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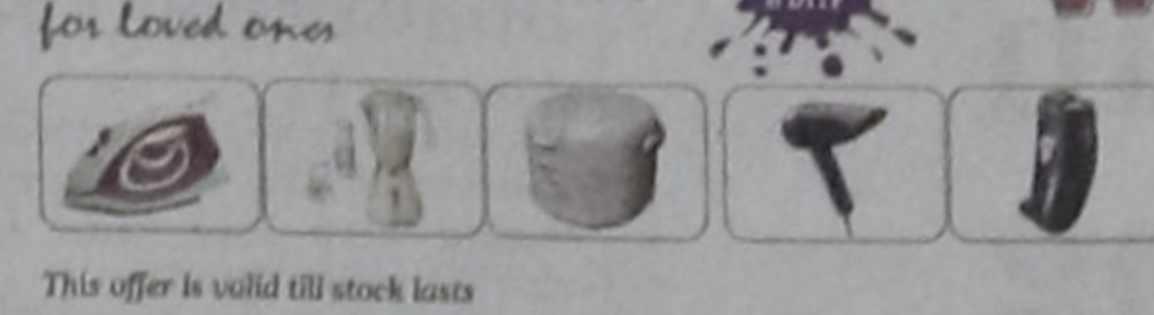
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Holy Ashura observed

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Ashura was observed across the country on Sunday commemorating the Karbala tragedy in which Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) along with his family members and followers embraced martyrdom.

On the tenth of Muharram, the fateful day, Imam Hussain (RA), the grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), along with most of his family members and followers embraced martyrdom at the hands of the soldiers of Yazid at Karbala while fighting to establish truth in society.

Members of the Shia Community took out a "Tazia" procession in the city on the occasion. Wearing black pajamas and panjabis and holding colourful flags inscribed with "Kalema", they paraded the streets.

Various religious organisations held milad and discussions highlighting the significance of the Ashura.

The day was a public holiday.

3 of a family burned alive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Three members of a family were burnt alive as a fire broke out at their house at Bhuapur in Tangail on Sunday night.

The dead are Sajib, 2, and his elder brothers Sabuj, 4, and Sharif, 7, sons of Kamrul Islam of Nikrail Pukuria village.

Police said the fire broke out at the house of Kamrul, an apparel trader, at about 8:30pm when his wife Rehana Begum and their four sons were asleep.

Local people managed to rescue Rehana and her elder son Arif but failed to save her other three sons.

Bhuapur Police Station Officer-in-charge Anisur Rahman said the fire might have originated from an oil lamp.

An unnatural death case was filed with the police station.

HASINA'S EXTORTION CASE No SC stay on HC order

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court yesterday refrained from issuing stay on the operation of the High Court order that stalled the trial of detained former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in a Tk 3-crore extortion case.

Brushing aside the government petition for stay, Justice MA Matin of the chamber court referred the matter to the full bench of the Appellate Division for hearing. The petition will come up for hearing on Thursday.

The government moved the petition seeking permission to appeal against the January 17 High Court orders.

The High Court order had come within two hours after the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court set up at the parliament building complex adjourned for three days the commencement of trial with the deposition by the complainant of the case.

The High Court, following defence application, had also passed an order upgrading the cause list for early hearings of its pending rule that had asked the government to explain why the placing of the extortion case under the Emergency Power Rules should not be declared "without lawful authority".

The case was filed by Azam J

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Prayer Timing		
January 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-40	5-44
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

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RESULT DOCTORING

Docs promoted without checking allegations

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

After holding back controversial results of examinations for promotion of doctors for more than eight months, the Public Service Commission (PSC) has finally approved promotion of a number of them without verifying allegations that the results were politically manipulated to favour many incompetent medical professionals.

The examinations for promotion of doctors took place under a committee headed by the then PSC chairman Zinnatun Nesa Tahmida Begum, which was accused of politically favouring many incompetent physicians ignoring competent ones. Zinnatun and the PSC member on the committee Prof Fazlul Haque resigned after the present caretaker government took over in January last year.

The PSC on February 20 last year

withheld announcement of results of the examinations but started publishing that from November 3 without any review.

