

Nasim

Nasim along with more than 100 lawyers appeared in the court and prayed for bail.

After hearing both sides, the court passed the order.

In the case filed with Ramna police station, it has been alleged that Nasim ignored the opinion of the tender committee and gave the work for supply of 10 lakh passport books to a bidder that caused the public exchequer a loss of Tk 81 lakh.

Mohammad Jalal Uddin Ahmed, Inspector of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC), filed the case on December 11 last year, accusing six persons including Nasim.

Jalal Uddin Ahmed, also the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the CMM's Court, Dhaka on April 2 against Nasim and three others.

The CMM's Court on April 16 sent the case to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court for trial.

Meanwhile, the Judge Court fixed June 9 for its next hearing.

Following the case, the accused were granted ad-interim bail by the High Court on December 12 last year. The court granted bail till submission of the police report.

Dacoity at night coaches: 4 cops suspended at Satkhira

UNB, Satkhira

Four policemen in Sadar thana were suspended for their negligence of duty.

Official sources said SI Anisur Rahman and constables Abdus Sattar, Habibur Rahman and Bazulur Rahman were suspended as passengers of two night coaches -- SMR Transport and Satkhira Express -- were robbed at Choighoria on Jessore-Satkhira highway when they were on duty on the highway.

Highway robbers looked valuable and cash worth about Tk 10 lakh from the two coaches injuring 30 passengers.

Meanwhile, police Tuesday arrested three people for their alleged involvement in the dacoity incidents.

They are Asadul Islam and Modhu of Devnagar and Mohitosh Pal of Choighoria village. Police also seized a pistol and a pipe gun from their possession.

School girl gangraped, photographed in Noakhali

UNB, Noakhali

A group of criminals on the pretext of a phone call took a school girl to a studio, raped her and photographed their action at Chatkhil on Thursday (May 2).

Before letting her return home, the youngsters threatened her that they would make public the photographs and kill her mother if she ever told anyone about their misdeed.

Ajifa Begum, mother of the victim said her daughter Shirin (not the real name), a student of class X, was returning home after appearing in the terminal examination in a local high school. On the way, one of the gangsters told her that there was a telephone call from her brother who lives abroad.

On that false plea, he took her to a nearby studio where the gangsters raped her one after another. They also took photographs of the rape. On return home Shirin told her mother about the incident.

On Tuesday, Ajifa Begum quietly went to Chatkhil Upazila Nirbahi Officer and sought justice. She named the culprits as Yusuf Suman, Parvez, Suman-2, Belal Hossain, Shaheed, Mizan and another unidentified young man.

The UNO immediately asked the police officer to take legal action against the culprits.

Hannan, younger brother of studio owner, admitted that the gangsters raped Shirin in his presence.

Following his statement, police arrested Sumon, one of the culprits and seized the photographs from the studio. Others went into hiding.

Retirement age

FROM PAGE 12 appointment to vacant posts in ministries or departments, district administration, directorate, autonomous and semi autonomous bodies continued on approval of the Prime Minister's Office.

Besides appointment to the development projects are being made in accordance with rules on approval of the ministries concerned.

AL alliance

FROM PAGE 1 February this year.

General Secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) Mujahidul Islam Selim told The Daily Star yesterday, "Like others we're also fighting against government's repression on political opponents. But forming any political alliance with Awami League is not in our agenda."

He said, "We may agree or defer with both AL and BNP on many issues but that does not means we're in an alliance-making process." The left parties' efforts for forging a 'greater communist unity' would remain the topmost priority, he said.

A leader of Workers Party said there might have been some informal talks with other parties. This is part of a continuous process in national politics. "But there has been no discussion in this regard in any of our recent politburo meetings."

Neither the president nor the general secretary of Workers Party were available for comments on the issue of a united movement as both are now away from Dhaka.

Awami League leaders will brief party chief Sheikh Hasina on the outcome of informal talks with the left parties when she returns home, party sources said.

Hasina, now on a month-long private tour of the UK and the USA, is scheduled to return home on May 23, the sources said.

Shazneen case

FROM PAGE 12 court granted the petition.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Group, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Latifur Rahman filed a murder case with Gulshan thana accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, a domestic help at his house, on April 24, 1998.

Majibur Rahman, Additional SP of CID, filed a rape case with Gulshan thana against seven people including Shahid after six months of investigation into the murder case.

