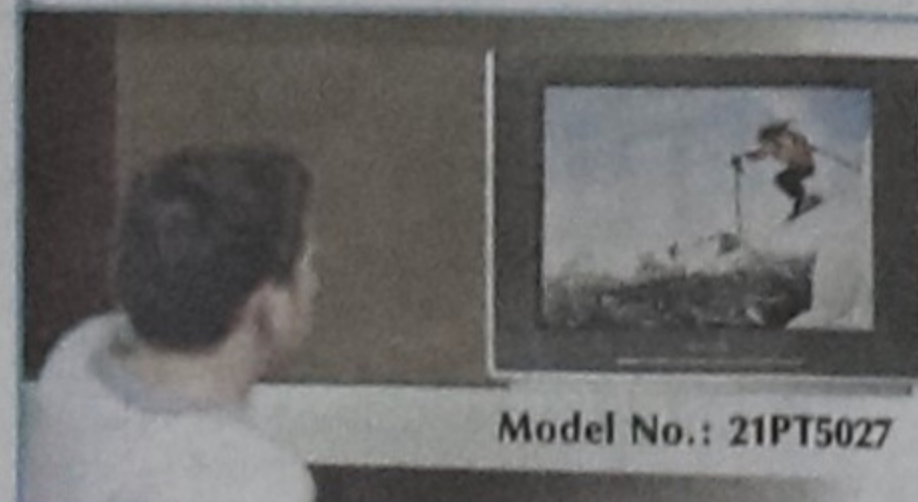




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Qatar labour minister due tomorrow

To sign manpower deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qatar's Labour and Social Affairs Minister Sultan Bin Hasan al-Dhabit Al-Dosari arrives in Dhaka tomorrow to sign an additional protocol, which will boost the Bangladeshi workers' employment and protect their interests there.

Sultan Bin Hasan will hold bilateral meeting with Adviser for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, which will culminate in the signing of the protocol.

The Qatar minister will also visit a technical training centre in Dhaka and get to know availability of workers during his two-day visit, a high official of the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment told The Daily Star yesterday.

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Hike oil prices, says expert committee

Tk 7,568cr govt subsidy likely in FY08 due to soaring oil prices on int'l market

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

An expert committee has asked the government to raise the prices of petroleum products as the government will have to spend Tk 7,568 crore as subsidy only for diesel and kerosene in FY08 due to high oil prices on the international market.

"The administered prices of petroleum products have generated fiscal and quasi-fiscal costs to the government," the expert report titled "The macroeconomic impact of rising oil prices on the Bangladesh economy" said.

The report, submitted to the

energy and power adviser yesterday, also observed that the administered prices cannot be continued for a long time because of implications for fiscal and current account of balances.

Sources in the energy ministry said the overall subsidy in petroleum products for the current fiscal year would be more as the crude oil prices crossed \$100 per barrel yesterday in the international market.

Nasiruddin Ahmed, a macroeconomic analysis specialist of the finance division and Siddique Zohair, an expert of the energy divi-

sion, were members of the committee formed by the government.

Asked about the committee's suggestion, a high official of the energy division admitted that the government is facing huge losses due to under-pricing of petroleum products. "But it's very difficult to raise prices of petroleum products considering the present economic condition as it will have adverse impact on the poor," he added.

The current prices of petroleum products in domestic market were set on April 2, 2007.

The report says that

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Three to debut on Tigers' 50th Test today

SPORTS REPORTER

In their 50th Test match, Bangladesh will give debuts to Tamim Iqbal, Zunaed Siddiqui and Sajidul Islam when the first Test of the two-match series against New Zealand begins at the University Oval in Dunedin today.

The match starts at 4am Bangladesh Standard Time and will be telecast live on satellite channel SAB.

Interestingly, when the three rookies will debut, one of them will

SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

BREAKING EPR DU student tells of Prof Anwar's involvement

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka University (DU) student yesterday accused Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) General Secretary Prof Anwar Hossain and several students of making provocative speeches and damaging vehicles on August 21-22 last year.

The fourth-year student of Social Welfare and Research Institute, Dewan Safayet Ahmed, did not say anything against Duta President Prof Sadrul Amin, Science Faculty Dean Prof Harun-Rashid and applied physics department Chairman Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik.

Safayet was giving statement at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court in two cases filed against four teachers and 15 students for breaching the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) on

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

Ctg top goon 'Kana' Bakkar held after gunfight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested a top criminal after he was injured in an 'encounter' between his associates and the law enforcers in the city's Lalkhan Bazar.

Sources said Abu Bakkar alias Kana Bakkar, 35, received four bullets in his hands and legs in the encounter at Bagghona of Lalkhan Bazar at about 2:00am.

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This rice mill in Kahalu upazila of Bogra is closed due to lack of supply of paddy. Around 5,000 mills are sitting idle in northern districts.

5,000 rice mills in North sitting idle for poor supply

STAR REPORT

About 5,000 rice mills in the northern districts remain either idle or closed while scores face closure due to poor supply and unusual spike in paddy prices.

In eight northern districts, about 4,925 rice mills have already stopped production, turning more than one lakh people unemployed.

Rice-mill owners in the eight districts Bogra, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Joypurhat and Rangpur said hundreds more will also shut down soon as they see no immediate solution to poor paddy supply and soaring prices.

Our Bogra correspondent reported yesterday that 1,500 rice mills have already closed due to poor supply of paddy and lack of money to purchase paddy at high rates.

"Some rice mills which are still running operate only two or three days a week," Amirul Islam, president of Bogra district rice-mill owners' association, told The Daily

Star, adding that many other mills will shut in next few days if paddy supply does not show signs of improvement.

