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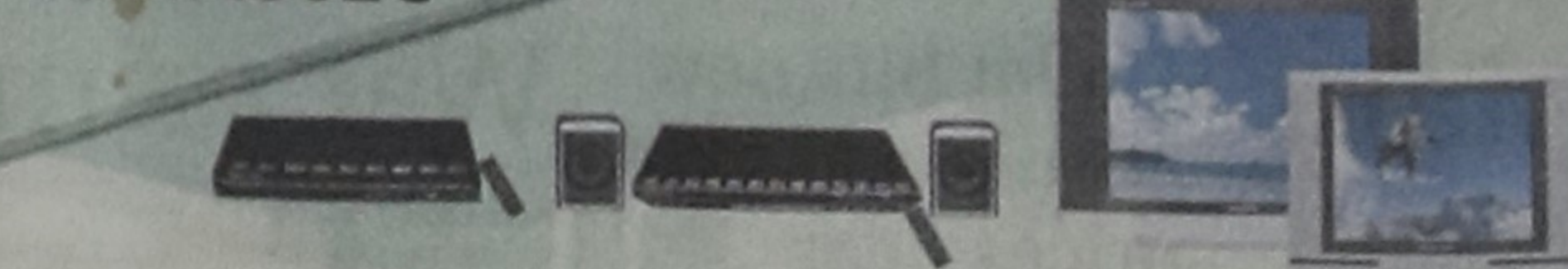
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Tahmima Anam's A Golden Age wins regional C'wealth prize

An international judging panel has awarded the 2008 Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best First Book Award for the Europe and South Asia region to *A Golden Age* (2007, London: John Murray) by Tahmima Anam.

The novel, a densely packed, lyrically written narrative set during Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence, was praised by the panel as "sensitive and evocative."

Animal's People by Indra Sinha was given the region's Best Book Award. *A Golden Age* had previously also made the final shortlist of five for the 2007 Guardian's First Book Award.

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Free Khaleda, Hasina before polls, demands Hannan Shah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Adviser Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah yesterday demanded release of his party chief as well as Awami League President Sheikh Hasina before the national election.

"We demand release of all the detained political leaders including former premiers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina before the

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Prayer Timing

March 15

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:00	5:35
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:30	4:45
Maghrib	6:14	6:18
Esha	7:45	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Zardari now free to seek premiership

Court quashes last remaining graft case

AFP, Islamabad

A Pakistani court yesterday quashed the last remaining graft case against the husband of slain Benazir Bhutto, his lawyer said, removing the final possible hurdle to him standing for prime minister.

Asif Ali Zardari was acquitted by the anti-corruption court in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, near Islamabad, in the last of seven cases that had been hanging over him for more than a decade, lawyer

Farooq Naik said.

"By the grace of God he has been honorably acquitted. I am very happy today that after a struggle of 11 years the state has failed to prove any cases against Asif Ali Zardari," Naik told TV channels outside the court.

"These are all politically motivated cases. After the long darkness in the tunnel the light has finally come and we hope that in future there will be no politics of revenge."

The case related to a BMW car

which Zardari had allegedly imported without paying duty.

The cases have been withdrawn as part of an amnesty given by President Pervez Musharraf last October, which allowed Bhutto to return from exile in an apparent prelude to a power-sharing deal between the two.

Bhutto was assassinated at an election rally in Rawalpindi on December 27 and Zardari took over the de facto leadership of her

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PHOTO: PID

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed seen among the heads of state and government of the OIC member countries posing for photo in the Senegalese capital Dakar yesterday, the concluding day of the 11th Summit of the organisation. Story on page 1.

'Govt decision to benefit the war criminals'

SCF to seek again permission for convention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Heroes of the Liberation War under the banner of Sector Commanders Forum (SCF) yesterday said the war criminals played a role in the government's decision denying SCF the permission to hold their national convention.

The SCF blasted the government as the decision would benefit the war criminals.

This is for the second time the SCF had to postpone their national convention due to the government's refusal of permission over concern for deterioration of law and order situation.

