in 1977, Rahima Akhtar, widow of Flight Sergeant Afaz Uddin Bhuiyan, received the cheque at the Prime Minister's office in the afternoon, reports UNB.

BNPPP meets tomorrow

A meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPPP) will be held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan at 3 pm tomorrow. Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will preside over the meeting, said a press release yesterday, reports UNB.

Go-slow at Ctg port continues

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Jan 16: The go-slow programme started by dock workers in the Chittagong Port from January 1 is yet to be withdrawn despite the efforts of the port authorities to settle the matter.

A senior port official said, "We tried our best but we don't see any solution in sight as the dock workers are not responding to our call".

Around 20 vessels remain stranded both at the jetties and the outer anchorage due to the go-slow programme, the port sources said.

Boy slaughtered in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent KHULNA, Jan 16: Police recovered the body of a teenage boy from a paddy field at Digholia here this morning.

The dead was identified as Bachchu Shaikh, 15, an employee of an oil shop. He was slaughtered by unidentified miscreants in the early hours of today.

Police arrested one Zia, 18, in this connection.

Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Sehri	Iftar
7	17	—	5:38
8	18	5:20	5:38
9	19	5:20	5:39

Twelve killed as night coach skids into ditch

By Staff Correspondent

Sixteen people were killed and 32 others injured in road accidents in Bogra, Dhaka and Rajshahi during the last two days.

Twelve people were killed and 29 others injured in an accident at Barat on the Bogra-Nagarbari highway Wednesday night, according to BSS.

Police and hospital sources said, the accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound night coach from Chilmari of Rangpur fell into a roadside ditch after the driver lost control of the vehicle.

Nine passengers of the coach died on the spot, while police recovered three bodies from the spot of the accident. Most of the injured were admitted to Bera Thana Health Complex.

All bodies were sent to the Pabna general hospital morgue for autopsy.

In Dhaka, two persons were killed in two separate road accidents in Dhania and Rajbari areas yesterday.

Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) sources said Abdul Quim (22) was injured seriously at about 10 am when he was run over by a passenger bus. He was immediately taken to DMCH where doctors declared him dead.

Another unidentified youngman, 25, was injured seriously at Rajbari Police Lines at about 11 am when a speeding truck knocked him there. He was taken to DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries in the afternoon.

Our Rajshahi Correspondent says: Two persons were killed and three others injured in a road accident at Belpukuria, about 15 kilometers from Rajshahi town yesterday.

According to police, a trolley of Rajshahi Sugar Mills hit a rickshaw van from behind.

Out of the five passengers of the van, a minor girl, Hasina Begum, 9, died on the spot. Another girl, Najma Begum, 15, succumbed to her injuries on way to the hospital. The injured three persons were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The driver of the trolley managed to escape.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed her deep

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Abahani's Indian star forward Dhanraj Pillai (in white) sending a cross to the Sri Lankan Army goalkeeper during their international hockey tournament match at Hockey Stadium yesterday. (Story on page 10)

— Star photo

German expert on 'top-dying' of Sundari trees

Genetic finger-printing likely to help unveil mystery

By Shehab Ahmed

Is it viroid or bacteria or something else, like increasing salinity, as some tend to believe to be the reason for top dying of the Sundarbans' main species, the Sundari tree?

A German molecular biologist is investigating into the actual cause.

Prof Hans Peter Muhlbach of Hamburg University of Germany visited the world's largest surviving mangrove forest this week, gathering a wide range of samples for study back home to determine the exact cause of the Sundarbans' 'sickness'.

"We have taken everything: barks, leaves, twigs, chips even blocks of wood from healthy to fallen and dead trees and soil samples during our three-day trip to the forest," Prof Muhlbach told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

He went to the forest with Dr Emdadul Huq and Dr Sheikh Shamimul Alam, two teachers of the Botany Department of Dhaka University, on January 12, collecting samples in six blocks of the Sundarbans.

"We visited block numbers 19, 22, 26, 32, 36 and 39 deep inside the forest with assistance provided by the Forest Department," including motor launches and boats to access the remote jungle. The department also lent us support with manpower and camps to facilitate our trip," Prof Muhlbach said.

He said the situation in some



Hans P. Muhlbach

areas were critical. "We found almost entire blocks have been affected with tops dying slowly, withering the trees and decimating the most valuable resource in the mangrove," he added.

