

## Bush, Blair admit

FROM PAGE 16  
and a private lunch with Bush before heading home.

Blair briefed the president on his discussions in Baghdad on Monday with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who said his forces are capable of taking control of security in all provinces within 18 months. Iraq's new government was installed last week.

"I think it's possible to happen in the way that Prime Minister Maliki said," Blair said. "For that to happen, obviously, the first thing that we need is a strong government in Baghdad that is prepared to enforce its writ throughout the country. My very strong feeling, having talked to the leaders there, is that they intend theirs to be such a government."

Neither Bush nor Blair would give specifics on when soldiers from their countries can begin to go home.

"We're going to work with our partners in Iraq, the new government, to determine the way forward," Bush said. He said the goal remains "an Iraq that can govern itself and sustain itself and defend itself."

He said one problem was the lack of an Iraqi defence minister, and he urged Maliki to fill the post soon.

Bush declined to discuss news reports that the Pentagon hoped that the US force, now at 131,000

troops, could be reduced to about 100,000 by year's end.

"We'll keep the force level there necessary to win," Bush said.

Britain has about 8,000 troops in Iraq. Blair said the goal remains that Iraq security forces could "take control progressively of their own country."

On another topic high on the agenda, neither Bush nor Blair would reveal his thinking on possible incentives to draw Iran back to negotiations over its suspected nuclear weapons programme.

"Of course, we'll look at all options. But it's their choice right now they're the ones who walked away from the table," Bush said. "I think we ought to be continuing to work on ways to make it clear to them that they will be isolated."

Bush was dismissive of recent back-channel overtures from Tehran, including a letter to him from Iran's hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Bush said he read the letter. "I thought it was interesting," he said.

But, he added, the Iranian leader "didn't address the issues of whether or not they're going to continue to press for a nuclear weapon. That's the issue at hand."

## Hasina's remarks

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at Hasina's "untrue and imbalance" statements, he said.

In reply to a question, he dismissed the suggestion that there was a constitutional vacuum in the country following the president's illness and said Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar came back while the president was still in the country.

In reply to a question, Bhuiyan said he hoped that the Election Commission will implement the Supreme Court verdict on the voter list.

Asked if the chief election commissioner should resign, he said, "The issue of resignation is his personal matter, but I don't think anything has happened that demands his resignation."

On replying AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil's letter, he said there is no need to hurry in this regard as the position did not move from its earlier position demanding exclusion of Jamaat-Islami from the dialogue on electoral reforms.

Hoping that the AL will reconsider its stance, Bhuiyan said he might still reply to the letter.

Asked if the government will change its position, he said as of now they did not change their position.

The LGRD minister termed last few days' incidents a conspiracy to destroy the country's economy.

## Uncertainty

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other factories did it, said another worker.

In their interpretation of the massive violence in garment factories in Savar and other places in the capital, garment owners, law enforcers and ministers said outsiders, not garment workers, carried out the attacks to destroy the garment industry and economy of the country.

However, talking to the workers of Universe garment The Daily Star gathered that the protest started as its management was dilly-dallying to realise their 11-point demand.

Workers of the Universe garment factory said dissatisfaction over the 14-hour-a-day work scheme, that too without weekly holidays, unhygienic dining and prayer space, lack of electric fans and other disadvantages gave rise to the protest. The workers also demanded wages of three months for a worker when he is fired.

A worker said, "Nobody from outside provoked us to protest." Requesting anonymity, he said, "First we placed our 11-point demand on May 2, but the management did not seem to bother about it. Some musclemen hired by the management even attacked us on May 20."

"The killing of a garment worker in Gazipur on the same day also led the workers to go for a violent protest," said another worker.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Acting President Salam Murshedi admitted different irregularities and incidents of harassment at the Universe garment factory. "We are aware that the management's behaviour with the workers was not good. We have decided to talk to them on this matter," he said.

"The management of the Universe garment mishandled the issue," he added.

The management of the Universe garment factory could not be reached for comments.

## AL blames

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pay good salaries to the workers, which were also not paid regularly," Shajahan Khan MP said, adding that the workers were also agitated because they faced an acute crisis due to skyrocketing prices of essentials.

The workers were also agitated because of the police firing at SQ Garments and the deaths of two workers in Ansar firing at Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ), Shajahan said.

