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BNP's return to JS

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B Chowdhury rejected the Speaker's arithmetic that it would have taken three years and eight months to dispose of all the notices and amendments to the four CHT bills.

"It was the highest degree of falsehood from on less than the chair of the Speaker," he said, adding that this was nothing but an attempt to mislead the people.

He added that if the opposition members were allowed to speak on the notices for one minute each, it would have taken five to 12 hours only.

In reply to a question, the BNP denied the ruling party allegation that the huge number of notices and amendments were intended to obstruct the passage of the bills.

The bills on the CHT were unconstitutional and unprecedented. So, such huge number of notices and amendments were brought to the bills," he said.

The Deputy Opposition Leader questioned the neutrality of the Speaker and said the chair did not allow BNP to discuss the bills following a 'secret consultation' with the ruling party.

"By doing so, the conspiracy succeeded but the government was defeated morally and politically," he told a questioner.

Chief Whip of the Opposition, Khandaker Delwar Hossain said despite their demand, the Speaker did not convene the Business Advisory Committee meeting to discuss and decide the process of considering the bills in such a unique situation.

Replying to a question, Delwar said the government did not want us in the House during the passage of the CHT bills as "we could have exposed the loopholes of the bills and explained how they are contrary to the Constitution."

Referring to their meeting with the President, the Opposition chief whip said as per advice of the President, the BNP members brought amendments to the bills on CHT and agreed to join discussion on it.

In reply to another question, Delwar said the parliamentary standing committees were not constituted and 11 other parliamentary committees not re-organised as per commitment by the government party.

He said the government is yet to implement the four-point agreement and withdraw political cases against the BNP leaders and workers.

"We'll take the decision of joining the budget session after examining the given situation," he said, adding that it would depend upon how much the government is interested in bringing the opposition back to the House.

About the Speaker's ruling on the April 15 incident in Parliament, Prof B Chowdhury said this ruling was "insulting to us." He directly blamed the Speaker for provoking the situation that day.

The deputy opposition leader was also critical of the government for not making any statement in the House on the nuclear tests carried out by India.

BNP leaders K M Obaidur Rahman, Shamsul Islam and Whip Mashiur Rahman were present at the briefing.

Japanese investor complains about 'non-cooperation' of govt organisation

A Japanese investor yesterday complained about 'non-cooperation' of a government organisation and warned that she will close down a Tk 70 crore project if her grievances were not settled, reports UNB.

"I had come here to invest after being informed that Bangladesh is one of the suitable places for investment ... but the situation is reverse," said Okayasu Masae, the Managing Director of Japan-based Chugai Chemicals Ltd, at a press conference at the National Press Club.

Commissioning of towers of the 132 KV transmission line on the land of the project - Vita Food Industries and Tourism Complex Ltd in Comilla - by PDB is the main cause of her anger.

The Japanese investor sought direct interference from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is in charge of Energy Ministry, in solving the problems.

"I don't want to go back with a bad experience ... think of what bad impact it may create among the enthusiastic Japanese and other foreign investors when your country is inviting more investment from outside," said the Japanese entrepreneur.

According to her, the problem was created as the PDB set up poles of the 132-KV line on the project's land despite a court's showcause notice and a Board of Investment (BOI) letter that recommended changing the path of the transmission line.

Masae said as the construction work of poles began on the land with police protection on Monday, she rushed to Dhaka to meet the PDB Chairman who didn't allow her to meet. The Member (Transmission) also refused to talk to her, she alleged.

The project will turn into meaningless if the electric poles are constructed on the front side of the site," she said.



New Miss Universe Wendy Fitzwilliam of Trinidad and Tobago (center) poses with her 1st runner-up Miss Venezuela Veruska Ramirez (left) and 2nd runner-up Miss Puerto Rico Joyce Giraud at the end of the 47th Miss Universe contest in Honolulu yesterday. —AP/UNB photo

PM to inaugurate Bangabandhu Bridge June 23

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the Bangabandhu Bridge on the river Jamuna on June 23, an official press release said in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

The bridge, the world's 11th longest bridge, would establish direct road and railway links between northwestern region and the eastern part of the country.

Some Tk 3,700 crore (950 million dollar) is being spent for constructing the 4.8 kilometre long bridge with 18.5 metre width.

Mannan Bhuiyan concerned at N-tests by India

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has expressed concern over nuclear tests by India and criticised the government for its failure to raise voice against the nuclear weapons, reports UNB.

In a statement yesterday, he said: The whole world is against those trying frantically to become a nuclear power despite the poverty and hunger prevailing in different countries, including India.