The phenomenon has threatened the fragile ecosystem in the Sundarbans even though it is a managed forest, he said. "We need to study in depth to diagnose the disease before it spreads like plague."

A molecular bio-technological process known as "genetic finger printing" will help iden-

tify the mysterious affliction, he observed.

He is planning to carry out the genetic finger-printing at the research centre at Hamburg University. His friend and researcher Prof H J Jacobsen, also a molecular biologist, is expected to use molecular markers RFLP or RAPD to identify the culprit through the genetic finger printing.

Jacobsen had also been to Dhaka with Prof Muhlbach to attend the Ninth Bi-annual Bangladesh Botanical Conference. They also visited the Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture at Mymensingh. But Jacobsen left for home missing the expedition to Sundarbans.

Prof Muhlbach expressing his worries about the situation said it requires a multi-disciplinary study to find out the causes and remedy of the disease.

He is hopeful about the detective work to unearth the mystery behind the slow death of the Sundari trees with the genetic fingerprints. "Funds, I believe, would not be a problem for the research, which is going to be a joint Bangladesh-European scientific venture to save the forest," Prof Muhlbach said.

He has left for home yesterday with the specimens from the Sundarbans that will help him to find out the exact cause

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Move to grab historic site?

By Staff Correspondent

Part of the historic Eidgah at Dhanmondi dating back to the mid-17th century, has been illegally occupied by a mosque committee.

More than two bighas of the Eidgah land, earmarked by the Directorate of Archaeology and the Public Works Department (PWD) for a garden for beautification of the historic site in the city, has been "taken over" by a Waqf Estate belonging to a nearby mosque. The occupied area has been surrounded by a five-feet high wall where two large signboards read, "This land belongs to Abu Bin Kashem Waqf Estate".

As per official records, the area was taken over by the government through a gazette notification in 1981, earmarked as an archaeological site and handed over to the relevant department.

About a month ago, on a Friday morning as I was passing by the site, I saw some workers raising a high wall around the

site. I immediately rushed to the Dhanmondi thana and filed a written complaint," said a senior engineer of the PWD. Following intervention by police, the workers stopped the work and promised to dismantle the half-done wall. But later, the wall was quickly completed and the signboards erected.

PWD has "officially alerted" the higher authorities about the take-over, he said.

The Muazzin of the mosque told this correspondent that the area was taken over by the mosque committee as it belonged to its Waqf Estate "as per a photograph procured from an archive in Calcutta." "The photograph shows the Eidgah and the same area as one. We even found the ancient markings while digging earth for the wall and surrounded the site accordingly," the Muazzin claimed.

Some others in the area said that the owners of the Estate would build a market on the site.

When contacted, secretary of the mosque committee, Keramat Ali Bhuiyan, a former police officer said that the wall was constructed to keep "smugglers away from the site."

Asked whether he was aware that the land was a part of a historic site and thus belonged to the relevant government department, Bhuiyan replied in the affirmative but said, "If anyone claims this land, tell him to see me." He claimed that about eight years ago there was a ministerial recommendation that the land could be handed over to the Estate so that a market could be built there.

When contacted, officials of the Administrator of Waqf under the Ministry of Religious Affairs said that no permission was sought from the office before the take-over. "The committee in question is in default of Tk 50,267.45 in Waqf contribution to the government," said a senior official adding that

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Letter from UAE President handed over to PM

The UAE Charge d'Affaires Abdulla Mohamed al Takawi called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in the city yesterday and handed over a letter from the UAE President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan al-Nahyan, reports BSS.

Takawi conveyed best wishes and regards from the UAE President to the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recalled that the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the UAE had been initiated at the time of Bangabandhu's government. Since then the relations between the two friendly countries have been cemented and strengthened, she said, adding that the relations at present are excellent.

The Prime Minister inquired about the health and welfare of the UAE President, who underwent a surgical operation in the United States in December.

The Prime Minister also extended her cordial invitation to the UAE President to visit Bangladesh at a mutually convenient date.

9 dacoits held in city after gunfight

By Staff Correspondent

A CID team arrested nine persons, reportedly the members of a gang of inter-district dacoits, from the city's Lalbagh area yesterday evening.

At least five policemen of the CID, including an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) and a dacoit were injured during the half-an-hour gunfight at Chotoo Katara Ghat bazaar on the bank of the Buriganga at about 6pm, said CID sources.