All the accused -- Shahid, Hasan, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin -- were present in the court during the hearing.

Special public prosecutors Mahub Ahmed, Arfan Uddin Khan, Advocate Sheikh Baharul Islam, Mohammad Ali, Saima Khanam and S M Anwar Hossain appeared in the court on behalf of the state while Advocate Mosarraf Hossain Kajol and M A Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam for the accused.

The murder case, pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, was earlier stayed by an order of the High Court. The order will remain valid till disposal of the rape case.

Trial of the rape case began at the special court on July 9, 2000.



Performers at a musical soiree arranged on the 141st birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore at DC Hill Park in the port city of Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Karachi suicide blast

FROM PAGE 1 responsible.

He said the bombers had targeted the West in general and specifically countries participating in the US-led multinational coalition fighting al-Qaeda and Taliban extremists in Afghanistan.

In Pakistan, which is a key Western ally in the war on terrorism, Sindh provincial police chief Kamal Shah said: "We cannot rule out the involvement of al-Qaeda... We will investigate the possible involvement of al-Qaeda."

Foreigners appear to be in increasing danger in Pakistan following September 11 as al-Qaeda fighters slip across the border to escape the US-led war in Afghanistan, to which France has contributed Mirage jet bombers.

Yesterday's blast -- the worst ever attack on foreigners in Pakistan -- followed a grenade attack at a church in Islamabad in March in which an American diplomat's wife and stepdaughter were among five killed.

It coincided with the resumption of the trial of four radical Muslims accused of kidnapping and murdering US reporter Daniel Pearl earlier this year.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf called an emergency meeting of his security chiefs and told them Pakistan was being subjected to a systematic terrorist campaign "for its bold and courageous stand against international terrorism".

The meeting "decided to strengthen the county's western border (with Afghanistan) and reinforce vigilance against any infiltration from those borders," an official statement said.

Musharraf said in a television interview he considered the bombing "an attack on Pakistan as well as France" and warned of a tough government response.

"We feel that this act of international terrorism has to be met with full force," he said.

"We would appeal to the international community to understand our domestic environment resulting from our cooperation against international terrorism, understand our concerns and also understand that Pakistan is doing and is already doing all that it can to combat terrorism."

French President Jacques Chirac also reaffirmed "France's determination to do everything possible to fight international terrorism".

Chirac dispatched his defence minister, Michele Alliot-Marie, to Pakistan and called on the Pakistani authorities to "do everything possible to find and punish those responsible".

The French prosecutor's office said officers from the anti-terrorist section and the DST counter-intelligence service would leave for Pakistan "as soon as possible".

The massive explosion in this southern port city destroyed the

Pakistan navy bus, blew out the windows of buildings 100 metres (330 feet) away and left a large crater on the ground outside the luxury hotel.

Pieces of the alleged bomber remained in the mangled car, which was blown 50 metres (115 feet) away by the force of the blast.

"The bus is littered with blood and human parts and metal is scattered everywhere," said Sheraton hotel employee Mohammad Aqeel.

"On both sides it is devastating damage. I can see the front of the Pearl Continental and I can't see any glass on any of the windows. There are shops in front of the hotel and they have all been blown away."

The New Zealand and Pakistan cricket teams were staying at the Pearl ahead of the second Test match due to start here Wednesday morning. New Zealand cancelled the tour and announced the team's immediate return home.

The French naval workers were from the Direction des Constructions Navales (DCN), a French state-owned company involved in jointly building with Pakistan three Agosta 90B class submarines.

The company announced it was recalling its expatriate workers -- engineers, technicians and factory workers. A total of 40 French nationals were sent to Karachi to work on the submarine project.

Bombing dents hopes

FROM PAGE 1 and called on the United States for support in beefing up his police resources.

The Palestinian Authority evacuated all its security service and government buildings in the West Bank town of Ramallah, fearing a swift Israeli reprisal for Tuesday's bombing.

In the second bombing, an 18-year-old Palestinian youth was seriously wounded after his attempted suicide attack backfired about 20 kilometres (12 miles) southeast of the coastal city of Haifa.

Nobody was else was hurt in the blast, which Israeli army radio said occurred when part of the explosives the youth was wearing on his body detonated, possibly by accident. No group claimed responsibility.