PM: Long march

From Page 1

counterproductive to the government, the PM said: Only those who lack confidence may fear so. I've confidence in me. We could sign the peace accord as they (the tribal leaders in CHT) reposed confidence in me and I trusted them.

"The (government-PCJSS) agreement was signed to help the CHT people live in peace," she said.

Recalling the arms-surrender ceremony at Khagrachhari, Sheikh Hasina said that she had even ignored suggestions by her security personnel not to make the arms-surrendering Shantibahini members there. "While talking to the Shantibahini boys, I found tears in their eyes and anxiety on their faces. But my words removed their worries."

Responding to Opposition criticism against the bill providing for setting up of a Regional Council (RC) in the CHT, the PM pointed out that special administrative arrangement for the region existed since the British rule, even in the Mughal era. She also mentioned the hill district councils established by the Ershad government in 1989 and maintained by the next government of Khaleda Zia.

"We also consider the CHT as a special zone and accordingly, we're going to set up the regional council," she said.

Rounding up the businesses in the four-month-long session, the Leader of the House viewed that passage of the CHT bills in the session would be considered as the most remarkable task in the parliamentary history of Bangladesh.

Citing other businesses including formation of the JS standing committees, she said that return of the main opposition party BNP to the House was another major event in the session.

She termed the BNP lawmakers' 'rowdiness' in the House on April 15 as 'the most scandalous incident in the country's parliamentary history.'

Commenting on the Speaker's action of only warning the Opposition MPs responsible for the incident, she said, "You've been liberal enough not to go for any punitive measures. Punitive actions are taken against such behaviour in parliament in any country."

Replying to criticism by the Opposition lawmakers for stoppage of live broadcast of parliament proceedings by radio, the Prime Minister said that the government signed agreement with BNP for live broadcast of the question-hour only. The state-owned electronic media is functioning as per the agreement signed with BNP, she claimed.

Khaleda goes to C'nawabganj today

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia will visit Chapinawabganj today, reports UNB.

She will address a public meeting at Nachol in the afternoon.

Begum Zia will return to the capital tomorrow, said a party press release in the city yesterday.

Bangladesh-India tie

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two enter the ground late this afternoon in the north-western Indian state of Punjab for the toss.

The day-night affair will start at 5:20 pm (BST) with confident expectation from Bangladesh cricket fans, many of whom will be glued to their TV sets with ESPN covering the match live from the spectacular venue at Chandigarh. Kenya is the other participating team in the meet, which will be played on a double-leg league basis across seven different venues in India.

Akram sustained an injury on his back during a light practice session at Mohali on Tuesday and is certain to miss the match against India, disclosed Gazi Ashraf Hossain over telephone yesterday afternoon.

"The local authorities have been very generous by providing us with a doctor round the clock, but he (Akram) would not be fit before our next match against Kenya," said Hossain whose side is travelling without a physio. But the Bangladesh manager promised a 'tough' show against the mighty Indians despite the absence of Akram.

Both Bangladesh and Kenya were awarded with one-day status by the game's ruling body ICC in June last year. To sum up in the words of Bangladesh's coach Gordon Greenidge, "Our aim is to defeat Kenya and qualify for the final. We all want to be there at the Eden Gardens." The final will be played in Calcutta on June 1.

Attorney General K S Nahi appeared on behalf of the government while Dr M Zahir appeared for the SEC while Barister Rafique-ul-Haque appeared for the petitioners.

Shibir

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Railway sources said train service to and from Chittagong was normal.

At 7 am, some Shibir activists tried to put a barricade at Foulderhat point but police removed it. Railway sources said.

Shibir called the barricade demanding expulsion of outsiders from some residential halls of Chittagong University.

The magistrate then recorded Shahid's statement under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The recording reportedly ended at about 7:15 pm.

Later, the magistrate sent his staff to the court room to enquire whether there was any petition for the accused. People present there answered in the negative. After a few minutes, uniformed police escorted Shahid out the magistrate's room and took him to the court prison. He was then sent to the Dhaka Central Jail.

"I stabbed her when she (Shazneen) kicked me as I tried to violate her," replied Shahid from the prison van as reporters asked him why he killed Shazneen.

The magistrate in his order said the accused was directed to be sent to jail as there was no petition for the accused and the statement under Section 164 had been recorded.

However, the magistrate refused to say any details about the confessional statement saying that it would be sub-judice and that the case will still under investigation.

Sources said Shahid's statement was almost similar to that he had given to the CID investigators.

Meanwhile, CID sources said, Shahid was again taken to the scene of the incident yesterday morning.

The Daily Star got a run down of events from CID sources who attributed those to Shahid's statements to the investigators.