The CID team recovered two sawed-off rifles, 16 bullets, a machete, some shells of cock-

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AL nominee for Thakurgaon by-polls

Ruling Awami League has nominated Ramesh Chandra Sen to contest the by-election in Thakurgaon-1 parliamentary constituency scheduled for next month, reports UNB.

Party Parliamentary Board has nominated Sen for the constituency, said a press release yesterday.

AB Bank issue Showcase on BB Governor, 3 others

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday issued a rule nisi on the Governor of the Bangladesh Bank and three others to showcase as to why the memo dated December 22, 1996 directing A Rahim Chowdhury to refrain from performing the duties of Chief Executive of Arab Bangladesh Bank shall not be declared to have been passed without lawful authority.

The divisional bench comprising

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Tangail BNP worker stabbed to death

TANGAIL, Jan 16: A worker of opposition BNP was stabbed to death near Chhillimpur Bazar in Delduar thana, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Julhas Uddin Sarker, 40, of Hinganagar village, sustained stab injuries in his belly at about 1 pm. He died on way to hospital.

According to police, one Sabdur Miah attacked and stabbed Julhas with sharp knife as he refused to give him money for buying drugs.

A case was filed with Delduar thana. However, none was arrested.

25 chargesheeted in Bangabandhu Murder Case

Star Report

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted charge sheet of the murder case of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members in the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Wednesday, according to officials sources.

The charge sheet named at least 25 accused persons and 70 witnesses, the sources said.

In the list of accused persons, three were mentioned as dead and 15 absconding. Seven are already in custody. The main witness is the complainant himself, who witnessed the killing on August 15, 1975, the sources said.

Mahitul Islam, the then Resident PA to Bangabandhu lodged the case with Dhanmondi police station on October 2 accusing 14 persons.

The 14 accused in the case are: Late President Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed, Taheruddin Thakur and eleven former army officers — Maj Faruk, Maj Bazul Huda, Maj Noor, Maj Jalil, Maj Rashid, Maj Shahriar, Maj Pasha, Maj Shariful Hossain, Capt Kismet, Maj Rashed Chowdhury and Risalder Moslemuddin.

A source in the CMM's court said that since it was a murder case, it would be tried by the district and Sessions Judge's court.

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Ershad tells The Daily Star

AL will keep JP alive, BNP to come closer

Star Report

Jatiya Party chief Lt. Gen (rtd) Ershad said that the Awami League will keep his party 'alive' in its own interest and that the BNP will try to come closer to the JP.

"Nobody can foresee the future — only Allah can," the former president told The Daily Star yesterday.

Before boarding a Bangladesh Biman flight on way to Saidpur he talked to The Daily Star chief photographer A K M Mohsin at length, sketching his future plans in politics.

Ershad yesterday went to his hometown in Rangpur. It was his first visit to his powerbase in the north-western region that returned him to parliament from five constituencies in two elections while he served time in Dhaka Central Jail since he was deposed in a mass-uprising on December 6, 1990. He was sentenced to 23 years

imprisonment in three cases out of 18 corruption charges and a murder case.

The general who ruled Bangladesh with a strong fist for nearly nine years since he seized power in a coup on March 24, 1982, looked what he described as 'fighting fit', wearing a dark grey suit with a red tie and expensive moccasins.

After the interview, Ershad and his entourage of 18 left for boarding the aircraft. His wife, Rawshan, joined him at the tag end of the interview.

However, they did not sit together. Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury sat with Ershad on the front seat of the F-28 aircraft.

When the aircraft landed at Saidpur, there was total disarray as the JP supporters rushed to shake hands with him.

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Israel dismantling its bases in Hebron

HEBRON (West Bank), Jan 16: Israeli soldiers today lowered the Star of David flag and loaded dozens of trucks with boxes and equipment — the beginning of the end of their 30-year rule over this West Bank city, reports AP.

In heavy rain and fog, army bulldozers dismantled cement barriers at the gate of Israel's main military headquarters on a hill above the city. Soldiers folded large olive drab tents and piled furniture, antennas and water tanks into the trucks.

The base will become headquarters of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's security forces. The handover of 80 per cent of the city of 130,000 Palestinians and 500 Jews to Arafat's control is expected to proceed once Israel's parliament approves the pullout agreement.

