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WEALTH STATEMENT
ACC looks into legality of filing case against Sajeda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) is looking into the legal backing for filing a case against Awami League presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury as it yesterday decided not to accept her wealth statement because it had no dateline next to her signature.
 Meanwhile, the ACC also decided to issue notices against former BNP lawmakers Fazlul Haque Milon, Shahidul Haq Jamal and former AL state minister KM Jahangir asking them to submit their wealth statements.
 ACC Director General (administration) Col Hanif Iqbal said this during a routine press briefing at
SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

SEIZED LUXURY CARS
Cops asked to move fast with cases

KAILASH SARKAR
 Dhaka city police have been directed to concentrate more on quick disposal of the cases in connection with luxury cars kept abandoned at different police stations.
 The police high-ups made the directive as at least 60 luxury and high priced vehicles of the bigwigs, including former ministers, lawmakers, business tycoons and influential but unscrupulous people, are getting damaged due to improper maintenance.
 The cases are under the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and police investigation.
 The police have decided to make headway into the cases, but the commission is yet to consider the matter.
 ACC Director General (Admin) Col Hanif Iqbal told The Daily Star: "The commission hasn't considered the matter so far as the cases are sub-judicial."
 Assistant Commissioner (AC-Crime) Md Abdul Awal, who is charged with taking care of the vehicles, said: "We've held several meetings on the issue and decided to take measures so that the cases are resolved."
 "All the police stations concerned have been asked to pay more attention to quick disposal of these cases. The cars can't be auctioned as long as the cases are not disposed."
 Soon after the army-backed caretaker government launched drives against corruption, as many as 49 luxury vehicles, including Pajero, SUVs, Harrier, Porsche, BMW, Toyota Prado, Lincoln, Lexus, Toyota Land Cruiser, Cadillac and Infiniti were seized from the bigwigs.
 The remaining 11 were found abandoned as the owners left those to dodge the eyes of the ACC and law enforcers.
 The expensive vehicles have been kept at various police stations
SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

Dhaka should get int'l help in getting duty-free access
Says Tony Blair

UNB, DAVOS, Switzerland
 Former British prime minister Tony Blair said Bangladesh has strong cases of getting international support for its two major concerns—adverse effects of climate change and duty-free access to the European Union and American markets.
 "I had a very good meeting... I'll try to help Bangladesh on climate change and trade issues," he told
SEE PAGE 19 COL 7



Bomang King Aong Swe Prue is showered with flower petals during the festivity of Rajpunnah at the Rajbari in Bandarban town yesterday.



A rickshaw-van puller and his passengers cover themselves with plastic sheets at Mugdapara in the capital during yesterday's drizzle amid the cold wave.

JP for forming national govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 Jatiya Party (JP) yesterday urged the government to form a 'national government' comprising all political parties, civil society members, and professionals to tackle the present political and economic crises in the country.
 "A 'national government' comprising all political parties and civil society members is required as it's not possible for the caretaker government to tackle the present political and economic crises," JP Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam said at a meeting at Hotel Sundarban in the capital.
SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

Rejoinder, our reply

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 Labaid Cardiac Hospital in a rejoinder to The Daily Star yesterday said its report titled 'Labaid Hospital, Patients allege negligence in treatment' published on that day was biased and one-sided.
 Although the report was based on information provided at a press conference, the comments made by the hospital authorities were not published with equal importance, said the rejoinder signed by the hospital's Chief Administrator Brig Gen (ret'd) Dr Manjur A Molla.
 It said the incidents described at the press conference were false and baseless and some of those had
SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

10 PBCP outlaws to die for murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi
 A speedy trial tribunal in Rajshahi yesterday sentenced ten outlawed cadres of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) to death for the murder of five people, including four policemen.
 The ten were indicted in a robbery case. The accused murdered four policemen and a leaseholder of Chowbaria Hat of Manda upazila in Naogaon in 2006 while looting firearms and ammunition.
 Delivering verdicts in two cases, one for blasting explosives and the other for the robbery and murders, the tribunal judge ATM Mesbaudoula sentenced seven others to life term imprisonment and four to 10 years rigorous imprisonment.
 The ten PBCP men sentenced to death are PBCP regional organising secretary Nurul Islam Shahin, PBCP cadres Tahurul Islam, Shafikul Islam, Abu Bakar Siddik, Nurunnabi Hasan, Shafikul Islam-2, Sanjay Kumar Saha, Pintu, Dilip and Tomal.
 The ten along with Khairul Islam and Abdul Awal were also sentenced to life term imprisonment in the case for blasting explosives.
 Raghunath Barman, Abdul Karim, Ahmed Shah Nurul, Sanaul Islam and Azimuddin were given life terms in the case for robbery and murder. They were also given 10 years in jail each in the explosives case.
 Abdul Mannan, Rabiul Islam, Joyal Abedin, and Majed Ali were given 10 years jail in the robbery case.
 The life term convicts were fined Tk 3000 each while those sentenced to 10-year imprisonment were fined Tk 2000 each. In default of this, they would serve six and three extra months in jail respectively.
 A total 21 PBCP outlaws were accused in the charge sheet of the case on April 16, 2007.
 Seven of the accused were present in court when the verdict was given while 14 remain absconding. Four out of those initially taken into custody went into hiding after freed on bail.
 Inspector Ilias Fakir, officer-in-charge (OC) of Manda police station, said Shahin, Tahurul, and Tomal.
SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