According to government service rules, medical professionals must pass examinations under the PSC for promotion. On May 28, 2006, the government sought professors, associate professors and assistant professors against 432 posts in different medical institutions. The examinations held under the disputed committee stirred controversies.

It was alleged that the committee recommended promotion of many doctors without requisite qualifications as they were blessed by the then general secretary of Doctors Association of Bangladesh (Dab) ABM Zahid Hossain, depriving many properly qualified and competent ones. Zahid was allegedly involved with BNP (then in power) politics and exerted his

political influence in transfers and promotions in the health sector.

Sources said Zahid influenced promotion of three Dab members as assistant professors though they lacked required qualifications.

One of the three worked as a medical officer at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Disease (NICVD) for five years and had no teaching experience. But assistant professor (current charge) for 27 years Dr Shirajul Islam of Dhaka Medical College was denied promotion despite meeting the promotion criteria.

Eleven cardiologists were promoted as assistant professors. Of them, one was promoted under the freedom fighters' (FF) quota for being a member of an FF's family. Earlier, he was declared 'unauthorised absent' by the health ministry for taking unauthorised leave. He was then working at the

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WEF MEET

CA leaves for Davos today

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed leaves Dhaka today for Switzerland to attend the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The three-day meeting will begin in Davos tomorrow.

This is the first time Bangladesh has been invited to attend at the head of government level the annual gathering of world's top financiers, bankers, leaders of commerce and industry, academics, thinkers, politicians and statesmen.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday said the participation of the chief adviser in the World Economic Forum in Davos will greatly enhance the international image of Bangladesh.

"This invitation has been issued because the World Economic Forum believes that Bangladesh has a good story to tell the global audience, a story of positive social transformation and development reforms and innovative changes through ideas that have evolved domestically," he said.

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Govt forms committee to review 6th Wage Board

UNB, Dhaka

The government has formed a seven-member committee to review the recently approved Sixth Wage Board Award relating to salaries, allowances and other benefits for the journalists, employees and press workers.

An official announcement said yesterday, the committee will review the Sixth Wage Board Award and put forward recommendations to the government to remove anomalies in the wages and allowances, if any.

The government approved the final recommendations of the Sixth Wage Board Award for the journalists, employees and press workers on December 6, 2007.

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3 killed as bus skids off flyover

UNB, Narsingdi

Three people were killed and 10 others injured when a bus plunged from Bhehanagar flyover in the town on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway yesterday morning.

Police said the Dhaka-bound bus from Kishoreganj skidded off the flyover into the Narsingdi District Hospital compound at about 8:00am killing its three passengers on the spot and injuring 10 others.

One of the dead was identified as Waliullah, 3, while the identity of the remaining two could not be known.

The injured are undergoing treatment at Narsingdi District General Hospital. Police recovered the bodies and sent them to the hospital morgue for autopsy.



Teachers and employees of non-government educational institutions stage a demonstration at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday demanding that their jobs are included in the government monthly pay order (MPO).

48 killed as heavy fighting grips Jaffna

AFF, Colombo

Fierce fighting erupted in northern Sri Lanka yesterday as government forces mounted a fresh push into territory held by Tiger rebels and said 48 people were killed in new clashes.

Security forces launched a pre-dawn assault against a defence line of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the Jaffna peninsula and smashed at least two dozen guerrilla bunkers, the defence ministry said.

It said 15 rebels were killed and more than 30 wounded while the military suffered two soldiers dead and nine wounded.

"Troops launched a multi-pronged surprise assault at LTTE

positions ahead of Nagarkovil defences (in Jaffna peninsula)... forcing terrorists to flee with soaring casualties," the defence ministry statement said.

However, the Tigers said they beat back the military offensive and pushed the security forces to their original positions.

The Tigers, in a statement published in the pro-rebel Puthnam.com website, said they killed three government soldiers and wounded more than a dozen during a 45-minute battle. The rebels said they did not suffer any losses.

Elsewhere, the rebels lost 31 cadres in fighting across Vavuniya, Mannar and Weli Oya, all in the northern area of the mainland, on

Sunday, the defence ministry said.

The Tigers placed their losses in the Mannar area at three killed on Sunday and said they had inflicted heavy casualties on government forces.

Since the start of this month, the Sri Lanka defence ministry has claimed it has killed 551 rebels against just 24 government soldiers dead.

