SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

Pakistan govt backs down

allegedly paid in bribes by

companies seeking customs

had steadfastly refused to

write to Switzerland, saying

Zardari has presidential

who was in court, says the

government appears to have

given ground in the long-

the letter before it is sent --

and our correspondent says

much will depend on whether

The BBC's M Ilyas Khan,

But the court wants to see

Until now, the government

inspection contracts.

immunity.

running dispute.

write to Switzerland to withdraw a letter sent in 2007 by the then attorney general which asked them to halt probes into Zardari.

The court has given him another week to reopen the corruption case against President Zardari. His government has to write to Swiss authorities and submit a draft at the next hearing on September 25.

It is still unclear how the new letter will be worded and what its implications for the president will be, reports BBC. Judge Asif Saeed Khosa

"It is necessary we should

shall be presented in the court

case to September 25 and

instructed ministers to have

The allegations against

Zardari date back to the 1990s,

when he and his late wife,

former premier Benazir

Bhutto, are suspected of

the draft letter ready by then.

The judge adjourned the

for our perusal.'

said the prime minister had satisfies it. made "serious efforts" to He says Ashraf has adopted a more conciliatory approach resolve the standoff but the towards the court than his court wanted to see the letter predecessor, Yousuf Raza before it was sent to the Swiss Gilani, who was disqualified to check if it fulfilled the order dating back to December from office for refusing to comply with the court's AskaritoldAFP. demands.

The court exempted Ashraf be fully satisfied that the from appearing before it in requirement of the order is person until further notice. fully met," the judge said. "When the letter is drafted it

Former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani was thrown out of office in June after being convicted of contempt of court for refusing to write to the Swiss and it seemed his successor Ashraf could suffer the same fate.

If the court accepts the letter, it could bring an end to a saga that has roiled nucleararmed Pakistan's political

laundering \$12 million scene at a time when the country is struggling with Islamist militancy and a weak economy.

The row had threatened to bring down the coalition government led by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which is on course to become the first elected administration in the country's history to complete a full five-year term.

Analyst and author Hasan Askari said the move would probably satisfy the court and bring the standoff to an end but cases against Zardari were unlikely to restart any time government's wording soon.

"Swiss authorities have three options: they can stay quiet on this matter because it is already 15 years old, they can wait till Zardari is no longer president, or they can start the case proceedings,'

"If they decide to re-open the case, the government of Pakistan will seek presidential immunity from the Swiss authorities on the basis of international convention as well as Pakistan's constitutional provision.'

Askari said he thought it was unlikely the cases would proceed in Switzerland as long as Zardari was president, though he could be unseated if the PPP loses a general election expected early next year.

Kate wins legal battle

from a French court preventing the images being spread across the globe by the owners of Closer - the first to publish the naked pictures.

It is a sensational victory for the Duke and Duchess with the judge yesterday hitting the French magazine with a series of strict punishments for the breach of fied privacy.

The yesterday morning ruling means: Closer France must not print any more copies of its controversial issue and take the topless pictures off its website; the photos cannot be published in any other magazines or papers in France; the photographs cannot be sold by them to anyone else in the world and Within 24 hours the offending pictures must be handed over to the Palace.

The court said Closer would get a 10,000 euro daily fine each time they sell them on or publish them.

At the start of the unprecedented court case in Paris, barrister Aurelien Hammelle evoked memories of Princess Diana's ordeal at the hands of paparazzi as he said a photographer had violated Kate's privacy, adding she is a "young woman, not an object".

Judges agreed the magazine must "give back" the equipment on which the digital photos were stored and banned the images from sale in France or abroad within 24

Legal fees of 2,000 euros were also awarded to the

Mizanur Rahman said the

draft would be finalised after

the seminar and handed over

to the government before

October 9. The report will also

be submitted to the United

Nations Human Rights

In the report, the NHRC

has recommended that the

government focus on some

key areas to improve the

The areas are institutional

human rights situation.

Council (UNHRC).

have also filed a criminal complaint under France's privacy laws which could see Closer fined up 36,000 pounds and its editor serve up to a year in prison. And they have filed against "persons unknown", referring to the photographer, who has not yet been identi-The Duke and Duchess of

Cambridge are suing the French Closer magazine for printing semi-naked pictures of Kate last week. It is the first time that a

member of the Royal Family has sued a publication through the courts in France.

