Pay commission

FROM PAGE 12 for a promotion. But the new system may be introduced after a certain period following the implementation of the new pay scale.
The NPC has also recommended

an independent pay structure for Bangladesh Bank, but said the national pay scale should be applicable for autonomous organisations, state-owned commercial institutions and public universities unless they become self-sufficient.

The NPC will hand over the recommendations to the government after the Eid-ul-Azha. Sources say the NPC recommen-

Depression moves westwards

UNB, Dhaka

The depression over the southeast Bay and adjoining areas moved slightly westwards yesterday.

A Met office bulletin said it was centred about 1,950km southsouthwest of Chittagong, 1,870km of Cox's Bazar and 1,900km south southwest of Mongla seaports.

"It's likely to intensify further and move in a west-northwesterly direction," said the bulletin.

Maximum sustained wind speed within 48km of the depressioncentre is about 50kph, rising to 60kph in gusts or squalls. Sea will remain moderate.

The ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been asked to hoist distant cautionary signal

7 show-caused

FROM PAGE 1 7,116 tonnes of rice from India worth over Tk 10 crore a few yeas ago, but 3,560 tonnes was declared rotten and later kept in the port

The shipping ministry last month asked the MPA chairman to hand over the rotten rice to TMI receiving only Tk 22 lakh as service charges and rent of the warehouse since 1999, although the charges could be as high as Tk 8 crore.

MPA started handing over the rice from January 10 following the ministry order. TMI has already received over 1,000 tonnes from the warehouse and allegedly transported it to different markets for sale, sources said.

The court has also ordered the MPA to take back the rotten rice which was received by the TMI and directed the authorities concerned to see that the rotten rice is not

SM Enayet Hossain, a resident of Bagerhat town, filed a case with the court on January 13 accusing the seven persons of handing over the rotten rice to the importer's agent

Eid windfall

FROM PAGE 1 give me Tk 250 then I will take you with me as I am able to take up to five Some passengers protested on

the premises of the station when they found that there were no tickets in the counters. "They (ticket counter men) say

that all the tickets have been sold. But tickets are available when passengers are paying extra money," said Badiur Rahman, a Chitttagong bound passenger.

The situation was no different at the Sadarghat launch terminal. Launch operators are charging higher fares from the passengers in the name of price hikes of diesel. Tickets were selling in the black market.

Mismanagement at bus and launch terminals is likely to further worsen when the four-day government Eid holidays begin on

2 troops die FROM PAGE 12

"The operation resumed at daybreak on Sunday. There is heavy firing on both sides," said a police spokesman.

"One of the militants has taken up a strong position in a two-storey building close to the entrance of the stadium complex, while the other militant was first holed up in the passport office."

The passport office later caught fire in the gun battle and the bodies of two paramilitary soldiers were

dragged of the burnt-out office by fire fighters. "The gun battle sparked a fire in the passport office which has now been doused. The bodies of two

CRPF men were pulled out of the building," said the official. "When the fire broke out in the passport office the militant hiding

there ran and took up a new position in an adjacent building," he added.
Aside from the soldiers' barracks,

the stadium complex houses the passport office and other federal government buildings for Srinagar, summer capital of Indian Kashmir where a deadly revolt against New Delhi's rule has raged since 1989,

killing tens of thousands. The pro-Pakistan Al-Mansoorin guerrilla group telephoned a local news agency to claim responsibility for the attack.

Islamic militants routinely step up attacks in the run-up to Republic Day on January 26, which is observed as a "black day" by sepa-

ratists and rebels. The stadium where the stand-off was continuing is due to be used for a Republic Day parade and security had been beefed up in the area.

dation for an independent pay structure for the central bank came despite strong demands for such pay structures for the tax administration, law-enforcement agencies, public universities and nationalised

commercial banks. In its report the NPC said the central bank as the country's high-est banking institution should have an autonomous administration with its own pay structure that will help rope in more talented and efficient personnel for its manage-

About the nationalised commer-cial banks, the NPC stressed that a quick and resolute decision is necessary to recruit honest, reliable, efficient and talented officials in order to improve banking services and compete with private banks.