Bomangs mark Rajpunnah in Bandarban

MONIRUL ISLAM MONU, Bandarban
 Thousands of tribal and Bangali people yesterday celebrated Rajpunnah in true fashion of communal harmony amid cultural diversity at the local Rajbari premises in Bandarban town.
 Rajpunnah is one of the oldest traditional festivals in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.
 During this festival Jhum
SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Prof Anwar for listing Shibir men doing politics at DU

UNB, Dhaka
 Prof Anwar Hossain, one of the four Dhaka University teachers released from jail, yesterday urged the students to make a list of Chhatra Shibir members doing politics on the campus and launch another movement for the trial of war criminals.
SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

40 militants, 8 troops die in Pak gun battles

AFP, Islamabad
 Pakistani troops backed by tanks and gunships cleared militant hideouts near the Afghan border, sparking gunbattles that left eight troops and 40 rebels dead, the army said yesterday.
 Thirty militants were also arrested in the clashes over the last 24 hours in the South Waziristan tribal district, the hideout of an insurgent commander accused of masterminding the killing of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto.
 Pakistani forces launched a major operation against rebel positions following days of fighting in the barren, lawless region, which the United States has identified as a key lair of al-Qaeda and Taliban militants.
 "Reportedly, 40 miscreants have been killed in the last 24 hours and 30 miscreants have been apprehended, many of them injured," an army statement said.
 It added that eight soldiers "embraced martyrdom" while 32 others were injured in the clashes, the heaviest single-day toll in several weeks of fighting since Benazir's assassination almost one month ago.
 Soldiers have cleared militants from three strongholds in Spinkai Raghazai, Nawazkot and surrounding areas of Tiarza village in the tribal area, the military said in the statement.
 Tanks had moved into position to protect the movement of military convoys, the statement added. Security officials said helicopter gunships were also pounding insurgent positions.
 Chief military spokesman Major General Athar Abbas said the clashes occurred in areas mainly controlled by the fiercely independent Mehsud tribe.
 Abbas said he was not aware of the whereabouts of rebel commander Baitullah Mehsud who is based in South Waziristan's mountains, and has been blamed by the Pakistan and the US Central Intelligence Agency for Benazir's killing.
SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

75,000 MT rice import okayed

UNB, Dhaka
 The government yesterday approved two procurement proposals of the food ministry to import 75,000 metric tons of non-basmati rice from India to make the staple sufficiently available in the local market.
 According to two tenders invited by the food directorate, a Mumbai-based Indian company will supply 50,000 MT of rice while a local company will import and supply 25,000 MT.
SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

Prayer Timing
January 25

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-35	6-10
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-46	5-50
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

US ELECTION
Hillary, McCain lead latest opinion poll

AFP, Los Angeles
 Hillary Clinton and John McCain lead the latest national poll of US voters, boosting their frontrunner credentials in the race to become the Democratic and Republican candidates for president.
 The survey, conducted by Los Angeles Times and Bloomberg News, shows Hillary with a nine-point lead over fellow Democrat Barack Obama, but her lead has shrunk from 24 points in the last Times/Bloomberg poll, in early December.
 In the poll, released late Wednesday, New York Senator and former first lady Hillary was first among Democrats with 42 percent, Illinois Senator Obama was second with 33 percent and former senator John Edwards was third with 11.
 However, the poll also found that about two-thirds of Democratic voters now say they are "certain" about who they will vote for, making last minute changes less likely, the Los Angeles Times said in its analysis of the numbers.
 And should Edwards drop out -- he has not won any primaries thus far -- his supporters were more likely to defect to Hillary than Obama, the poll found.
 The margin of error for the Democrats was plus or minus three percentage points. The poll was conducted January 18 to 22 among 1,541 adults.
 Meanwhile, Senator John McCain led the Republican field with 22 percent, followed by former
SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

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