Bush expressed "disgust" with Tuesday's bombing, the first since seven people were killed in central Jerusalem on April 12 as US Secretary of State Colin Powell started an ill-fated peace mission.

He said he was sending CIA director George Tenet, who developed a series of ceasefire proposals last year, back to the Middle East to help build a unified Palestinian security force.

About Tuesday's blast, one police official said the suicide bomber appeared to have carried the explosives into the Spiel club, in

the industrial suburbs of Tel Aviv, in a large suitcase.

The terrorist came alone into the place, it appears, carrying a suitcase," said Haim Cohen, police commander of the coastal region.

"He went into the snooker club and blew himself up," Cohen told Israeli public television. "More than 50 people were wounded, some of them seriously."

Officials said several of the injured were taken to hospital in critical condition. The Israeli daily Haaretz said on its website that 11 of the injured were in serious condition.

Amid scenes of mayhem and devastation on the southern outskirts of Tel Aviv, witnesses said the impact of the blast caused the third floor ceiling of the building to collapse, and that the entire club appeared to be destroyed.

Police said they had not yet managed to get all of the bodies and possible survivors out of the building. It was not immediately clear how many people were inside the building at the time of the explosion.

The suicide attack was the first to strike Israel since a young woman suicide bomber killed six other people on April 12 in central Jerusalem and the deadliest since the army launched Operation Defensive Wall on March 29.

In an anonymous phone call to AFP in Jerusalem, a man who said he represented the Ezzedine al-

Qassam Brigades, the military wing of the Hamas Islamic resistance movement, claimed responsibility for the attack.

"We are going to attack within this week and declare the holy war against all the Israelis for what happened last month in Jenin camp by the Israeli army," he said.

The blast immediately caused some senior Israeli minister to question the wisdom of shutting down the army's sweeps of the West Bank, which Sharon had promised to do under strong international pressure.

Meanwhile, Israel continued its sweep for Palestinian militants on the West Bank despite formally declaring an end to its Operation Defensive Shield.

Embrace

FROM PAGE 12 the same position, the daughter in her mother's firm clasp. Having failed to separate the bodies, rescuers sent them by launch to Rangabali, the burial site.

They could not be identified by anyone on the way to burial. Finally, when the launch, MV Rahman, carrying the decomposed bodies reared Rangabali, the final effort to separate the mother from the daughter failed as the two bodies were locked in what the medical experts call "rigor mortis".

The authorities had no choice other than bury the mother and the daughter still in embrace.

NZ cancel Test tour after blast

FROM PAGE 1 Team liaison officer Fahimuddin Alvi was taken to hospital after sustaining a heart attack as result of the explosion.

"He was moving around making arrangements for the team's coach to go to the stadium," said Pakistan assistant coach Sikander Bakht. "He was terrified by something like this happening so close."

New Zealand physiotherapist Dayle Shackel, who had been sitting in the team bus, received a minor injury to his left elbow from broken glass.

"I was sitting down, opened the curtains and a massive bang blew me to the ground," Shackel told the New Zealand Press Association. "Glass exploded all around me."

Wicketkeeper Robbie Hart had been in his room at the time of the blast.

"The whole room caved in, glass was flying everywhere," Hart said. "I hit the floor and most of it went over the top of me. It was just crazy."

Former New Zealand fast bowler Danny Morrison, now a television commentator, said scenes outside the hotel had been horrific.

"You could see body parts all over the road. You could see torsos, arms and legs everywhere," he said.

New Zealand radio commentator Bryan Waddle told Radio Sport he could see the mangled frame of the bus.

"Basically that's all you can see, the mangled wreckage of the bus. I had a quick look into the street -- it wasn't very appetising so I decided to walk away from that area," he said.

Waddle said metal fragments and broken glass had littered the heavily damaged hotel front, and security checks were being made to ensure there were no other devices.

The tour had been scheduled originally for September and October last year but was postponed after the September 11 attacks on the United States and the subsequent war in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Security concerns also led to West Indies cancelling a test series, which was later staged on neutral territory in Sharjah. The Pakistan board has already lost more than \$10 million in revenue since September 11.

Pakistan Cricket Board head Munawwar Rana said the cancellation could have repercussions on the country's future programmes.

"It will now take a lot of effort to convince the International Cricket Council or other cricket boards to play in Pakistan after this incident," he told Reuters.