The commission noted that due to political appointments and pro-motions, the issue of recruiting efficient bank officials has been

The NPC report said the nation-alised commercial banks and spe-cialised banks would remain under

the national pay structure unless they are economically sound. The commission observed that in comparison to private universities, the pay structure and benefits for public university teachers and

staff are inadequate. It recommends a well-thought out rise in tuition fees to increase the income of the public universities after which an autonomous pay structure may be considered for

If the universities start to become self-sufficient with increased income, full-time public university teachers and researches may get a payrise, the report suggests.

Students confine

man from harassing the student, a group of police including the three accused -- Shohag, Muktadir and Majid -- on duty on the campus roared with laughter at the incident. When the student protested in outage, the three policemen hurled

abusive words at her, witnesses said. As a male student of the same lepartment protested their behaviour, the policemen assaulted them physically.

The students of the department then took place in front of the proctor's office and demanded suspension of the three policemen, apology from them and their withdrawal from the campus.

Vice Chancellor AMA Favez came to the spot and sat in a meeting with the policemen. As the demands were not met immediately, the students then confined the VC, pro-VC, treasurer, proctor, assistant proctor and police officials to the proctor's office for about 40 minutes

The VC later assured the students that police had agreed to apologise informally, but did not mention

when and where.

The VC told reporters that the policemen were closed immediately, but the Ramna officer-in-charge he is yet to receive any written statement from the authorities.

40 hurt

derailed. But the accident did not hamper the schedule of other routes, railway sources said.

Railway sources said the authorities sent a relief train from Laksam station to the accident scene yesterday morning after they learned of

Half the year gone

FROM PAGE 1 Committee Chairman M Akbar Ali presided over the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Ali told The Daily Star that the meeting has suggested the ministry to take minimum number of projects for their proper implementation in due time.
"We've also asked them to recruit

fresh teachers for primary schools as the institutions have been facing a shortage of teaching staff," he said. "We've suggested appointing female teachers in the schools near their houses for easy transportation. The ministry can transfer, if need be, the male teachers, "he added.

Master plan

FROM PAGE 12 Jafrul Islam Chowdhury said that theywould take legal actions against

the polluters of the island. 'No buildings higher than the

coconut trees will be allowed in the island," said a source present in the

LGRD and Cooperative Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan was the chief guest of the meeting that was chaired by the State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammed Nasir Uddin.

The St. Martin's Island lying 17 kilometres off Tekanf, comprises four islands -- Narikel Zinzira, Dakhinpara, Galachira and Charadia.

With a population of 5,700, the St. Martin's Island has been subjected to environmental degradation due to unplanned establishments developed over the years to cater for the tourists, said the meeting source quoting the experts as saying.

The experts believe nearly five endangered species of marine turtles including Green, Olive Ridley, Hawksbill and Leatherback lay eggs in the 835.80-acre island. But constant human intervention poses threats not only to the turtle population but to the live coral of the island.

Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam will visit the St. Martin's Island at the end of this

Hasina, Asma discuss HR situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International human rights activist Asma Jahangir yesterday met Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and discussed the human rights situation in Bangladesh, especially the killings in 'crossfire'.

During the hour-long meeting at Hasina's Sudha Sadan residence in Dhanmondi they also exchanged views on threats of violence against Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh

Asma observed that the civil society here has been playing a robust role in counteracting the anti-Ahmadiyya campaign of the religious extremists. We have shared our views on how

to improve human rights situation both in Pakistan and Bangladesh, Jahangir told the newsmen after the

Asma, the former chairperson of the Pakistan Human Rights Commission, said, "She (Hasina) is daughter of my father's friend and we have a very good family relations. And that's why we spent the time mainly

enquiring about family affairs." Asma Jahangir's father, Malik Jilani, who was an eminent politician in Pakistan, spent years in jail and under house arrest for opposing a string of military dictatorship in that

Later, briefing the reporters, Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury said Asma and Hasina also talked about the government's handling of criminals, which, they observed, raised question as to whether 'the criminals should be put in due process of law or killed in

"Awami League too wants punish-ment of the criminals, but not in the way the present government deals with the issue involving the Rab," he

The AL president citing the example of capital punishment of dreaded criminal Ershad Sikder said her government ensured punishment of the criminals through justice, Saber told the newsmen.