Their lawyer Hammelle has accused the magazine of intruding on a "highly intimate moment" by taking the topless pictures of Kate while she was on a private holiday at a chateau in Provence.

The lawyer compared the "grotesque invasion" to the relentless pursuit of Princess Diana by photographers.

The photographer responsible should be prosecuted, the Royals say.

Hammelle said the pictures of the Duchess were taken "just six days after the 15th anniversary of the useless, cynical and morbid hunt which led to the death of William's mother".

Lawyers representing Italian publishing group Mondadori, which owns France's Closer and is controlled by former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, told the court that the photos are not theirs to sell.

development, including

strengthening the judiciary

and ratification of interna-

tional human rights treaties,

socio-economic and cultural

rights, civil and political

rights, women rights, child

rights, persons with disability,

indigenous people, refugees,

religious and ethnic minori-

the judiciary in the country is

faced with a general lack of

According to the report,

ties and climate change.

William and Kate have The Duke and Duchess indicated that they are prepared to present evidence themselves, once they return from their royal tour in the Far Their lawyer told the Tribunal de Grande Instance in Paris that the couple could not have known they were

> being photographed and it would only have been possible to see them with a long He said Silvio Berlusconi's company Mondadori, which owns the French edition of Closer, should be fined £8,000

the original digital images. A judge is expected to decide whether to grant William and Kate an injunction over any further publication or sale of the pictures at

per day if it fails to hand over

midday today. However, any fine is likely to be dwarfed by the amount the magazine has made over the past five days.

Most French newsagents have sold out and the magazine's iPad application keeps crashing because so many are trying to view the pictures.

The magazine's legal team have infuriated the Royal couple by saying their fuss made it big news and that they shouldn't have been sunbathing so close to a public road, lawyer Delphine Pando said.

Yesterday the Duke and Duchess also started criminal proceedings against the photographer, or photographers, who took the pictures.

Lawmen go unpunished capacity. Resolution of cases is

> often very complex as the laws are outdated. All these factors combine to make a system that does

> not deliver speedy, affordable and trusted outcomes. The report suggests raising awareness and educating people on their rights to religious freedom and equal-

developing a National

It also recommends

SC verdict 'distorted'

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election under a small cabinet.

The party's policymakers and legal experts reviewed the full text and rejected it at a closed-door meeting last night with party chief Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Gulshan office in the capital, meeting sources

Khaleda may address a press conference tomorrow to explain the party stance on the apex court verdict,

they added. Asked about the discussions at the meeting, a senior BNP leader said, "We

think the full text of verdict is

nothing but a reflection of the prime minister's recent proposals on election-time government."

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in an interview with the BBC during her recent visit to London proposed formation of a small cabinet that would also include BNP representatives for holding the next general

The BNP outright rejected the proposal.

On Sunday, the SC released the full text of its verdict declaring illegal the constitutional provision for caretaker government.

In the verdict, the SC said the next two elections might be held under a caretaker comprising lawmakers.

At the review meeting, BNP leaders expressed the view that there is no similarity between the short order and full text of the SC verdict. The meeting was

attended by BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, standing committee members Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Rafiqul Islam Mia, Vice Chairman Justice TH Khan and former minister Aminul Haque, among others.

Moody's sees

FROM PAGE 1

Governor Atiur Rahman.

The rating also shows the country's efficiency in debt repayment, successes in managing external pressures and a largely stable banking system, Rahman said.

Bangladesh's rating is higher than that of Sri Lanka (B1) and Pakistan (Caa1), but one notch below India's. Moody's said the rating

reflects its methodological assessment of low economic, institutional and government financial strengths. But it said the recent

macroeconomic pressures stemming from a negative terms of trade shock and delays in aid disbursements have weakened the balance of payments.

No university

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senior immigration official. The new measure sets a university degree as a prerequisite to obtain a visa, the official said.

"The Federal Residency Department... has decided to adopt stricter regimes for tourist, visit and conference visas to curb the influx of blue-collar workers from many labour exporting countries," said the official.