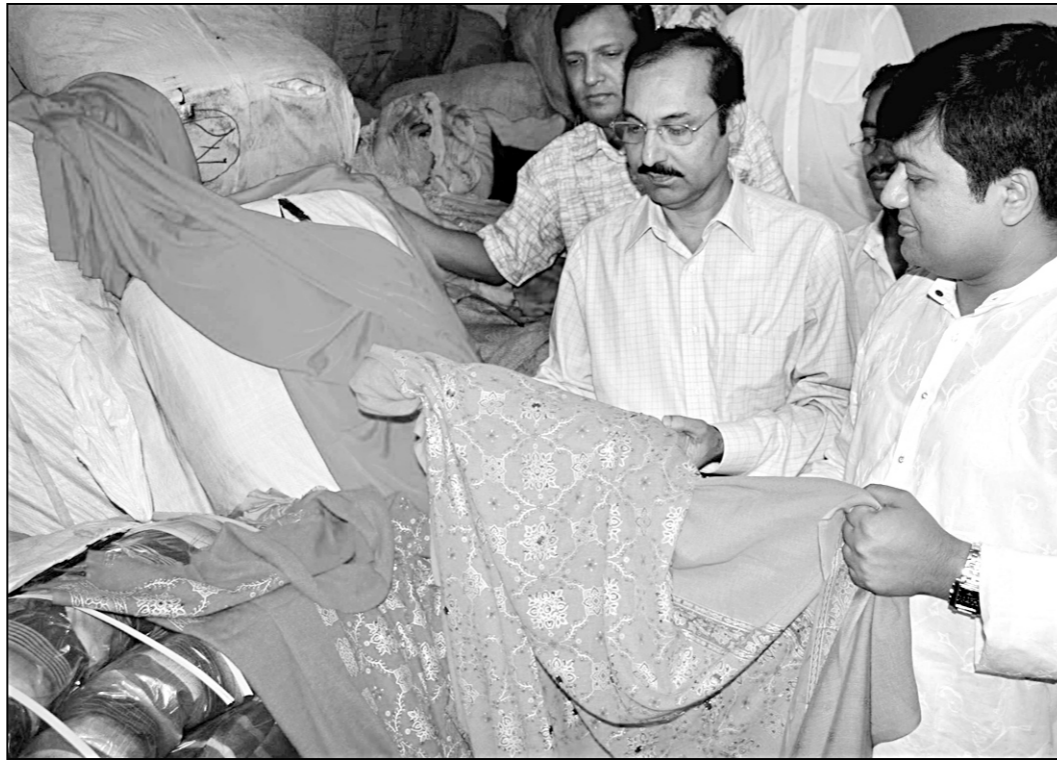
He said about 100 to 150 workers took part in the destructive activities wearing green helmets, but the law enforcers failed to control them and protect the factories, which is 'mysterious'.

He mentioned that the demands of the workers include an increase in wages and other facilities, protection for them from the goons and extortionists, while the owners' demands are to ensure security at the factories and to the owners, and government's financial assistance to offset their losses.

The committee will place the demands of both the owners and workers in the next parliamentary session, he said.

Responding to a question Shajahan said AL will allow trade unions in the EPZ, if voted to power.

Chief Whip of the Opposition Md Abdus Shaheed, Jahid Hasan Russel MP, Akram Uddin and Begum Hasina Dowla were also present at the briefing.



Customs officials examine an Indian sari after intelligence men seize illegally imported Indian clothes worth Tk 4 crore at Konabari on the Dhaka-Tangail highway yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Rohingya camps

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The UN body has an agreement with the Bangladesh government that seeks to meet the basic needs of Rohingya refugees in the camps. Generally renewed every year, the agreement for this year is, however, yet to be signed because of some differences of opinion between the government and the UNHCR.

"The deal this year is being delayed because various issues have not been finalised," she said, adding that the UNHCR has set a timeframe and told the government that it cannot wait for long.

"We are discussing with the government about how to improve the standard [at the Rohingya camps] as we see the government as our partner," said Lim during her stay in Dhaka on Sunday.

Without making any specific allegation, she said it is essential to make clear what amount of money was spent for what.

