

Muhith slates Kamal's remark on stock index

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday criticised the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the finance ministry for his remarks on the stockmarket index.

"I have not given any figure on what should be the index. The only thing I've said the market is overvalued and it will correct itself," Muhith told journalists after a meeting on the offloading of state-owned companies' shares at the finance ministry.

AHM Mustafa Kamal, chairman of the standing committee, said on Tuesday the index at Dhaka Stock Exchange should come down to 3,000-3,500 for stability.

The index now hovers around 6,500 from nearly 9,000 in early December.

"I've no right to say what the index should be," Muhith said on Kamal's remarks.

He also said the House body chairman can only recommend but can't give any decision.

Mustafa Kamal owns CMC Kamal Textile Mills, a company listed on the stockmarket. The price of a share of CMC Kamal rose to nearly Tk 1,600 in November from Tk 144.75 in March last year.

The price increase rate was over 1,000 percent during this period.

According to data available at the Dhaka Stock Exchange, CMC Kamal that was listed in 1997 gave dividend (10 percent bonus) in 2009.

"He (Kamal) has a conflict of interests in the stockmarket as two of his companies are listed on the market. Simultaneously, he is a lawmaker and chairman of a watchdog committee," said a former chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The finance minister yesterday came down heavily on the investors for demonstrating on the streets. "What rubbish they are doing. It is pre-planned," he said.

Courtroom

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Reading from the report of the second autopsy, conducted at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Civil Surgeon Golam Sarwar said, "One bruise on left lower chest is two and a half inches long and two inches wide."

The latest autopsy has found eight external and seven internal wounds.

"In our opinion, the death was due to haemorrhage followed by Septicaemic shock resulting from the wounds inflicted by blunt weapon. Those were ante-mortem and homicidal in nature," Sarwar told a two-member bench of the HC.

A murmur of voices rose in the courtroom as the civil surgeon concluded. "Someone shouted out, 'You scoundrel. How much money did you take?'"

The DMCH autopsy found four bruises on the chest, three on the back of abdomen and one in left thigh.

The external bruises were on average four inches long and two inches wide.

The internal ones were mostly four and a half inches long and three inches wide. The wounds include three in the chest, three on the back of abdomen and one in left thigh.

Asked which one of the two reports is true, Sarwar avoided a directly a reply. "This is about the experience of doctors. The DMCH doctors are more experienced than those from Shariatpur," he said.

Instantly, the court wondered about the fate of hundreds of post-mortems

done in the district in past.

"According to your statement, all the post-mortems done in the past in the district were wrong," one judge told Sarwar.

In reply to another question on how Hena died within 34 hours of her discharge from the hospital, Sarwar claimed Hena was "completely healthy" at the time of her release.

"Then it must be a genie who has killed the girl," the judge quipped.

At one stage of the hearing, Additional Attorney General MK Rahman brought to the court's attention different news reports containing the civil surgeon's statement that journalists were lying about Hena's death.

"What you have said is completely false, and what the journalists said are completely true," another judge observed.

Nirmal Chandra Das, the medical officer who headed the Shariatpur autopsy team, tried to raise the issue of lack of instruments for a proper autopsy. But he could not name any such tool when the court asked him.

The judge came down heavily on investigation officer of the case Sub-Inspector Aslam of Naria Police Station for bringing the issue of Hena's "affair" with alleged rapist Mahub in the inquest report.

"Who are you to write those? While the post-mortem at DMCH identified so many external injuries on the body, how come your inquest report mentioned nothing of those," said the judge.

HC summons

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In a suo moto rule, the court directed the SP to deploy police at the archaeological site immediately, and asked the inspector general of police (IGP) to deploy Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), if necessary.

An HC bench comprised of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain issued the rule in the wake of press reports that the archaeological site and relics are being damaged due to building of structures for expansion of a mosque adjacent to the site.

Attorney General Mahubey Alam placed before the court the reports published in two national dailies -- the Prothom Alo and Kaler Kantha.

Earlier on January 23, following a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB), the same bench ordered the local administration to stop

the construction work.

It also directed the cultural affairs secretary to submit to it within 10 days a report on whether the mosque near the site can be relocated to another place to protect the cultural heritage without hurting religious sentiment.

HRPB President Manzill Murshid yesterday prayed to the court to pass an order to save the historic site.

A report from our staff reporter in Bogra adds: Officials of the Department of Archaeology and Shibganj police yesterday afternoon recovered some of the antique stones removed overnight from Mahasthangarh Mazar premises.

The stones were hidden under earth on the north-western side of the mazar.

Custodian of Mahasthangarh Museum Nahid Sultana said about 15 pieces of the antiques were recovered till 4:00 pm yesterday.