New Zealand cricket teams have had three tours to Sri Lanka interrupted by bombings in the past 15 years.

A New Zealand team was in Colombo in 1987 when a car bomb killed more than 100 people and in 1992 a bomb exploded outside the team hotel.

Last year, the team was in Sri Lanka when a suicide attack by Tamil Tigers closed Colombo's international airport.

Khaleda: Salt-iodizing

From Page 1
poor health and these ultimately affect economic growth," she said co-chairing the roundtable on "A Smart Start for Children: The Sustained Elimination of Iodine Deficiencies" in a UN conference room.

The dialogue is part of the schedule of a three-day UN special session on state of world children that began at the United Nations headquarters yesterday morning.

In the intervention, the Prime Minister said Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) were recognised as a major public health problem in Bangladesh in early 90s. Cumulative loss of iodine from the soil because of floods and rains washing the delta perennially made the country extremely vulnerable to the dangers of iodine deficiency.

She said almost 84 million people, or 70 per cent of the country's

population, were detected as iodine-deficient in the early 90s.

However, Khaleda said IDD programme in Bangladesh was implemented with strong political commitment and administrative support and intensive collaboration with development partners.

A significant impact has been made by universal salt iodizing activities in Bangladesh over the last decade, resulting in a drastic reduction in IDD prevalence rate, the prime minister told her audience of world leaders.

She said urinary iodine deficiency and total goitre rate and visible goitre rate were significantly reduced following the action by the government with technical and financial assistance from UNICEF, Japan government and CIDA.

Khaleda said a unique cost-sharing scheme was developed in Bangladesh to ensure financial sustainability of salt-iodizing drive after negotiation between the government and the Bangladesh Salt Mill Owners Association.

The PM said about 30 per cent of households in Bangladesh were still not taking iodized salt owing to various reasons. New strategies have to be formulated to cover poor households and low-consumption districts to ensure universal consumption of iodized salt in the country.

India to face acute shortage of IT workers by 2005

AFP, New Delhi

India's software industry may face an acute shortage of more than half-a-million professionals by 2005, the country's top software lobby group said in a report.

The report released Tuesday by the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), said the industry, which has spawned several Nasdaq-listed firms, would need more than 1.4 million computer programmers by 2005.

"But the supply would only be 875,000," it said.

According to the report, India's engineering colleges had not kept pace with an industry that has grown an average 50 per cent annually over the last five years. The industry has also lost many of its brightest young stars to the United States.

According to a UN report released in New Delhi in July last year, India loses two billion dollars a year in resources through the brain drain of 100,000 skilled computer professionals to the United States alone.

The average total cost to India of educating each skilled professional was between 15,000 and 20,000 dollars, the report added.

The study also identified the southern Indian city of Bangalore as one of a number of "world-class technological hubs" which have emerged to challenge Silicon Valley and other centres in Europe and Japan.

Meghna tragedy

FROM PAGE 1 Mohammad Abul Khaer, operator of the sole telephone in Rangabali, said the relatives and villagers -- all in a daze -- were waiting until the last of the bodies was buried.

Khaer said officials and volunteers wrapped each decomposed body with white cotton and buried separately in a field near Kachiabunia Bazaar, with people from two unions of Rangabali and Chhoto Baizua watching from afar.

UNB adds: Seventeen more bodies of the victims of the May 3 launch disaster in the Meghna River were recovered from Munshiganj and Chandpur Tuesday midnight and yesterday, raising the death toll to 345.

Of the decomposed bodies, two were recovered from Mohonpur, 10km south of Matlab, one from Char Laggimara and 12 from Char Abdullahpur of Munshiganj district. Another body of a child was recovered from near Shainal on Tuesday midnight.

Four bodies recovered from the riverbank at Char Abdullahpur yesterday afternoon by the Navy rescue team were taken to Shainal and buried in a mass grave.

The rescue team wanted to bury the decomposed bodies at the same place but could not do so because of administrative difficulty.

Meanwhile, the one-member probe body with ADC Monjur-Elahi yesterday initiated its inquiry into the disaster.

The earlier report from Munshiganj quoted the people in char areas as saying that more bodies were floating in the river.

Navy ship BNS Tamjeed still anchored at the place of disaster near Shainal sent a team with the backup of police by speedboat downstream in search of floating bodies.