The government is paid the cost for administration and services delivered to the refugees but the amount should not be more than what is spent for the refugees, Lim said. The money and the number of people working in the camps have to be proportionate, she noted.

"We are also accountable to the donors. We assess the need every year and look for funds from the donors. Sometimes we do not get what we want. But we have been able to ensure all basic needs and they were not left without anything," she explained.

"You have very complex bureaucratic system. When we deal with something, the problem goes from one place to another," she remarked, adding that the situation here needs to be corrected.

## Bureaucrats' rat race

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Lawyers across the country strongly protested Chunnu's conduct. And a writ petition in this regard was also filed with the High Court (HC). In the wake of growing criticism, he quit office.

Different newspapers published reports on political activities of Cabinet Secretary ASM Abdul Halim, Information Secretary Hayder Ali, Chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission Muhammad Omar Farooq, Assignment Officer at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Dr Firoj Mahmud Iqbal and PMO officials Shamsul Alam and Abdul Matin.

Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University Abdul Hadi is 'monitoring development work' in his area in Mymensingh for the same reason, sources said.

In the name of official visits, the cabinet secretary visited Islampur of Jamalpur and joined different political programmes. Local BNP activists and supporters of lawmaker from the area Sultan Mahmud Babu protested Halim's activities. Loyalists of the two sides also clashed over the issue.

The HC issued a rule on May 24 on the government to explain why it should not be directed to terminate the contractual service of the cabinet secretary for his links with the BNP in violation of service rules. The HC rule followed a writ petition as public interest litigation filed by a former private secretary to the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

According to sources, Omar Farooq is campaigning for contesting the polls from Dhaka-13 constituency. Supporters of local BNP lawmaker Ziaur Rahman Khan alleged that the BTRC chairman frequently attends political meetings in the area.

A section of BNP activists led by district BNP Joint Secretary Mohsin Khan and Dhamrai Municipality Chairman Dewan

Planning to wrap up the Cox's Bazar camps soon, Lim termed the Rohingya issue "a success story" as 2,30,000 people out of 2,50,000 have already returned to Myanmar.

"It is a pity that the remaining 20,000 people are still in the camps and it is worrying for us as the international community cannot keep funding for years," she said.

Lim said lingering refugees are there all over the world and the issue is a priority for the UNHCR. "A lot of efforts are going on in Myanmar to improve the situation there and encourage the refugees to go back."

"We need to try and continue assistance so that they can return to their normal lives. Our objective is that the refugees find solution and the camp is closed. But as per our principle, the return must be voluntary and you cannot force people to leave," she said.

On return, the refugees need some assistance for livelihood, safety and a whole variety of reasons, she said, adding that it is the responsibility of every country to contribute to the solutions to such situation.

Lim pointed out that due to misconceptions refugees are often held responsible for various problems. But one should not generalise the matter, she said, adding that those who are involved in crimes should be dealt with through due process.

"We have to start looking at the conclusion of this success story," Lim said. "Returning to one's own country is one option, but there is always a possibility of going to another country to be in another refugee situation."

## Blair morally

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wholly different moral order to the events of July 7."

He was referring to the London attacks last year, when four Islamic extremists killed 52 people and themselves by bombing the transport network.

"It would be entirely logical and explicable," the leftist lawmaker said.

"And morally equivalent to ordering the deaths of thousands of innocent people in Iraq -- as Blair did."

Galloway said he would alert the authorities if he learnt of a plot to kill the prime minister -- but only to prevent generating "anti-Arab" propaganda.

"Such an operation would be counter-productive because it would just generate a new wave of anti-Arab sentiment whipped up by the press," he said.

"It would lead to new draconian anti-terror laws, and would probably strengthen the resolve of the British and American services in Iraq rather than weaken it. So, yes, I would inform the authorities."

Galloway said he would rather see Blair brought to trial for war crimes than killed because innocent civilians would also likely die in such an attack.

His remarks immediately sparked a storm of protest.

MP Stephen Pound, of Blair's governing Labour Party, told The Sun tabloid newspaper: "These comments take my breath away. Galloway is disgraceful and truly twisted."

"Every time you think he can't sink any lower he goes and stuns you again. It's beyond reprehensible to say it would be justified for a suicide bomber to assassinate anyone."