Shahid planned to violate

Shazneen under threat. Keeping it in mind, he collected a kitchen knife from the kitchen and entered Shazneen's bedroom where she was alone and speaking over telephone sitting on the bed.

Seeing Shahid in her room, Shazneen started shouting, "Don't you know you should knock the door before entering into my room ... get out." Shahid turned back and acted as if he was leaving the room. Shazneen became busy with the phone again.

Shahid, at one stage, hurriedly approached her from the other side of Shazneen's bed. He reached one of the bed-side lamps and put it off. This frightened the girl. At this stage, he jumped on her and tried to be in control, prompting Shazneen to kick him in defence. Angry Shahid caught hold of her hair and stabbed her with a knife near her throat.

"Save me, save me," Shazneen shouted only to be stabbed repeatedly. As she was groaning, an incensed Shahid lifted her to take her to her floor near the bathroom.

Shahid then jumped on

Shazneen who was profusely bleeding and was almost unconscious.

At this state, Parveen opened the door and saw Shahid sitting on Shazneen's body. Shahid called Parveen in, but she went away.

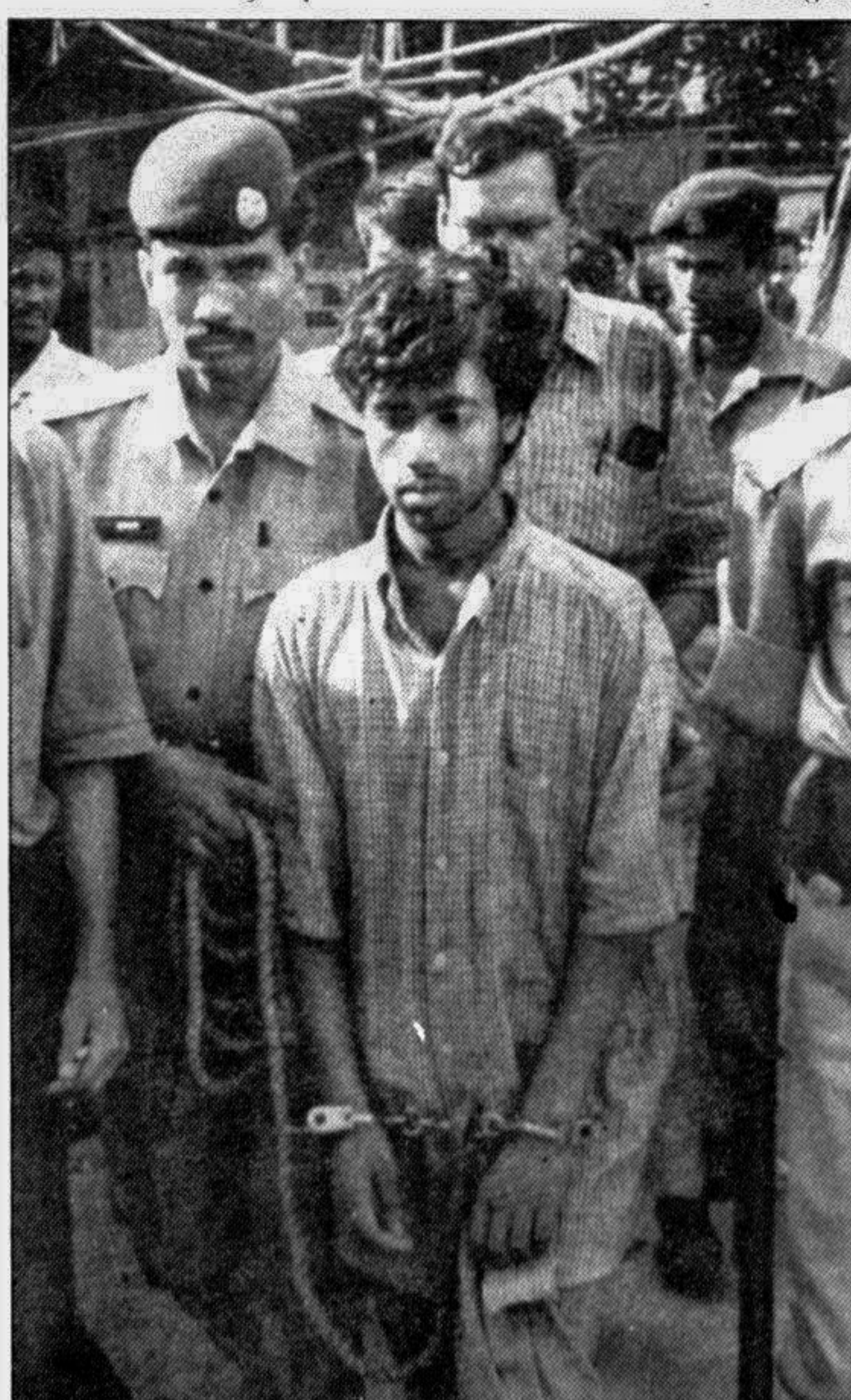
Shahid immediately lifted himself from her body and stabbed her several times before leaving. He rushed to the bathroom, washed his hands and ran out of the room.