"If criminals like Ershad Sikdar could be punished through due process of law, then why shouldn't be the same legal procedures applied to tryand punish other criminals?" Saber

quoted Hasina as saying. She (Hasina) also pointed out to Asma that the elite force remains mysteriously indifferent to the armed cadres of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Saber said Asma Jahangir inquired about the August 21 grenade attack on AL rally last year and the progress in probe into the incident. She said that if the culprits go scot-free, such crimes would be committed frequently.

WB won't

FROM PAGE 1 had arrived here Saturday night on a two-day official visit.

The finance minister said, "They told us to utilise the aid properly. But it does not imply a believe that we will waste the money.

"The \$200 million will be readjusted from different aid projects of the bank here which are very much difficult to implement even in the next 10 years. We are bound to pay commitment charge against the projects, as we are not able to implement in time," Saifur said, noting, "In this context, it is a good arrange ment for Bangladesh, as we will not have to pay the commitment

charges.' In response to Jhang's criticism of the PRSP, Saifur told him he would seek recommendations of lawmakers and politicians outside parliament after the Eid-ul-Azha on how to better the political governance and include them in the strategy paper. He also sought recommenda-

tions of the WB on the issue. Talking to the media, Jhang said he has discussed the WB's cooperation and relationship with the Bangladesh government. "We hope Bangladesh government will continue their consultations with the stakeholders concerned before

finalising the PRSP." On the proposed immunity to the WB, Jhang said, "It is nothing new in the other World Bank member states, we have similar laws there. But in Bangladesh there is a lot

of confusion about the law." Wallich said the government should take steps to reform the police administration, improve law and order, and restructure the power sector, which are the major concerns for development here.

Ruta polls

FROM PAGE 12 department of logic and Prof Dr Abdul Wahab of department of geography were elected president,

general secretary and treasurer. Nine of the 10 posts for members went to the White Panel, Yellow Panel's AHM Mustafizur Rahman of department of sociology was elected

Former Ruta treasurer Prof Anik Mahmud of department of Bangla conducted the election as the election commissioner.

At least 757 Ruta members cast their votes, while 11 votes were

Muggers

blasted a hand-bomb.

Aziz, 20, with splinters in the legs and left hand, was rushed to the DMCH.

demanded Tk 50,000 from the owner ers at the DMCH.

Freewheeling bigwigs

FROM PAGE 1 Pajerojeep Dhaka Metro-Cha-5143. State Minister for Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Ziaul Haque Zia came by a Nissan Patrol jeep with the number of Dhakametro-Gha11-3817.

His Private Secretary Delwar Hossain uses another Toyota land cruiser four wheeler with the numberplate Dhaka Metro-Gha 02-1860. The car belongs to the Department of Public Health Engineering under the ministry.

Jamaat-e-Islami MP and Chairman of the standing committee on the Ministry of Religious Affairs Moulana Delwar Hossain Saidee came by a Pajero jeep with the number of Dhaka Metro Gha- 2279. The car pelongs to the Islamic Foundation.

According to sources, this car was previously used by State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharref Hossain Shajahan. When the Foundation gave the state minister a new car, this one was then given to the MP.

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain uses several cars of Petrobangla and its subsidiaries. State Minister for Education Ehsanul Haque Milon often uses a car belonging to the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

According to sources, most of the ministers, state ministers, secretaries and joint secretaries exerting their power use more than one luxury car in addition to the government allocated mid-range Sedan car which mainly serve their family at the state's

It's not just the ministers and the secretaries who enjoy multiple cars at the expense of the taxpayers; in some cases, influential deputy secretaries and even some influential private secretaries to the ministers, who are not supposed to get any official car, get touseluxurious SUVs.

They prefer using SUVs belonging to the subsidiary organisations under their ministries, an investigation of The Daily Star reveals.