BNP MPs stage

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government. Treasury bench Chief Whip Abdus Shahid in parliament criticised the opposition lawmakers for their "unruly" behaviour with security men and officials of the speaker's office.

"They [opposition lawmakers] have encouraged anti-democratic forces by the sit-in programme."

BNP lawmaker Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anee, who participated in the sit-in, alleged that sergeant-at-arms of the Jatiya Sangsad was rude to them.

Talking to reporters after the programme, he also criticised the deputy speaker for not showing hospitality in the absence of the Speaker, now on a Sri Lanka visit.

Eyewitness said when the opposition lawmakers gathered at the place around 3:00pm, Sergeant-at-Arms Capt AKM Faruque Hassan invited them to have tea and snacks at the Speaker's office. The lawmakers refused the invitation and some of them even hurled abuse at Faruque.

During the sit-in, the opposition MPs demanded action against those who "tortured" BNP leaders and activists across the country in Monday's hartal. They also demanded withdrawal of the case against opposition leader Khaleda Zia in connection with a violent demonstration against the proposed Bangabandhu International Airport at Arial Beel.

They submitted a memorandum signed by the opposition chief whip to Speaker Abdul Hamid and one of his assistant personal secretaries received it.

At a press briefing at the parliament's media centre, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faruque said the opposition will return to the House only if the government creates a proper atmosphere.

Independent

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Bangladesh to attract investment for a sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction, said US Ambassador to Bangladesh James F Moriarty.

"Bangladesh has made substantial progress in developing institutions and undertaking reforms to reduce corruption," he said at the inaugural session of the 20th Annual US Trade Show 2011.

"However, sustaining these efforts will be a challenge," he added.

Moriarty said Bangladesh has not been very successful in attracting investment because investors look for a stable and predictable environment where rules are consistent and risks are minimum.

"Each country's reputation is becoming very critical and Bangladesh has shown steady progress in the last two decades," he said.

Bangladesh has enormous potential for strengthening economic relationship with the US, especially if it succeeds in attracting more investment, Moriarty noted.

3 Hazaribagh

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labourers working at severe health risk.

None of the factories has environmental clearances, Monir noted.

Experts say consumption of tannery waste through fish and poultry can cause liver and kidney diseases, even cancer.

In July last year, The Daily Star found in and around Hazaribagh some 100 small traders using tannery waste as ingredients for poultry and fish feeds and supplying those to some 20 factories across the country.

Shahidul Islam, chief scientific officer of Bangladesh Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR), said in the country around 176 tonnes of solid waste is produced a day at 270 tanneries, 90 percent of which are located in Hazaribagh.

Monir Chowdhury said they will take measures to compel the tannery owners not to sale their waste to feed traders.

The practice of using tannery waste for fish and poultry feed started around 10 years ago, as the prices of imported protein for feed had gone up over the years.

Fresh case to add

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provide necessary security to Hena's family.

The bench also ordered them to simultaneously proceed with the murder case filed by Hena's father Darbesh Kha with Naria police on January 31.

It directed the inspector general of police (IGP) to take legal and departmental actions against sub-inspectors of Naria police -- Mirza AK Azad and Aslam Uddin -- for manipulating the first information report and the inquest report regarding Hena's unnatural death.

The IGP was ordered to replace existing investigation officer Aslam Uddin with another police officer having the rank of at least an assistant superintendent of police.

The police chief was directed to submit a compliance report to the court within 15 days of the order.

The court directed the health secretary, and the director general (DG) of the Directorate of Health to constitute a high-powered committee comprising DG Health, principal of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), director of the hospital, heads of the forensic departments of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and Shuhrawardi Hospital, and joint secretaries of the law and home ministries to examine why the post-mortem reports prepared by Shariatpur Sadar Hospital and DMCH are diametrically different.

The committee will also examine whether the civil surgeon of Shariatpur, and the doctors of the hospital there, who prepared the first post-mortem report, committed any offence or were negligent in their duties.

The DG Health will have to submit a report to the HC within 30 days of receiving the order.

The court ordered the secretaries to the ministries of religious affairs and information to run a campaign at all mosques, madrasas, and union parishads across the country identifying fatwas as a criminal offence.

Hena, 15, was mercilessly whipped at a village arbitration following a fatwa on January 24 for allegedly having an illicit affair with her married cousin Mahub, while her family kept insisting that she had actually been raped by the man. She died on January 31.

Mubarak to stay

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But he said he would ignore "dikats from abroad".

Egypt's military had earlier said it was standing ready to "protect the nation".

"I express a commitment to carry on and protect the constitution and the people and transfer power to whomever is elected next September in free and transparent elections," Mr Mubarak said.

Ahead of Mr Mubarak's announcement, thousands of Egyptians had again gathered in central Cairo to call for him to step down.

Doctors, bus drivers, lawyers and textile workers were on strike in the capital yesterday, with trade unions reporting walk-outs and protests across the country.