The Parliament debate was to begin at 11 am (0900 GMT) today and was expected to last well into the night, with each of the 120 legislators given a chance to speak.

Approval is guaranteed because of the support of the dovish opposition parties for the peace agreements. As many as one-third of the legislators in Netanyahu's nationalist-religious coalition were expected to abstain or vote no.

The preparations for the Israeli redeployment began at dawn today, just hours after Israel's Cabinet approved the agreement on Hebron and a three-stage pullback from West Bank rural areas in a tumultuous 12-hour session. Netanyahu was relentlessly heckled by hardliners who accused him of giving away parts of the Jewish homeland.

Science Minister Benny Begin, son of the late Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, resigned in protest after his colleagues voted 11-7 in favour of the agreement between Netanyahu and Arafat.

"The Prime Minister committed himself to give away sections of the Jewish homeland. He gets zero from Arafat," said Begin.

In contrast to the Israeli government, the Palestinian Cabinet and the PLO Executive Committee authorised the agreement with a comfortable majority late Wednesday. The vote count was not released.

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Teenage boy murdered in city

By DMC Correspondent

Guns murdered a teenage boy and looted some ornaments from a jewellery shop at Madartek under Shabujbagh thana in the city early yesterday.

Shah Alam, 14, was found dead inside the shop, Sharif Jewellers, when his elder brother Mobarak went to open the shop at around 8:30 am. The body bore no marks of injuries except some froth at the mouth, said sources at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). The body was sent to the DMCH.

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Body to review losses in govt owned jute, textile mills

The government yesterday constituted a high-powered committee headed by the finance minister to review the public sector jute and textile mills, incurring losses, reports BSS.

The committee was formed at a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair at her Tejgaon office.

The prime minister said priority would be given to the workers and employees of those industries, incurring losses if they wanted to purchase through cooperative or limited company basis.

The committee will also review the situation of the mills and factories, which were closed earlier but later closed down.

The committee members include commerce and industries minister, state minister for jute and textile, state minister for labour and manpower, MPs and representatives of workers and employees. It will submit its report.

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Separation of Judiciary Bill drafted

By Mizan Ali

The Committee on Separation of Judiciary has finalised its report and prepared a draft bill suggesting amendments to 10 Articles of the Constitution, officials said.

The bill, titled Separation of Judiciary Bill, is likely to be placed in the Jatiya Sangsad during its current session. The draft bill will be presented to the Minister for Law and Justice on Saturday, the sources said.

The draft bill suggested amendments to Articles 95, 96, 99, 107, 109, 110, 111, 114, 115 and 117, the sources said without giving the details.

The most important aspect of this bill is its recommendation for formation of a judicial council which will make suggestions to the President regarding appointment of judges of the Supreme Court, the sources added.

UP chairman shot dead in Khagrachhari

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 16: The Union Parishad chairman of Maissar Union under Moalchhari thana of Khagrachhari district was gunned down by Shantibahini men this evening, security sources said.

Adisankar Kissa, 45, was attacked by Shantibahini at the Manikchhari point at 7 pm when he, accompanied by his secretary, was returning home by a motor-cycle.

The secretary escaped unhurt.

2 children burnt alive, 20 houses gutted in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 16: Two children died and 20 houses were gutted in three fire incidents here in the past 24 hours, police and fire brigade sources said.

The deaths were identified as Hajera, (6) and Salaudinn, (5). They were burnt alive when a fire that broke out at 12:45 last night in CDA residential area under Pahartoli thana. Fourteen kucha houses were gutted.

Fire brigade personnel brought the blaze under control in one hour. The fire originated from an electric short circuit.

In another incident at 2:55 am at Gosaidanga, five houses were gutted.

The other incident of fire took place at 3:45 pm today near Bhari bazar. Two houses were gutted, fire brigade personnel said.

The fire originated from an oven.

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Sampras stays on course

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 16: Swiss teenage sensation Martina Hingis and Spaniard world number two Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario swept into the third round of the Australian Open today, reports Reuters.

In the men's section world number one and top seeded American Pete Sampras also got through to the third round after a 3-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 win over Romanian Adrian Panu.

Fourth seeded Hingis took just one hour to dispatch Lisa Raymond of the United States 6-4, 6-2, while Sanchez-Vicario made an remarkable entry into the third round when her Belgian opponent Stephanie de Ville retired hurt.