"This would help significantly reduce the risk that individuals engaged in organised crime or the trafficking of persons could gain entry to the country," he

Tourist visas are usually arranged through hotels or airlines and travel agents.

Tourism grew rapidly in the UAE, especially in the glitzy emirate of Dubai, where the number of tourists increased to 9.3 million in 2011, up 10 percent from the previous year.

The UAE has millions of foreign workers, mostly from South Asian countries.

The expat-dominated population is estimated to have grown to around 8.2 million by the end of 2010, with UAE nationals making

6 more

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Some of the officials claimed that they were not posted at the sections of the head office which dealt with the loan, while the others said they did not even know the company, ACC Deputy Director SMM Akhter Hamid Bhuiyan told The

Daily Star. A Bangladesh Bank investigation found that the Hotel Ruposhi Bangla branch of the Sonali Bank had lent Hall-Mark Group and five other companies Tk 3,547 crore between 2010 and May this year on forged docu-

ments. Of the amount, Hall-Mark alone took Tk 2,667 crore.

The anti-graft body has so far grilled 50 Sonali Bank and Hall-Mark Group officials in this connection.

Partnership

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Secretary Mohamed Mijarul Quayes is leading the Bangladesh delegation of 15 members drawn up from different ministries while Wendy Sherman, US under secretary of state for political affairs, will lead the US delegation at the dialogue.

First of its kind, the dialogue is being held following the signing of a joint declaration on Bangladesh-US Partnership Dialogue on May 5 in Dhaka during US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit here.

Food security, maternal and child health, family planning, climate change, strengthening of democracy, youth and women's empowerment and other issues will come up for discussion, diplomatic sources said.

The US is likely to discuss signing of Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework Agreement, a trade pact that has remained unsettled for the last four years over labour standard issues in Bangladesh.

On security issues, the two sides will discuss cooperation in combating terrorism, counter-terrorism, military-to-military cooperation, violent extremism and transnational crime.

Human rights, civil society, democracy, women's empowerment, Grameen Bank, role of the media, etc will figure in the development agenda.

Messy affair

FROM PAGE 1

sympathetic to him as he suspected that anything bad might happen to him due to the immense pressure on

In the last several weeks, sources in the government and the WB hinted that Rahman was the last remaining obstacle to the revival of the WB loan for the Padma bridge project.

Rahman said he had unearthed the "spying" after he had received some emails, which might be sent by some spies. "But I did not want to make public the plot without informing the organisation, which will lend money for the project. It would not be wise to make the conspiracy public before informing the World Bank about it."

He claimed the WB employed some people of the country as "spies", who have secretly provided information to it. But the information they have supplied was not authentic and had no grounds.

"These spies have advised the World Bank on what to do. As these spies gave advice, the World Bank said: 'You are not being able to give any evidence or witness of corruption and you are only saying that corruption has taken place here and there'.

"In reply, the spies told the World Bank that nobody leaves a mark in this type of corruption. As you cannot do anything about it, stop opening the bidding," said

Rahman quoting the emails. He said the government had sent all the pieces of information related to the tender to the World Bank 18 months ago, but they have not given any opinion in this regard. It only gave opinion about a Canadian firm.

He further said the Canadian firm was not the lowest bidder, but the World Bank had suggested a way to the government before Bangladesh sent any assessment to it. 'The Canadian firm

became the lowest bidder according to their suggestion," said the adviser.

"When the Canadian firm became the lowest bidder, their local sources told the World Bank that if the Canadian firm gets the job, the global lender would not be able to stop corruption in the Padma bridge project." Rahman alleged many

"spies" visited Washington and some were also sent to Bangladesh from Washington. The adviser added he

spoke to the lenders, including the World Bank, last Friday about the "conspiracy". "I told them it was illegal." He however said he did not

think the Bank would be able to disclose the names of its 'spies". "It will have to protect them. If it discloses their names then it will not get any

secret cooperation in future. "So, the World Bank is putting pressure on us."

He said the WB says if he resigned, work on the Padma bridge would begin. "But I have examined the agreements between the government and the Bank. They have not given consent to any proposals sent to them.