This practice forces the subsidiary organisations to borrow others' cars or avail other means of transportation when they need it to carry out official work. SUVs are used to make field trips to supervise project implementation. The wives, children and other

family members of those top officials rampantly use these project cars for going to school and shopping and to olaces for morning or evening walk. Officially, each of the top bureaucrats gets one car and a driver from the government transport pool. But in

reality most of them use two to three cars, most of which are SUVs. Sources at the government transport pool said they mainly provide Nissan Sunny cars to the ministers, state ministers and secretaries. The joint secretaries and deputy secretares get Toyota cars. The pool has a few uxurious cars or SUVs like Nissan Patrol, Mitsubishi Pajero, Prado,

Toyota Land Rover, Land Cruiser and so on for special use. But at the Secretariat, this correspondent found scores of latest SUVs and luxury cars carrying high officials who are not supposed to have them. Each of these cars costs from Tk 20

lakhtoTk40lakh. The car drivers told The Daily Star that the cars mainly belong to various donor-funded development projects. Their duties start in the morning when they take the children of the bureaucrats to schools and colleges. The drivers' official duty, which includes taking the wives, children and relatives to shopping, houses of relatives and weddings, among other things,

usually ends late in the evening.
According to sources, top officials also use government cars to go outside Dhaka and for political purposes. The subsidiary almost always bears the cost of drivers and fuel for private use of these luxury vehicles by top bureau-

In most cases, the top government officials take the cars from the subsid-

iary organisations by verbal orders. The subsidiary directorates or departments under various ministries buy latest model luxurious cars with money from donor-funded projects. But the departments or directorates generally never hand those cars over to the government transport pool

even when the projects are complete. The Ministry of Planning admitted to the newly formed Anti-Corruption

Zim in catbird seat FROM PAGE 1

The partnership ended with Taylor being bowled by Enamul Haque for a chance-less 78. His career-best knock was studded with ten boundaries in

The 18-year-old left-arm spinner Enamul, who took seven wickets in the first innings, finally succeeded when he decided to come over the wicket and got the ball to spin back from the rough outside the leg-stump. Part-timer Mohammad Ashraful's

wicket when wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud gloved a bat-pad catch diving to his right to dismiss Elton Chigumbura. But Taibu, who cracked most of his 11 boundaries on the off-side during a 172-ball essay spanning two-and-a-

half hours, saw off the remaining five

leg-break produced another quick

overs with Panyangara.
The Zimbabwe skipper offered just one chance when on 67 but Mashrafee failed to react to a sharp catch at slip off the bowling of Rafique. Earlier, Bangladesh's first innings lasted 17 overs in the morning after

resuming on 169-8. Overnight bats-

men Mashrafee (26) and Tapash

Baisya (13) added 35 valuable runs for

the ninth wicket before the home side

were skittled out for 211.

The Directorate of Fisheries has around 45 latest SUVs. This correspondent found 26 shiny cars parked in front of the directorate at Matshya Bhaban during a visit. Of them, 14 were of latest model Toyota Land Cruiser, Land Rover, Nissan Patrol and Mitsubishi Pajero four wheelers. The officials of the directorate told The Daily Star that most of those cars came from various donor-funded

Commission that only 133 cars out of

4,230 bought by government organisations in the last six years were

handed over to the transport pool. The

government could not find out the

whereabouts of the rest of the cars

mostly bought under development

But according to sources, the subsidiary bodies kept the cars for use

of their top officials sometimes with

the permission from the ministries concerned and often without permis-

In exchange for the permission,

nisters, secretaries and joint secre-

they provide one or two cars to the

taries of the parent ministries.

All the directors, deputy directors and even some assistant directors of the directorate have an official car. The government drivers of the

directorate told The Daily Star that the directorate often provides cars to the high officials of the ministry. One Pajero jeep is permanently used by the minister concerned and another by thesecretary.

Talking to The Daily Star, Assistant Director of Directorate of Fisheries Rafiqul Islam, who looks after the transport related issues, admitted that most of the cars were bought for donor-funded projects. Although there is a rule to hand over cars to the transport pool after the projects are finished, this is rarely complied with, headded.

There are some abandoned cars in the garage of the Directorate of Fisheries because these came in such a bad shape that the pool officials did not accept them, Islam pointed out. The cars would be sold out through

auction, hesaid. During one investigation, it was found that a luxurious jeep was parked in front of Ramna Park. The driver of the cartold The Daily Starthat the car belonged to the Directorate of Primary and Mass Education, but the secretary used the car.