As he was fleeing, he left his knife near the boundary wall, climbed a tree to get on the wall and walked a few steps to reach another tree to get down on the other side of the boundary wall.

Then he discovered blood in his shirt, took it off and put it in his trouser's pocket.

Shahid had walked past Banani graveyard and Dhaka Gate on the Airport Road to reach Cantonment railway station. He went to Chittagong via Myemsinh and Bhairab. At Bhairab, he worked at a station-side restaurant.

CID officials were still investigating many of the unanswered questions related to the brutal murder of the school girl.



Shahid, the prime accused in Shazneen murder, being produced before the CMM's court yesterday. —Star photo

'Bangladesh yet to finalise state of forces accord with US'

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday said that Bangladesh is yet to finalise the State of Forces agreement with US, reports UNB.

Briefing newsmen at the Foreign Office yesterday evening, he said, "We could not yet agree with some of the proposals of the USA."

The major differences to be ironed out are visa-free movement of US forces and allowing them to bring in equipment without duty.

Samad said that Bangladesh will review similar agreements USA has with other Asian countries. US has such agreements with Japan, South Korea and Kazakhstan.

D-8 summit

From Page 1

Minister for Foreign Affairs, State Minister for Cultural Affairs, State Minister for Information, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and all other secretaries concerned.

A central co-ordination committee was formed with the Foreign Secretary as its head. Two sub-committees on security and media were also formed.

Samad said that it was decided to hold a three-day D-8 Cultural Festival beginning November 23.

An official-level meeting will be held in Dhaka on November 24-25, to review the preparation.

JS motion

From Page 1

5,000, but only 1100 to 1200 arms were surrendered after the peace accord.

Ershad feared that the power and autonomy vested in the tribal people through the agreement, might raise the demand for an independent state.

The JP members criticised the CHT agreement as unconstitutional and said the proposed Regional Council will create regionalism.

The government leaders disagreed with the opposition's view and said the Regional Council will only coordinate the development activities in the three hill districts.

The treasury bench members said the accord was the outcome of political farsightedness of Prime Minister Hasina and thanked her for taking such an initiative to reach the agreement that put an end to two-decade old bloody war.

Pak FM

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said a statement issued by the prime minister's office.

According to the statement Sharif told Clinton that Pakistan "had no option but to take appropriate measures to protect its sovereignty and security in accordance with the aspirations of the people."

Ayub told The Associated Press in a telephone interview that Pakistan is both capable and ready to match India, but the decision to explode a nuclear device will be a political one.

"Pakistan has all the facilities to conduct a test ... Pakistan can match India anytime possibly better," said Ayub. "But this will be a political decision as and when the Cabinet decides."

International security and defence organisations say that the likelihood of a nuclear explosion in Pakistan is in the Chaghal district of south-western Baluchistan.

The area is a desert and barely 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the border with Afghanistan.

Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan, the architect of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme, said earlier that Pakistan has the capability to carry out a test and was waiting for the green light from the government.

Four raped

From Page 1

sters near the Sat Tala slum in Mohakhali area.

She is now under treatment at the DMCH.

The victim, along with one Shahid, a co-worker, was returning to her house in the slum at about 8 pm. Suddenly the gang appeared before them and wielding knives, took them to a nearby field.

The attackers tied up Shahid and raped the girl in the field.

None was arrested in connection with the incident till filing of this report last night.

Two girls, both aged about 18, were gangraped in their rented house at Chata Masjid Lane under Mohammadpur thana Monday night.

One of the girls was a garments worker and the other was an employee of a computer firm.

In the FIR, the girls alleged that someone knocked their door at about 10 pm.

When they opened the door, four youngmen stormed into the room, locked the door, and raped them. Three of their accomplices guarded standing outside, the girls alleged in the FIR.

India conducts N-tests

From Page 1

The five permanent council members met Tuesday to consider a draft statement, prepared by Sweden, which expressed concern over India's violation of a 'de facto moratorium' on testing since the approval by the UN General Assembly of the 1966 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

US President Clinton, who had been considering how to respond since the first tests were announced Monday, on today ordered an end to current US assistance to India and a ban on future aid, according to a senior White House official traveling with him in Germany. Humanitarian aid was exempted from the sanctions.