"The work of the Padma bridge cannot be started during the remaining tenure of the government with finance from the World Bank. I suspect the Bank will not be able to provide the financing for the bridge easily." Rahman went on to say

about his leave had virtually sent him to a gulag camp of the former Soviet Union. The gulag was a govern ment agency and was recognised as a major instrument of

political repression during the

that speculations in the media

Sovietera. "I want your sympathy. Please save my life. Anyone might suffer a heart failure under such pressure. I am still living with your sympathy and I want this sympathy to continue," he pleaded with the media.

Earlier on Monday, Rahman skipped the regular cabinet and purchase committee meetings, which only fuelled the speculations about his leave further.

"The working committee meeting of the Awami League discussed me. I did not go to the cabinet and purchase committee meetings because my presence could have spurred the excitement further. I did not go there to avoid the excitement."

urge the WB to disclose the names of its "spies" and give those names to the government to save the country from a bad reputation. Bangladesh's global repute will increase if the WB dis-

closes their names and what

He said the media should

type of information they have supplied, he observed. Rahman said he had not said that he would go on leave. "Those who will take the

also not said so." The adviser also said he did not know who had bid for the contracts of the bridge.

decision about my leave have

He added he had forwarded the emails, which have been sent by unidentified senders, to the finance minister. It is now up to the government to decide about publishing those, he said.

The WB should disclose

the names of the people who

are engaged in the propa-

ganda and tarnishing the

image of the country, he added. He, however, said disclosure of emails should not be seen as a condition for him to

go on leave. "I said my leave is less important. The country's interests and image are the most important here. I will

leave if my departure upholds the country's interests and image. It will depend on the disclosure by the World Bank about its [spying] activities."

The WB cancelled its \$1.2 billion credit for the Padma bridge project on June 29, saying it had evidence of a corruption conspiracy involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and private

individuals. Hajj flights

FROM PAGE 1

The carrier will have to cancel four regular flights scheduled fortoday.

Citing a preliminary

estimation, a top official of Biman's marketing division said the airline had earned around Tk 10 crore in revenue by selling tickets, which it would have to refund now. "Moreover, around Tk 8 to Tk 10 crore will be spent

additionally for food and hotel fares of the stranded passengers," the official told The Daily Star, seeking anonymity.

Visiting Shahjalal International Airport yesterday, this correspondent found several minibuses ferrying passengers from the airport to different hotels. Around 300 passengers

were stranded at the airport for hours. Visas of many of them will expire in a day or 'Schools of the children of

my employer have already opened after a vacation. As a driver, I used to drop and pick them up from schools," said Sirajul Islam. His flight for Riyadh was

scheduled for Sunday and he now fears losing his job. Expressing frustration, another driver Emdadul

Haque Bhuiyan said he had

been waiting for three days for his flight to Riyadh. "We earn foreign currency for the country, but nobody seems to care about our plight." Despite being aware of Biman's poor service,

And now after this pitiful experience, he has decided

Emdadul opted to fly by it to

notto fly on Biman any more. The crisis hit the national carrier as a leased Boeing 747 left the airliner on September 12, eight days ahead of the scheduled end of the lease. The aircraft has a passenger capacity of 505.

The situation turned worse as a Boeing 777-300ER was grounded for 15 hours on Sunday after a bird hit its engine while the aircraft was landing at Shahjalal International Airport, said Biman sources.

An airbus which was supposed to join Biman's fleet on September 15 after overhauling in Singapore did notarrive.

The airline could not even put a DC 1030 aircraft in

Disengaged, not leave

sources.

FROM PAGE 1 instead of going on leave, sources in the Prime Minister's Office told The Daily Star yesterday.

Gowher Rizvi, foreign affairs adviser to the prime minister, left Dhaka on Sunday night for the World Bank head office in Washington carrying a letter to this end, added the

The letter, however, did not clarify how Mashiur would disengage himself from government duties, which leaves room for confusion for the global

lender. A high-level delegation of the Bangladesh government was scheduled to start talks with top WB officials in Washington in this regard

last night.

But finance ministry officials say they are doubtful that the WB will accept such an offer.

After cancelling its \$1.2 billion loan deal in June, the WB made a fresh commitment to the government that it would revive the deal on three conditions, including the removal of Mashiur, who is the integrity adviser of the \$2.97 billion project.