Mr Mubarak, 82, had previously said he would leave office only after presidential elections due to be held in September.

Negotiations between the government and opposition groups have made little progress, with protesters disillusioned at plans for reform put forward by Mr Mubarak's government.

In recent days, the US government had stepped up its call for the protesters' concerns to be addressed.

Mubarak announced that he had put into place a framework that would lead to the amendment of six constitutional articles in the address late on last night, reports Aljazeera.

"I can not and will not accept to be dictator orders from outside, no matter what the source is," Mubarak said. He said he was addressing his people with a "speech from the heart".

Earlier, the Supreme Council of Egyptian Armed Forces had met to discuss the ongoing protests against

According to the second post-mortem done by DMCH, she died of extensive external and internal injuries.

The inquest report by Naria police and the first post-mortem by Shariatpur Sadar Hospital however had not found any mark of injury on Hena's body right after her death.

The Daily Star in a news report on Feb 7 raised doubt about the reports from Shariatpur and Naria, which prompted the HC to issue a suo moto order the same day for exhumation of Hena's body and a fresh post-mortem.

The body was exhumed that night and sent to DMCH. The next day a new post-mortem was done by DMCH which found extensive wounds on Hena's body, and determined those were the cause of her death.

Yesterday's HC ruling came after the new post-mortem report had been submitted to the court the day before.

A huge crowd of local and international journalists, human rights activists, and lawyers thronged the court yesterday to know about the new post-mortem.

Meanwhile, a Shariatpur court yesterday placed Mahub Khan, the alleged rapist and the main accused in the existing case, on a five-day remand. He was arrested by Shariatpur police from Savar on Wednesday.

During yesterday's hearing at the HC, Civil Surgeon of Shariatpur Golam Sarwar; doctors Nirmal Chandra Das, Rajesh Majumder, and Hosne Ara Begum of Shariatpur Sadar Hospital, who prepared the first post-mortem report; Sultan Ahmed, who attended Hena at that hospital; arbitrator Idris Ali Sheikh, who is also a member of the local union parishad; OC of Naria Police Station Abul Khair Fakir; Sub-inspector Aslam Uddin, who prepared the inquest report; Hena's father Darbesh Kha; and her cousin Minu Begum appeared before the court responding to its summons.

Attorney General Mahubey Alam, Additional Attorneys General MK Rahman and Murad Reza, Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain, Assistant Attorney General Fazilatunnesa Bappy, and Advocate Seema Zahur assisted the court.

Mubarak's government.

In a statement entitled Communique Number One, televised on state television, the army said it had convened the meeting response to the current political turmoil, and that it would continue to convene such meetings.

Tens of thousands poured into Tahrir Square after the army statement was televised. Thousands also gathered in Alexandria, Egypt's second city, our correspondent said.

Earlier, Hassan al-Roweni, an Egyptian army commander, told protesters in the square that "everything you want will be realised".

Hassam Badrawi, the secretary general of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), told the BBC and Channel 4 News earlier on that he expected Mubarak to hand over his powers to Omar Suleiman, the vice-president.

"I think the right thing to do now is to take the action that would satisfy ... protesters," Badrawi told BBC television in a live interview.

Autistic child

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sector-11 hoping to earn the cost for the treatment. Moshir was engaged in carrying bricks on his head to upper floors.

Yesterday around 3:45pm, the boy suddenly lost balance and fell from the fourth floor of the under construction building.

He was rushed to Bangladesh Medical College Hospital, Uttara branch and was later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The doctors there declared him dead at 6:45pm.

Khandaker Rezaul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Uttara Police Station acknowledged the incident.



Children at a stall of the Little Magazine Chattar of Amar Ekushey Bhai Mela have a look at poems, stories and novels written by the young.

PHOTO: STAR

Little magazines still a craze for youths

NAJMUL ALAM NOBIN

The sparse crowd around the vicinity of 'Little Magazine Chattar' at the Amar Ekushey Bhai Mela paints quite a different picture than the rest of the fair, which is thickly populated.

A handful of people were seen sauntering around the stalls mostly consisting of students.

"The Little Magazine Movement has its history attached since the Language Movement. However, it formed into an institution in 1996 after a space was allocated for it at the fair," said Shakil Hasan, a poet and an activist of the institution.

"Interest of the people in the Little Magazines is increasing each year, espe-

cially among young writers who visit our stalls to know how to publish their work," he said.

There are 31 stalls of the Little Magazines at the book fair with names like Agrabij, Megh, Lamppost, Dar Kak, Shamprotik, Gram Theatre, Chal Chitra, and Nisharga are selling their magazines.

Masudur Rahman, a sales person at the stall of Shaluk expects the number of buyers to increase once the latest issues hit the fair, he said.