Galloway, who formerly belonged to Labour but now represents his own left-wing Respect party, is no stranger to controversy.

He joined Fidel Castro earlier this week on a television show designed to rebut claims that the Cuban president had amassed a large personal fortune.

Galloway compared his own struggle against allegations that he took money from former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with Castro's battle against claims of secret wealth.

## Kansat

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They alleged PBUSP Joint Convener and Kanki Union Parishad member Jaynal Abedin were not even present on the streets during police atrocities but he received Tk 25,000 as compensation.

Rokeya Begum, wife of Rabbani's younger brother, also got Tk 25,000. When asked about the reason for her getting compensation Rabbani said she was arrested during the movement and that is why she received the money.

Shafiqul Islam of Binodpur complained he was not mentioned in the list but he still bears bullet wounds of January 4. "Please arrange compensation for my son. I sold a piece of land, several trees and domestic animals for his treatment," his mother Asma Begum told newsmen.

Like Shafiqul, Waliul Azam and Ziaur Rahman of Kaithapara of Shibnagar raised similar complaints and they said there were many victims like them.

Rabbani in his explanation told The Daily Star that the allegations were not true, "Those who are demonstrating are not acting for the people and the list was prepared jointly with local administration."

## Lightning kills

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The injured--Paritosh Mandal, Ripon, Hafizur Rahman, Fazila Khatun, Parimal and Khokon--are undergoing treatment at Sathkira Sadar Hospital and upazila health complexes.

## President's surgery

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Quoting Bangladesh High Commissioner to Singapore Munshi Fayed Ahmed and physicians concerned, the press secretary said a system of communication has been made with four grafts on four quality vessels to overcome three major blocks in the president's heart.

The most important thing now is to see that no complication arises or there is no infection during the post-operative period, the physicians said.

The president has been taken back to the intensive care unit from the operation theatre, the PID hand-out said, adding that he will be kept there for observation for two days.

At the ICU, the president stared at his wife and tried to talk. He moved his hands and legs this time, said the press secretary.

Problems with the president's heart were detected during check-ups in 2004, later at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka, and at Jeddah in Saudi Arabia in January last year, he added.

With chest pain, President Iajuddin, who is now 75, was admitted to the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka on Tuesday afternoon and had medical check-ups there.

A seven-member medical board headed by Prof MA Malek decided to send the ailing president to Singapore for treatment. He was flown there by an air ambulance on Wednesday afternoon.

An angiogram (an investigative

medical procedure) done on Thursday found one completely blocked and two partially blocked arteries in his heart.

Special prayers were offered at all mosques across the country after the Jum'a prayers yesterday for the president's early recovery.

Acting President Jamiruddin Sircar, Secretary to the President Abu M Moniruzzaman, Military Secretary to the President ANM Muniruzzaman, press secretary to the President and Bangabhaban officials and employees attended special prayers at Bangabhaban Jame Mosque.

Special prayers were also offered in other places of worship.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to Singapore Munshi Fayed Ahmed said the Singapore government provided the Bangladesh president due state honour and facilities.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Patricia A Butenis yesterday phoned President Iajuddin's wife Prof Anwara Begum to know the condition of the president's health. Other foreign diplomats including British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury and Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh also inquired about the president's health.

## Myanmar removes

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clamour for her release.

At least two uniformed police removed the barbed wire and cleared spikes from the front of the gated driveway to her rambling lakeside home, shortly after a police officer made a 10-minute visit to the residence.

Officials were not immediately available to comment on why the barriers had been removed or why the uniformed policeman had made the rare visit.

The slight easing of security around her home further boosted the hopes of her supporters that she could be released, even as diplomats and analysts urged caution from expecting such a dramatic gesture by the military leaders.

A spokesman for her National League for Democracy party, Lwin said the policeman had apparently delivered a message.

"I think she received a message, but what kind of message she received I don't know," he told AFP.

The order confining the Nobel peace laureate to her home expires Saturday, and while the junta has routinely renewed it in the past, hopes within the NLD have swelled since the junta made the surprise decision to allow a visiting UN envoy to meet with her on May 20.

That was her first contact with anyone other than her maid or her doctor in more than two years. Her latest period of detention began in May 2003.