On Monday night Mashiur rejected media reports that he had gone on leave, although a number of top government and Awami League sources told this paper that he had proceeded on a month's leave.

According to government sources, the adviser did not attend the weekly cabinet Executive Committee of the National Economic Council meeting vesterday.

meeting on Monday and the

Asked to comment on his reported going on leave, Mashiur told reporters yesterday, "There were no talks between the person who will seek leave and the person who will grant it." He evaded a directed

reply on whether he would still be discharging his duties as an adviser, but said, "I took breakfast today as I take on other days. If you still ask me whether I am hungry, I have no reply. I have taken the amount of food I usually take and I have done the work I do every day."

He has all along maintained his innocence, but said he would go only if the

MK Alamgir pledges to try killers

UNB, Dhaka

Terming the murder of journalist couple Sagar-Runi a tragic incident of national life, Home Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir yesterday promised to bring their killers to justice.

"I myself am alarmed and deeply hurt....I think this is a tragic incident of our nationallife. "We are committed to

punishing the perpetrators and masterminds of it (murder), bringing them within the ambit of law," he said. The home minister made

the remarks in response to

journalists' queries after placing wreaths at the Shaheed Minar at Rajarbagh Police Lines in the capital. He was paying homage to the martyred policemen, who had built up resistance against the Pakistan occu-

pation army at the call of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1971. IGP Hasan Mahmud Khandaker, DMP Commissioner Benazir Ahmed and Rab DG Mokhlesur Rahman, among

Grameen Bank

Bill, 2012 and Hindu

others, were present on the

FROM PAGE 20 Registration (Amendment)

Marriage Registration Bill, 2012. Fazlul Azim in parliament strongly blasted the government, saying the Grameen Bank bill was being passed to grab the internationally renowned

microcredit organisation. In the presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Azim said the government was enacting the law as some high-ups were angry at Prof Mohammad Yunus,

and well managed

help the carrier recover its the founder of GB. "But you will not be able to destroy a person like Prof Yunus, who is respected all

over the world," Azim said. The government spoke in favour of women empowerment; at the same time it was clipping the wings of 84 lakh poor women who were the owners of Grameen Bank, he

added. 'No other financial organisation is running as well as Grameen Bank. Money has been looted from Sonali Bank. But without arresting anybody involved in the Sonali Bank scam, the government is out to grab Grameen

Bank." In reply, Planning Minister AK Khandker, who placed the bill in parliament for passage, said the passing of this bill was crucial for the appointment of a GB managing director, a position which had remained vacant for months and so had caused disruption in the smooth functioning of the institu-

tion. Later, Fazlul Haque walked out of the house to protest the bill and

returned after its passage. Under the terms of the bill, the chairman of GB in consultation with the board of directors will form a selection committee to prepare a three-member panel for appointing the

managing director. The board, with approval from the Bangladesh Bank, will appoint the MD from amongst the panel.

On August 23, President Zillur Rahman promulgated the amended Grameen Bank Ordinance, 1983, giving more powers to the bank's chairman in picking the managing

Earlier on August 2, the cabinet approved in princicarried out by a woman to ple the draft of the ordiavenge the anti-Islam film, nance.

The planning minister

in parliament on September 11 placed the Grameen Bank (Amendment) Bill, 2012, which was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the finance ministry for scru-

The IS body submitted its report before the House

Qaeda calls **FROM PAGE 20**

violence sparked by the movie rose to 31 including the 12 killed by a blast in Afghanistan yesterday. The bombing on a high-

death toll from a week of

way leading to Kabul international airport occurred around 6:45am as a female suicide bomber using a car blew herself up. The South African foreign

ministry said eight of its citizens working for a private

among the dead. The Afghan presidency

company at the airport were

Afghans, believed to include the bus driver and an interpreter, and one citizen from Kyrgyzstan were also killed. Eleven other people were wounded, it said in a statement.

Afghanistan's second largest insurgent group, Hezb-i-Islami, claimed responsibility, saying it was

which has sparked a week of furious anti-US riots across later confirmed that three Asia, North Africa and the

> Department official yesterday refused to call an attack on a US mission in Libya in which four Americans were killed "an act of terror," saying a full investigation had to be completed first.

Middle East. Meanwhile, a US State director.

tiny.

election.

on Monday.