Army chief Sarath Fonseka said at the beginning of the year that the military planned to eliminate the estimated 3,000 cadres of the LTTE in the first six months of the year, or 500 rebels a month.

The military's claims cannot be independently checked as no journalists or rights groups have

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Musharraf pledges free elections

West urged to allow Pakistan more time to work toward democracy

AFF, Brussels

Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf pledged yesterday that next month's elections will be free and fair and that he will honour the result whoever wins, as he launched a key four-nation European tour.

Musharraf, whose country is in a deep political crisis exacerbated by the assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, urged the West to allow Pakistan more time to work toward democracy.

"We must have fair and transparent elections," on February 18, he said in Brussels. "Whoever wins,

obviously power will be handed over to them."

"We are going to be returning to free, fair and transparent elections, and peaceful elections," he said, despite the slow progress made on the polls.

"We are for democracy and I have introduced the essence of democracy, but we cannot be as forward looking as you (in the West) are," he told reporters, non-governmental organisations and business leaders at a breakfast event.

"Allow us some time to reach that state," he said.

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SC clears ACC way to move ahead with Jalil graft case

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court yesterday overruled a High Court order paving the way for the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to go ahead with the proceedings of a graft case filed against detained Awami League General Secretary MA Jalil.

Following an ACC petition, the chamber court passed the interim order for a month and advised the ACC to file a regular petition seeking permission to appeal against the High Court order by the time.

Earlier, the High Court, upon a petition, had stayed further proceedings of the case and issued a rule upon the ACC to explain why the case should not be quashed.

ACC Deputy Director Enamul Haque Chowdhury filed the case against Jalil with Ramna Police Station in December last year for concealing Tk 65,29,229 in his wealth statement submitted to the commission and acquiring wealth worth Tk 63,82,805 beyond his known sources of income.

Paban held again at jail gate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khandaker Akhter Hamid Paban, son of Khaleda Zia appointed BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, was arrested at Dhaka Central Jail gate soon after he came out of the jail on bail in a case.

After the arrest, Paban was taken to Lalbagh Police Station where he fell sick at around 8:30pm. Later, he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for treatment.

Paban's sister Dr Delwara said police picked up Paban from the jail gate though there is no other case against him.

Rizvi Ahmed, acting office secretary of BNP, protested the arrest, saying the arrest was made to

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Gaza grinds to a halt amid Israeli blockade

Olmert stands firm over lockdown, EU slams Israel's 'collective punishment'

AFF, Gaza City/Brussels

Gaza endured a fourth day of hardship yesterday as Israel vowed to maintain a punishing blockade in response to rocket fire from the Hamas-run territory, despite increasing international concern over a developing humanitarian crisis.

The European Union slammed what it termed as "collective punishment" of impoverished Gaza's 1.5 million residents, while the United Nations called on Israel to open the territory's crossings to ease a "desperate" situation in a zone where most people depend on foreign aid.

Generators hummed across Gaza City after the territory's sole power plant shut down late Sunday after it ran out of fuel, plunging

entire blocks into darkness.

With Gaza crossings closed and fuel for generators slowly running out, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) warned that hospitals in the territory only had a few days' worth of fuel to run their generators.

Gaza City slowly grinded to a halt yesterday, with traffic dying down on the normally bustling streets and bread lines forming outside the few bakeries that had not closed for lack of fuel.

Weary Gazans awoke in darkness and struggled to stock up on staples after the territory's sole power plant—which provides most electricity to the city—shut down over the fuel shortages late Sunday.

Bread lines formed in some areas late Sunday night after the

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7th century temple remains uncared for

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinaipur

The early 7th century Baroshivaloy temple in Joypurhat is on the verge of ruin due to sheer negligence of the authorities, lack of maintenance and high salinity in the soil seeping through the structures.

The Baroshivaloy is a large brick-built temple with clay terracotta plaques and 11 other smaller similar temples surrounding it, according to Department of Archaeology officials. They said they cannot maintain the temples, at Delamia about four kilometres from Joypurhat town, due to lack of funds.

According to sources, poor maintenance work and high

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The early 7th century temples in Joypurhat decorated with terracotta plaques, which were indiscreetly painted white recently.

PHOTO: STAR