The driver said that the wife of the secretary came to the park for evening walk and that she often uses the car for shopping and other personal purposes. The secretary uses the transport pool car for official purposes. The cost of the driver and fuel of the car is borne by the directorate. The driver gets full overtime every month for his

service. Several government officials told The Daily Star that many ministers and secretaries do not want to take car from the transport pool because of low quality of the vehicles and poor services. The drivers of the transport pool often do not behave well and fail to 'satisfy the top officials'. On the other hand, the drivers under subsidiary bodies are well behaved and provide

good service, the officials said. A state minister returned a transport pool car just after a week as its engine ceased to function from the

very beginning. According to sources, the Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) buys the highest number of cars every year. It provides important government high officials with cars in related field of their work for smooth functioning of its projects. And in return, the officials help to get prompt decisions in favour of the

department. According to sources, the top government officials always try to get appointment at the LGRD ministry to

avail carfacilities A few years back, a joint secretary at the LGRD ministry was given forced retirement for questioning the logic behind buying additional cars for the projects. The joint secretary was told by the higher authorities not to interfere with the affairs of then chief engineer of the LGED.

2 pristine isles

area of only 18.70 acres is a part of the St Martin's Island. It is a coral sanctuary, houses 89 species of fish

and has no human habitation. Besides enhancing the already rich bio-diversity, the environment ministry plans to build the country's first marine park in Cheradia.

The environment ministry with financial assistance from the GEF has been implementing a number of projects since 2002 to protect the forests and bio-diversity of St Martin's Island, Sonadia, Cox's Bazar and Teknaf beaches, and Hakaluki Haor, Environment Minister Tariqul Islam told The Daily

He said Sonadia is rich in man-Chenkyab Dorji of Bhutan will take grove forest and is a sanctuary to guest birds and sea tortoise. His over as the next secretary-general of ministry has taken steps to conserve the Saarc secretariat from OAMA its eco-system, forest and the overall The ministry is also implement-

islands stressing the need for build-

ing environment-friendly tourism

centres there.

ing a project with an eco-tourism component, he said, adding there is no need to build a conventional tourism centre there. On the other hand, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism in its under the UN mandate and its latest proposal sent to the environment ministry sought the two

Jobs of 2,228 project staff to be regularised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has finalised the regularisation of 2,228 officials and employees from various development projects under the Ministry of Social

Out of a total of 2,800 employees recommended for regularisation by the social welfare ministry, the Ministry of Establishment agreed to Ministry of Establishment agreed to regularise the 2,228 members of the development project staff, Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid told journalists at a press briefing yesterday.

Mujahid said whereas crores of

taka were earlier spent for the regularisation of employees from development projects, irregularities and bribery in this case have now been stopped. Asked whether those staff will be a

burden for the government in the future, the minister said this is one of the recruitment processes in the government offices. Commenting on various develop-

ment activities by the ministry, he said the recovery rate was over 90 per cent against loans disbursed in the form of micro credit under various social welfare programmes. The government has no plan to

make the capital free from beggars, the minister said, adding, "There is hardly any capital city in the world where beggars do not exist and it is nowan international problem." Social Welfare Secretary Kazi

Monwarul Haque was present at the

Ahmadiyya FROM PAGE 12

the consequences of such actions of the government. Jahangir, who hails from Pakistan

and is an internationally renowned human rights activist, also asked moral support from the people of Bangladesh in the 'Pakistanis' struggle for democracy'.

Outlaws

created a hit list comprising several politicians, journalists and senior officers of the police department.

'We are working hard to track

down the outlaws who have entered the city with bombs. There is nothing to be worried about," said a senior officer of KMP. The officer did not deny reports of a financial deal between outlaws and an Islamic militant group for the purchase of 18 bombs, to be used for assassination in the Khulna region

and for other destructive activities to avenge the killing in crossfire incidents of many top leaders.

Deputy Commissioner Akbar Ali
at KMP said two powerful bombs recently recovered from two outlaws arrested in Dhaka by Khulna district police during Bishwa Ijtema may be among the 18 powerful bombs. "We are thoroughly checking this inforwatch on

mation and keeping shar our suspects," he said. Habibur Rahman, Khulna police super, also did not rule out the possibility of significant destructive activities, including assassinations by Janajuddho and M-L factions of PBCP, to create anarchy in the south-

western region. Senior officers of both KMP and the district police called for strict monitoring of the day-to-day law and order situation and the continuation of special combing operations

Pre-disaster

FROM PAGE 1 consensus at the summit by leaders of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional

