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11 killed in Pakistan sectarian violence

AFP, Gilgit
 At least 11 people were killed, six of them burned alive, during sectarian unrest yesterday in a northern Pakistani city where a curfew was imposed and troops were deployed to restore order, officials said.

Hasina to go abroad again for hearing treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 Leader of the Opposition and Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina will again go abroad this month for better treatment of her ear injuries that she sustained during the August 21 grenade attacks last year.

Prayer Timing

January 9

	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-30	5-35
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Palestinians vote today for Arafat successor

Low turnout predicted for Hamas boycott call; Israel eases closures

AFP, Ramallah
 Palestinians were mulling yesterday their choice of candidates to succeed the late Yasser Arafat ahead of a poll that looks set to be comfortably won by their historic leader's long-time deputy, Mahmud Abbas.

Public opinion polls have indicated that the result of today's vote is an all but foregone conclusion, with Abbas at least 30 points ahead of his nearest rival, independent candidate Mustafa Barghuti.

While Abbas appears in little danger of defeat, his supporters' main fear is that large numbers of voters will heed the call of the radical Islamist group Hamas and stay away from polling stations in only the second election for the head of the Palestinian Authority.

Candidates are officially barred from campaigning on Saturday and none have scheduled any rallies. Their supporters, however, are expected to continue canvassing until the last possible moment.

Abbas was slated to meet with the former US president Jimmy Carter, one of the leaders of the hundreds of international monitors who are overseeing the election.

In order to ensure the smooth running of the election, Israel has pledged to keep all its forces out of Palestinian towns and cities for a 72-hour period from Saturday, in theory allowing the local population an opportunity to travel freely within the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the first time in years.

But Israel has placed severe restrictions on campaigning in occupied east Jerusalem throughout the campaign. On Friday, it kicked two candidates, including Barghuti, out of the holy city for allegedly violating agreements on campaigning.

An Abbas victory is likely to be the signal for a resumption of top-level talks with Israel, frozen since Abbas walked out of a short stint as Arafat's first premier in September 2003.

After arriving back in his base in Ramallah on Friday night, Abbas told reporters there was no option but to do business with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

"Mr Prime Minister Sharon was elected by his people. We have no right to be asked for that to be changed... We have no other choice but to sit with him and we will do our best to convince him of Palestinian rights," he said.

Abbas said that he would ask current prime minister Ahmed Qorei to head up a new government and also voiced optimism about the prospect of persuading militant factions to sign up to a new truce. He managed to persuade all the armed factions to halt their campaign of anti-Israeli attacks when he was premier, but the so-called hudna fell apart after seven weeks.

"There was a truce inside the

Bringing back from the brink

Species start breeding at JU wildlife centre

JU CORRESPONDENT

A number of endangered species brought to the wildlife rescue centre (WRC) at Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus three months ago have started breeding again.

The female otter of the Mustelidae family has given birth to three offspring, weighing 200gm each, on December 15 last year. They have been developing normally and even better than they would in the wild, the researchers said.

The offspring now weighing about 400gm are still too young to walk as they can't see yet but should be able to do so within three or four days. However, after the female otter conceived,

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PHOTO: STAR

A female otter, which has given birth to three offspring, peeks through wire fence at the Wildlife Rescue Centre at Jahangirnagar University.

Strengthen links with people

UNB, Dhaka
 Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked her party leaders at grassroots level to bring people under the banner of the BNP in order to sustain the significant development by her government in the last three years.

She also advised the field-level leaders to strengthen their relations with people through mass campaign as well as participating in the ongoing development process.

"People have been enjoying the fruits of the development carried out by the government," Khaleda, chairperson of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), told the leaders at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

As part of her exchange of opinions with the party's constituency-based leaderships, she had direct talks with presidents and general secretaries of upazila and municipality units of

Injured US co staff found in cantt area, dies at DMCH

AFP, Colombo
 Elusive Tamil Tiger chief Velupillai Prabhakaran and his intelligence chief Pottu Amman are among the dead or missing after last week's tsunami disaster, state radio said yesterday, sparking fresh tension between government and rebels who immediately denied the report.

The island newspaper, meanwhile, reported Saturday that an expensive coffin "for a top LTTE leader" had been smuggled into a northern Tiger area inside a container carrying relief for tsunami survivors.

The LTTE, in a statement posted on its official Peace Secretariat website, slammed the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation for carrying the reports, saying now was "not the time for gossip mongering and malicious propaganda".

"The LTTE and the Tamil people wish to strongly protest against this mischievous act of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, stooping down to such low level of broadcasting news that (is) fabricated by interested parties," the statement said.

"At a time of a national catastrophe of this magnitude, it is very... regrettable that a responsible media of the government takes upon itself the job of spreading rumours and speculation that tend to create confusion in the minds of the people," it added.

Tamil Tiger chief goes missing after tsunami

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Saifur blasts Rab critics


BSS, Sylhet
 Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday came down heavily on those who criticised the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) for the death of criminals in crossfire.

"A certain quarter does not raise its voice for human rights when a criminal kills 10 to 12 innocent people. But this quarter is very active to uphold the human rights of a criminal killed in crossfire with the law enforcers," he said.

The minister was addressing the council of the city unit of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) at Alia Madrasa Maidan.

With BNP city unit convenor Ariful Haque Chowdhury in the chair, the council was addressed, among others, by State Minister for Public Works and Housing Alamgir

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Mr. Nasir is also the Managing Director of Frank Group of Companies. We wish best of success to his journey and pray for good health & long life.

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