Following the postponement of the SCF national convention that was scheduled for today, the war heroes at a packed press conference at the National Press Club warned saying that the government will be held responsible if any untoward situation arises

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Structures older than Pala Era found at Paharpur site

HASIBUR RAHMAT BILU,
back from Paharpur

Archaeologists recently found two ancient brick-built structures at the Paharpur world heritage site which they believe belonged to a period even earlier than the site's known time, the Pala Era.

The department earlier found several stone statues, including Mithun and Vayu, from the Gupta Dynasty before the recent excavation.

Archaeology Department Director Dr Md Shafiqul Alam confirmed the recent finds, saying the brick-built structures were found under the foundation of the main temple at Paharpur.

He said another structure was found outside the temple area. "These structures confirm that there was a civilization before the Pala Dynasty," he said.

Mahbubul Alam, assistant custodian of Paharpur site, said an ancient broken terracotta piece was found under the basement of the temple near the newly discovered structure while a decorated brick was found in the lower portion of the northern side of the temple.

Meanwhile, archaeologists dug out another brick-built structure from an earth-filled base on top of the 72-feet high temple. They believe the structure was made for beautification.

Nahid Sultana, custodian of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Archaeologists work on the newly located brick-built structure at Paharpur Buddha Bihar where this type stone statues, inset, dating from the Gupta Dynasty were also found.

India to import 8m garment pieces a year

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA,
New Delhi

India has approved duty-free import of eight million pieces of garments from Bangladesh per year without restriction on raw material sourcing.

The approval was given at a meeting of Indian cabinet presided by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday night, an official spokesperson told media persons.

The decision effectively reverses the decision taken by the cabinet in 2005, which had granted duty-free market access to Bangladesh for two million pieces of garment without raw material sourcing conditions at that time.

The decision is expected to somewhat correct bilateral trade imbalance that is heavily tilted

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No link between Saddam, al-Qaeda: Pentagon study

AFP, Washington

A detailed Pentagon study confirms there was no direct link between late Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and the Al-Qaeda network, debunking a claim President George W. Bush's administration used to justify invading Iraq.

Coming five years after the start of the war in Iraq, the study of 600,000 official Iraqi documents and thousands of hours of inter-

rogations of former Saddam Hussein colleagues "found no smoking gun (i.e. direct connection) between Saddam's Iraq and Al-Qaeda," said the study, quoted in US media Thursday.

The US administration appeared to bury the release of the study, making it available only at individual request and by mail -- instead of posting it on the Internet or handing it out to reporters.

A Pentagon spokesman on

Thursday said they did not know why the Joint Forces Command was not posting the report online, but denied that it was an attempt to limit its distribution.

"We don't have a reason to do so. I think when you see the report it will show a Nazi-esque catalogue of Saddam's ties to terror, both within his own country and elsewhere in the Middle East," said Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell.

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BGMEA Institute of Fashion & Technology (BIFT) & Niederrhein University (NU), Germany a leading European University on Textile & fashion

signed an agreement of cooperation on 14th March 2008 to develop academic, professional and cultural exchange in education, research and internationalization of education, exchange of information, teachers and students, organization of seminar, symposium, colloquia, publication of scientific journal etc.



Mr. Benajir Ahmed, President BIFT and Prof. Dr. Marie Louise Klotz, Dean, Niederrhein University (NU) respectively, signed the agreement and it was attended by Mr. David Lee, UNIDO representative from Vienna, Prof. Dr. Nazrul Islam, Principal, BIFT; Mr. Abdur Rashid Sarker, Secretary Ministry of Textile & Jute; Mr. Anwar-Ul Alam Chowdhury (Parvez); President BGMEA; Mr. Faisal Samad, 2nd Vice President BGMEA; David Haulbourne, Chief Technical Advisor, Bangladesh Quality Support Program (BQSP); Mr. Iqbal Chowdhury, Board member BIFT; Prof. Rossbach, International Consultant on RMG and Textile, BQSP; (Standing from left to right)



Condition of Firoza Begum now stable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The condition of Nazrul Sangeet artist Firoza Begum is now stable, said her physicians at Apollo Hospitals.

Firoza Begum was admitted to the hospital early yesterday following a pain in her abdomen. She is receiving treatment under the supervision of Dr Sadequul Islam, consultant of Internal Medicine department of the hospital.

Physicians said Firoza Begum

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