Cooperation (Saarc). We will not insist on it. We will be willing to raise it as our suggestion," he said, adding "Provided everyone agrees, we have to address our concerns towards [preparing for future disasters!,"

Morshed said the Tsunami disaster has made it imperative that such a pre-disaster early warning system is discussed at the summit. "I'm sure that the Summit lead-

ers will discuss the issue and find a way to face the challenge together," Morshed said. Asked of the possibility that future Saarc summits will be curtailed to two days or even one, as with the 13th Saarc summit, Morshed said, "That'll be discussed. When you become more business-

pressing the time-frame." The upcoming summit was postponed on December 30 following the Asian Tsunami. The fresh dates of February 6 and 7 were announced last Thursday by Pakistan, the current Saarc chair. Sources said that Lyonpo

minded, you have to consider com-

Rahim of Bangladesh starting on February 28. On the question of following up on the Additional Protocol on Terrorism signed during the 12th Saarc Summit in Islamabad, Morshed said, "We have currently ratified three out of the 12 UN conventions. We would like to work

conventions on such a matter." Bangladesh is committed to combat terrorism, within Saarc and beyond," said Morshed.

Jalil blasts 'crossfire'

The last city AL council was held in

AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu was the chief guest of the council, chaired by Rajshahi City AL President Mahbub Zaman Bhulu. AL leaders Abdul Mannan, Akhtaruzzaman, Golam Mustafa Mohiuddin and AHM Khairuzzaman Lytton were among

the prominent speakers. Jalil said the alliance government also hoodwinked the nation by forming an Anti Corruption Commission with its own people. According to him, "Zia Parishad members and party-nominated ambassadors can not make the commission free. If it were free it would have begun with investigating how Khaleda Zia's family has come to own millions of dollars after Zia left it but a broken suitcase.'

He also alleged that the BNPfamaat clique has impaired all the three wings of the state -- executive, legislative and judiciary -- by

"Empowering the communal

and fanatic people, this government has undermined the spirit of our Liberation War." Jalil said, calling upon his party cadre to unite for a nass movement to unseat the gov-

Amir Hossain Amu said, "The government has launched a deliberate process of killing to wipe out the democratic and pro-liberation

sections of the nation. 'The country's very existence will be at stake if this government continues," he maintained and said the AL is people's party and, so, it would not be easy to eliminate it.

AL Organising Secretary Abdul Mannan said whenever the BNP comes to power prices of essentials shoot up. He criticised the diesel price hike, saying, "Farmers of the country will have to pay an additional Tk 451 crore this year for the Tk3 rise in the price of diesel."

Akhtaruzzaman, in his turn, asked AL leaders and activists to avoid factional feuds and get unite for a nation-wide movement against the anti-liberation forces.

Establishment grilled

FROM PAGE 1 response and lack of co-operation from other ministries and divisions concerned

Secretary in-Charge of the Ministry of Establishment Safarraj Hossain said they had sent letters to different ministries and divisions on December 21 asking for information about the status of all the vehicles but only 12 ministries and three divisions responded. 'We cannot accept such excuse as

parent ministry. It must find out the public vehicles," Chairman of the Committee Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul said at the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. The ministry officials assured the parliamentary body of submitting a

it (establishment ministry) is the

complete report after having all the information from rest of the ministries and divisions. The committee however did not allow the ministry officials to disclose the partial report and the names of the

12 ministries and three divisions.

December 12 last year asked the establishment ministry to furnish information about the public vehicles in detail since it observed that different ministries and divisions did not return the vehicles on completion of the projects. At yesterday's meeting, the com-

The parliamentary body on

prompting the committee chairman to show the report of the transport pool and distribute its copies to each of the members and the officials. "If we can collect the report, why you people have failed to do so? You

have to submit the report in detail at

mittee asked for the report but the ministry officials failed to comply,

the next meeting and we will not accept any excuse," Bakul told the officials pointing to the secretary incharge of the establishment ministry.