Housewife shot dead by dacoits in Narail

UNB, Narail

Dacoits gunned down a housewife and looted valuables worth Tk 50,000 from a house at Komkhali village in Sadar upazila Tuesday night.

Family sources said a gang of armed dacoits numbering 12 swooped on the house of Ayub Hossain and shot dead Archana Begum, 20, wife of his younger brother, as she recognised some of them.

They also injured Ayub Hossain with sharp weapons and tied him up with a tree when he tried to run away from the house. He was admitted to Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

Later, police arrested two people -- Yusuf Mollah and Khairul Islam -- in this connection.

Spl police team

FROM PAGE 1 operate collectively, said an official who attended the meeting. If necessary, manpower in the three branches would be increased.

Chaired by LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdull Mannan Bhuiyan, the 24th meeting of the cabinet committee was also attended by Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman, Education Minister Dr Osman Faruque, IGP of police and top officials of the relevant ministries.

While reviewing the crime trend in the past one month, the meeting found that incidences of extortion and rape had risen while acid attacks had declined. It also observed that murders had slightly decreased during the period.

The meeting was informed that departmental actions were taken against 166 uniformed policemen serving in various capacities due to their negligence to duty. Besides, another 50 were transferred in a bid to improve the law and order.

Still, the meeting was annoyed with the police as the situation

remained far behind the expected level, one source noted.

The committee was highly displeased with non-implementation of a previous decision of the committee to set up a counter-intelligence unit to monitor the performance of the police. It asked the authorities concerned to execute the decision without further delay.

The cabinet committee also felt that the about 2,000 unarmed police personnel on patrol duty in the capital should be better equipped.

"We felt that the situation should be improved to ensure speedy trial of killers and other criminals," Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told the BBC radio last night. The minister said his government was taking various steps to check crimes against women.

Women activist Sultana Kamal while talking to the BBC regretted that the incidences of rape were on the rise and the culprits were going scot-free. "The victims are being denied justice. Rather, they are being threatened by the accused. This is simply frustrating for the victims who are often found committing suicides," she said.

Garments exporters

FROM PAGE 12 Exporters Association (BTTLMEA) Chairman Anisuzzaman, other leaders and around 400 members of the three associations were present at the meeting at Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday.

Kutubuddin said exporters should be allowed to import yarn through land ports if the government does not take steps to bring down yarn prices.

Besides, the government should implement the SAARC cumulation facility, provide 15 per cent cash incentive to forward linkage industries and allow central bonded warehouse in the private sector, the BGMEA president said.

Kutubuddin charged Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman for not "keeping his words".

"After imposing ban on yarn import through land ports he had assured us that it would be applicable only for commercial imports and not for imports under back-to-back LCs. But he changed his mind after three days," he expressed.

The BGMEA president also came down heavily on the former president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), Salman F Rahman, for his role against the SAARC cumulation. "He used his political influence in this regard and worked against implementation of the SAARC Cumulation facility."

Another BGMEA leader, M A Taher, said the country's RMG exporters are losing their competi-

tive edge and foreign buyers are shifting orders to other countries.

The government can keep the knitwear sector out of the SAARC cumulation facility and implement it for the woven garment sector, he recommended.

White paper

FROM PAGE 1 its release. She reportedly reprimanded him.

PMO sources said the political secretary told the PM that he was not aware of the content of the white paper as he received sealed copies. He blamed the mistake on the 'special cell' created to prepare the white paper.

However, sources at the PMO said the documents were available with many officials at least a week before their formal release.

Senior BNP leaders are also irked as they were kept out of the scene while releasing the documents. Some of them also told the PM that the white papers should be released by a senior cabinet member for their credibility.

Some ministers and leaders also requested the prime minister to probe into the allegations of corruption brought against Harris Chowdhury by a journalist as the political secretary failed to give any satisfactory reply on the charges. The reporter charged the political secretary for his alleged involvement in doctoring names in the white paper.

Faulty edn system

FROM PAGE 12 madrassah board in 292 centres and 28,800 in HSC (Business Administration) under the technical education board in 258 centres throughout the country.

The minister said, "There is no means of uprooting terrorism and corruption from the society except by infusing strong moral and ideological principles in the educational curricula."

Addressing law enforcers, the minister said,