Shakil said some outstanding little magazines are also being published at the district level.

"However, lack of publicity leads to limited publication," he said.

Saarc

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former Maldivian attorney general Aishath Dhiyana Saeed as the first ever female secretary general of the eight-nation regional body.

Dhiyana would become the first female and the youngest secretary general of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) when she takes office on March 1, replacing the incumbent Indian diplomat Sheel Kant Sharma, diplomatic sources said.

She is the second Maldivian to assume the post after Ibrahim Hussein Zakee, who served from January 1, 1992 to December 31, 1993.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni led the Bangladesh delegation at the meeting held in Thimphu on February 8-9. It was preceded by meetings of Saarc Programming Committee and Saarc Standing Committee.

The Council of Ministers is comprised of foreign ministers of Saarc countries -- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Seven members founded Saarc in December, 1985 and made way for Afghanistan in 2007.

Maldives will host the 17th Saarc Summit sometime between November and December this year.

Double blow

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46 weeks at the rate of Tk 250 per week.

The rest of the money was borrowed from relatives and neighbours.

More than Tk 20,000 was spent for the treatment at Shariatpur Sadar Hospital, said Riad Kha, Hena's cousin who helped arrange the loan.

Hena Akhter, 15, was whipped to death at Chamta village under Naria upazila in the district. She was lashed at least 50 times following a fatwa on January 24, witnesses said.

Darbesh, who earns between Tk 120 and Tk 150 a day, said he could not think of taking Hena to the hospital before her condition worsened the day after.

"I had Tk 500 only on that day [January 25]," he said.

The family had to pay Tk 1,500 for the first post-mortem, which ironically found no injury marks on her body.

Darbesh, 50, and his 12-year-old mentally challenged son Iqbal, are the breadwinners of the family of four.

Darbesh is yet to go to work following Hena's death. Asked how he will pay off the debt, he only gave a blank look.

Everything in place

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the next few days, the English team will also touch down in Dhaka for matches against Canada and Pakistan at Fatullah.

Dhaka and Chittagong, meanwhile, have been getting ready to host the world. The facelift of the capital and the port city are going on in full swing. Although the traffic has not yet been eased, one can easily see changes in other areas. The Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, which will host six World Cup matches, wore a whole new look. The surrounding areas have gone through massive face-lifting work. Most buildings from the airport to Mirpur and the Bangabandhu National Stadium have also gotten a fresh coat of paint. Besides, posters and festoons have been mounted in different parts of the city welcoming the visiting cricket community.

There might be a lot of disappointment among the fans for not getting hold of a dream World Cup ticket and the way it was handled, it is heartening for all concerned to know that the country is faring considerably better

than its two co-hosts in getting the designated venues ready to host matches. Sri Lanka's preparations have been blighted by rain while the Eden Gardens in Kolkata has already lost the right to hold the India-England match because the landmark venue was not ready in time.

Happily for Bangladesh, the weather has been fine and the two match venues, Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium and Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, appear in top shape with the venues being converted to all-seaters and facilities being upgraded to international standards.

The Bangabandhu National Stadium, the country's oldest venue and the setting for the gala opening ceremony which will feature international stars such as Canadian singer Bryan Adams, has enjoyed a similar facelift. Not wanting to leave anything to chance, authorities have shut down the venue to the general public seven days before the august occasion on February 17.

All that remains now is the ringing of the opening bell.

Nipah claims 2 more

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Moni was admitted to the hospital with high fever on Tuesday while Muktar on Wednesday, said a source at the hospital.

Contacted, Dr Towfiqur Rahman, director of the hospital, confirmed the deaths.

Md Monsur Ali Sarker, civil surgeon of Dinajpur, visited Belaichandi village in Parbatipur.

Eighteen Nipah encephalitis infected people are now undergoing treatment at RMCH, hospital sources said.

Meanwhile, Dr Khondoker Mohammad Shefayetullah, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services yesterday said that no new cases of Nipah virus infection were found in the last four days.

"The infection of Nipah virus is now under control. The crisis period is over and there is almost no chance of secondary infection," said Dr Shefayetullah at a press conference at the auditorium of Institute of

Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

Meantime, three people from Rajbari were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital last night with symptoms of Nipah virus, DMCH sources said.

The three are Abul Kalam, 55, his son Rusel, 18, and his nephew Abul Kalam, 18.

Kalam's wife Asma Begum told this correspondent that five members of her family fell sick after taking some date juice on Monday.

Two of them, however, recovered by taking some medicines at home.

The three were first taken to Faridpur Medical College Hospital where the doctors refused to admit them.

They then went to Enam Medical College Hospital at Savar yesterday morning. After some initial tests, doctors suspected them to be affected with Nipah virus and referred them to Mohakhali Infectious Disease Hospital.

Refused to be admitted, they finally came to DMCH.