"If any ministry or division refuses to give information, you must report to the committee at the next meeting said the chairman. Talking to The Daily Star after the

meeting, Bakul said the officials are

trying to save themselves. "Even the

retary is trying to do so," he alleged. Awami League lawmaker KM Jahangir Hossain told reporters that the committee would sit soon to discuss the issue. "We the members of the committee are determined to recover public vehicles which are now

being misused, "he added.

try, Jahangir said: "The ministry is ignoring the committee by hiding information. The transport pool report says the fisheries and livestock ministry has been holding the highest number of

Blasting the establishment minis-

vehicles for long. It has returned only 42 vehicles out of 1,228. The agriculture ministry is another defaulter that returned only 13 vehicles out of 680. The health ministry has given back three vehicles out of 670, the education ministry returned only one out of 113, the water resources ministry three out of 96, and the women and

children affairs ministry returned 12 out of 73 vehicles it had. A total of 371 vehicles still remain under the social welfare ministry, 284 under the forest and environment ministry, 172 under the posts and telecommunications ministry and 81 under the communications ministry. These ministries have not returned a

single vehicle on completion of the

development projects.

Israelı army

FROM PAGE 12 Gaza increased to 100 a week from

40 a week. "The army and the security forces have been instructed to increase operational activity to stop terrorism and they will continue to do so without restrictions I emphasize without restrictions so long as the Palestinians don't lift a finger, Sharon said. "The operational level has been instructed to take any step

necessary to stop the terrorism." Senior military officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the army was considering either a major raid into Gaza or several small operations against militants. The military prefers the second option, fearing a broad operation would ruin Abbas' chances for success, the

officials said. Palestinian Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath condemned the

threatened military action. "At the same time that Abu Mazen says he will work hard to return to the peace track, Sharon declares a military escalation," Shaath said, referring to Abbas by his nickname. "I'm afraid Sharon will say that Abu Mazen is following Arafat's path and so they will not deal with Abu Mazen."

The new violence may reflect militants' desire to prove their strength and compel Abbas to take them into account as he begins his tenure. In his inaugural speech Saturday,

Abbas condemned the violence, urged an immediate cease-fire and said he was extending Israel his hand in peace. Israeli officials said the speech was disappointing because Abbas did not say how he planned to stop attacks making only a vague men-

tion of how he would deal with the

violent groups and many wondered

whether the window of opportunity

created by Arafat's death was already closing. "Despite the change in Palestinian leadership, we see that at the top they have not started any activity to stop the terrorism, Sharon said Sunday. "This situation cannot continue."

Some in Israel criticized Sharon's decision to cut ties with Abbas, saying he did not give the new Palestinian leader a chance to prove himself. "He hasn't been in power long

enough to crack down on terrorism," said Israeli Environment Minister Shalom Simhon, a member

of the Labour Party. The violence was only one of the serious challenges facing Abbas. As he was inaugurated Saturday, 46 election officials resigned, accusing Abbas' ruling Fatah party and

intelligence officials of pressuring

them to abruptly change procedures

on election day including keeping

polls open longer and allowing voters to cast ballots in any location. The new rules gave Abbas supporters more opportunities to vote but did not fundamentally affect the final tally, they said.

The officials said they wanted to

warn that such actions could be easily repeated during July parliamentary elections. "I was personally threatened and pressured," said Ammar Dwaik, the commission's deputy chairman. "I am therefore announcing my resignation publicly, so that everyone knows that in the upcoming legislative election, this could happen

inquiry into the allegations and insisted that whoever is responsible be held accountable. "These mass resignations put a big question mark on the credibility of the voter turnout and the results," Hamas said in a statement Sunday. Abbas had hoped his landslide win would give him the legitimacy needed to make difficult decisions. He has condemned militant violence, but said he prefers to co-opt

Hamas demanded an immediate

however, there is little hope for a renewed peace process after four years of Israeli-Palestinian bloodshed. At a four-hour meeting late Saturday between Islamic Jihad and Fatah leaders in Gaza, the militants

the militants rather than crush

them. If he fails to end the violence,

The issue of cease-fire cannot be discussed while the Israelis are escalating their attacks against our people, while the atmosphere is tense," said Nafez Azzam, a senior Islamic Jihad leader at the talks. Other militant leaders, including

refused to even discuss a truce.

Mousa Abu Marzouk, a top Hamas official, also reserved the right to continue attacks, though some indicated they might be ready to

FROM PAGE 1

Some extortionists had

of the bakery and they might have blasted the bomb, Aziz told report-