Clinton, speaking to reporters in Germany where he was on an official visit, said he found India's actions personally "deeply disappointing." He called on other nations to impose sanctions as well.

"I hope the government of India realises that it can be a very great country in the 21st century without doing things like this," he said. "It's a terrible mistake."

He said he had spoken with Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, on today and urged him not to respond in kind to India.

Clinton also prohibited the export of certain defense and technology material, ended US loans and credit guarantees to India, and ordered US officials to oppose loans to India from international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF.

The steps Clinton took were spelled out in US laws calling for automatic sanctions on any "non-nuclear" country that conducts nuclear tests. Even though India tested five nuclear devices this week and a sixth in 1974 and says it is capable of building a nuclear weapon, it is considered "non-nuclear" under the Non-Proliferation Treaty until it is confirmed that it has the bomb.

Japan suspended 30 million US dollars in grants, including funds earmarked for modernising hospitals and fighting polio. Japan is India's largest donor.

The Netherlands temporarily froze aid worth millions of dollars and said it would not issue export licences for weapons to India.

Germany called off aid talks with Indian officials scheduled to have started Tuesday in Bonn. A portion of new development aid worth 300 million marks (532 million dollars) for India was put on ice.

The Danish government announced that it had frozen its 190 million kroner (28 million dollars) in aid to India.

Vajpayee said he had hoped the Western governments would not impose sanctions. "But if these steps are taken, then as Indians we will face it. We are prepared for any difficulty."

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said his nation would take a "fresh look" at possible sanctions for India. "This was the wrong decision for them to take," he said.

Clinton sidestepped a question on whether US intelligence agencies were surprised by today's test as they were by the first in the series on Monday.

Before this round of tests started, I did not know it was going to start," Clinton said. He said he talked with the Pakistani Prime Minister and advised him to "resist the temptation to respond to an irresponsible act in kind."

Clinton said he realises that the Pakistani government is under pressure at home, adding, "I can't say for sure what is going to happen."

On India's testing, he said, "I believe they were unjustified. They clearly create a dangerous new instability in their region." He suggested that India conducted the tests because it believes it is "underappreciated in the world as a great power."

"It's a very sad thing," Clinton said. He noted his wife and daughter had travelled to India. He has planned a trip later this year, but those plans were now in doubt.

The Indian government statement said today's tests "completed the planned series" which began in the desert range of Pokhran in Rajasthan state on Monday.

The tests involved "two sub-kilotonne" explosions at 12:21 pm (0651 GMT) and were in continuation of the planned programme of underground nuclear tests begun on May 11, it said.

"The tests have been carried out to generate additional data for improved computer simulation of designs and for attaining the capability to carry out sub-critical experiments if considered necessary. The tests were fully contained with no release of radioactivity into the atmosphere," it said.

The statement reiterated that India could reconsider its opposition to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). It has so far refused to sign, arguing that the pact lacks a timeframe for disarmament and fails to stop computer-simulated tests.

India made a similar hint on Monday after the three underground tests, the first since 1974, were announced by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Vajpayee

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saying, "Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem."

Vajpayee also referred to another "bitter neighbour," Pakistan, which New Delhi believes has received military technology from China.

"To add to the distress, that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state," the letter said. "At the hands of this bitter neighbour we have suffered three aggressions in the last 50 years."

Pakistan likely to conduct N-test by June

LONDON, May 13: Pakistan will carry out a nuclear test of its own before the end of June, in response to India's latest nuclear tests, Jane's defence group said today, reports AFP.

Paul Beaver of Jane's missiles and rockets cited intelligence sources as predicting that one explosion will be carried out at a site near Pakistan's border with Iran.

"It is expected that it will be one and it will be in Baluchistan, he said in a telephone interview, adding: "It's probably safe to say before the end of June."

Pakistan had been "working very hard" with North Korea and Iran to develop their nuclear weaponry, he said.

JS prorogued

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government as state minister and deputy minister respectively.

Again, during the just concluded session, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina proposed banning student politics and shoot-at-sight the armed goons on the campus, triggering mixed reaction in the opposition camp.

The sittings during the session mostly started late and for this the Chair made frequent appeals to members of both the sides to be punctual.

The Leader of the House attended the session almost regularly and participated in most of the debates, besides the businesses scheduled for her.

Erratum

In the headline of a Front Page news item published yesterday, the date of BNP's long march towards CHT was inadvertently mentioned as June 10. In fact, it will be on June 9. We regret the error.

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