In Kahalu, which produces most rice in Bogra, paddy prices increased by Tk 27 to 300 a maund, said upazila rice-mill owners' association president, Ali Ahmed. Shafiqul Islam, a rice trader of Dhunat upazila, said he needs 100 maunds of paddy a day but does not afford to buy at current rates which rose by Tk 300 a maund.

"So, I've been running my mill on alternate days," he said.

Our Rangpur correspondent said 290 rice mills out of a total of 350 in the district have already closed down due to poor paddy supply.

Jadab Mukherjee, organising secretary of Mahiganj mini rice depot association, said rice-mill closure is the main reason for poor supply of rice to local markets.

Citing low yield of aman paddy as the main cause of shortage of paddy, Ashraf Alam, proprietor of Rafique Rice Mills in Mahiganj, said



Ambassador Ruhul Amin dies in Paris

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Ambassador to France Ruhul Amin, who suffered a stroke, died in Paris yesterday.

Ambassador Amin suffered the stroke while he was returning to Bangladesh mission after a meeting at the French foreign ministry Wednesday afternoon.

"Doctors earlier declared him clinically dead...He was kept on life support," a senior official of the foreign ministry told the news agency.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury expressed deep shock at the death of Ruhul Amin, saying he was a brilliant and efficient officer.

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The authorities are yet to take any step to reconstruct the Forest Office at Kotka in the Sundarbans devastated by Cyclone Sidr on November 15 last year.

Proceedings of tax evasion case against Minu stayed

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday stayed for three months the proceedings of the tax-dodging case against jailed Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu.

Passing the stay order upon a writ petition, a division bench comprising Justice MA Rashid and Justice M Miftah Uddin Choudhury issued a rule asking the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to explain why the initiation of the case should not be declared illegal.

"The rule is made returnable in three weeks," said the court order.

On November 28, last year, Assistant Commissioner of Taxes Moshataque Ahmed filed the case with the senior special judge's court at Rajshahi against Minu on charges of hiding income of Tk 39,21,519 and evading tax of Tk 9 lakh.

Minu, also the top divisional leader of BNP, has already been sentenced to 13 years imprisonment in an extortion case.

Barrister Mahub Uddin Khokon appeared for the Minu.

Pak opposition wants better security ahead of Feb 18 vote

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's opposition parties demanded better security yesterday as the nation prepared for a lengthy February 18 election campaign, a week after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

The country's main political parties confirmed they would resume the race to restore democracy here but said the government must ensure candidates are protected from the dangers posed by anyone determined to disrupt the polls.

"We would like the government to provide foolproof security to Sharif, including a bulletproof vehicle," said Ahsan Iqbal, a spokesman for Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, the party of two-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

"We will continue our election campaign but we are revising the party chief's programme of public engagements in view of the current security situation."

President Pervez Musharraf announced the postponement of planned January 8 elections until

February 18 in his first major speech to the nation since Benazir's murder a week ago plunged the nation into turmoil.

He also announced Wednesday that a team of investigators from Scotland Yard, expected by the weekend, had been invited to clear up confusion over how the two-time former prime minister died, amid widespread disbelief at the official version of her death.

The PML-N spokesman said the party was not deterred by the vote delay and was determined to wage a lengthy nationwide campaign despite security concerns.

"Although the elections are now more than a month away the delay will not cause any harm to the campaign of our party, which is determined to restore genuine democracy in Pakistan," Iqbal said.

The government had provided Benazir with a bulletproof vehicle and police security but many of her supporters blame Musharraf for failing to stop the gun and suicide-bomb attack which killed her last Thursday in Rawalpindi.

Her October 18 homecoming

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Musharraf denies involvement in Benazir killing

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf yesterday said there was no government involvement in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto but admitted he was unsatisfied with the probe into her death.

For the first time since Benazir was killed in a gun and suicide attack that his government blamed on Al-Qaeda, he acknowledged reports that the crime scene had been quickly hosed down, possibly destroying evidence, after her murder.

One week after the popular opposition leader was killed at a campaign rally, and just a day after he said Scotland Yard would send investigators to help, Musharraf conceded he was "not fully satisfied" with the probe so far.

"I am sure that they did not do it

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2 children die in wall collapse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two children were killed and two others injured in a wall collapse at West Rajabazar in the city yesterday morning.

The deceased were identified as Imran, 6, student of Gulshanara Primary School in East Rajabazar, and Sabekunnahar, 5, a resident of West Rajabazar. The injured are Lameya, 6, cousin of Imran and also the student of the same school, and Jahirul, 4, a resident of the same area.

Witnesses said a major part of a dilapidated boundary wall of an under-construction building of Nagar Homes Ltd collapsed on Imran and Lameya while they were going to their school at around 8:15am, killing Imran on the spot and injuring Lameya.

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Vendors run business just beside Dhaka-Narayanganj rail tracks at Jurain in the city, risking their and the customers' lives.

NBR asks for account info of 19 persons

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday asked all commercial banks and financial organisations to provide account information of 19 persons, including former Awami League lawmaker Rahmat Ullah, former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Assistant Personal Secretary Shamsul Alam, and their family members.

The NBR sent letters to the commercial banks and financial organisations asking them to provide the account information within 10 days.

The NBR also asked for account information of two organisations owned by former law secretary Alauddin Sarder. Earlier, it had asked for his bank account information.

ATTACK ON UK ENVOY Court summons seven absentee witnesses again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Sylhet court yesterday re-summoned seven prosecution witnesses as they failed to appear before it to give their depositions in a case that was filed following grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury in 2004.

The judge at Sylhet Divisional

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Prayer Timing		
January 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:30	6:05
Juma	12:30	1:15
Asr	4:00	4:15
Maghrib	5:30	5:35
Esha	7:00	7:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

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