The United States, as well as neighbouring countries like Thailand and Malaysia, have all urged Myanmar to free the Nobel peace laureate.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan added his voices to those calls on Friday, appealing directly to junta leader Than Shwe for her release when her latest house arrest comes under review at the weekend.

"I'm relying on you, General Than Shwe, to do the right thing," Annan

said in a statement in Bangkok.

"Her release will facilitate national dialogue and allow the National League for Democracy (NLD) to participate in that dialogue," he said.

"The government will be reviewing her status within 24 hours," he said. "I take this opportunity to appeal to General Than Shwe and the government to release her."

Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won 1990 elections in a landslide victory but has never been allowed to govern. She has spent 10 of the past 17 years under house arrest.

UN undersecretary general Ibrahim Gambari said Wednesday there appeared to be a willingness by the Myanmar junta to "turn a new page in relations with the international community."

Analysts and diplomats have warned that the regime may not feel secure enough to free her, but that the generals might agree to loosen the restrictions on her movements -- possibly by allowing her more visitors or limiting her travel to within Yangon.

"They will have to come up with some kind of deal if they want to release her, to set down some of the minimum requirements on both sides," Thailand-based Myanmar analyst Aung Naing Oo said.

But he added: "I'm not sure the military is prepared to negotiate with her."

The visit by Gambari did signal a shift by the junta, which for the last month had ratcheted up the pressure on the NLD, intimidating members into resigning and threatening to outlaw the party over alleged "terrorist" links.

The military has also pursued a bloody offensive against ethnic rebels in eastern Myanmar since February.

## US citizenship

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reaching a consensus." Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. argued for finishing the bill before the November elections.

"This is one problem that is not going to wait until the next election," Graham said. "If you win or lose because you make a hard decision, so be it."

Politics has been an undercurrent as the Senate has tried to write legislation that would satisfy unions, immigration hawks, businesses and advocates for Latinos, and other interests. Several leaders involved in the debate, including Frist and Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., are considering 2008 presidential runs.

Latinos are the fastest growing segment of the electorate. Thousands, including some illegal immigrants, joined street protests to denounce the House bill and call for broader legislation.

"The Latino community and the rest of the country want effective immigration reform that brings order and fairness to our system," said Janet Murguia, National Council of La Raza president.

Senate leaders agreed that their success in conference will depend greatly on Bush.

"Now the time has come for very active participation by the president," said Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa. "I believe the president will put a very heavy shoulder to the wheel."

A chief architect of the Senate bill, Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., said he would "welcome the strong leadership of the president of the United States in this undertaking."

The House bill, which passed on a largely party-line vote last year, is generally limited to border enforcement. It would make all illegal immigrants subject to felony charges. It

has no provision for either a new temporary worker programme or citizenship for men, women and children unlawfully in the country.

The Senate bill, in contrast, would mark the most far-reaching changes in two decades by:

Urging the hiring of 1,000 more Border Patrol agents this year and 14,000 by 2011.

Endorsing Bush's plan for a short-term deployment of National Guard troops to states along the border with Mexico.

Calling for the construction of 370 miles of fencing on the border.

The guest worker programme would admit 200,000 individuals a year. They eventually could apply for a green card, which confers legal permanent residency.

A separate programme envisions admission of an estimated 1.5 million immigrant farm workers who also may apply for permanent residency.

For illegal immigrants, those in the country for five years could stay, keep working and eventually apply for citizenship. They would have to pay at least \$3,250 in fines and fees, settle back taxes and learn English.

Illegal immigrants in the country for more than two years but less than five would have to travel to a point of entry before re-entering the United States legally and beginning the lengthy process of seeking citizenship.

An immigrant in the country illegally for less than two years would be required to leave with no guarantee of return.

## Six killed

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Rab men encircled them at around 11:30pm.

As the Rab men asked the robbers to surrender, they opened fire, inviting retaliatory fire, Rab sources said.

During a 30-minute gunfight, two of the gang--Siraj and Feroz--were shot. They were rushed to the local health complex where the doctors declared them dead.

After the gunfight, the Rab men held a member of the gang named Mohammad Shafiq with firearms, while others managed to flee. They also recovered three guns, one double-shooter, one LG and 20 bullets from the spot.

On the confessional statement of Shafiq, son of Fayed Ahmed of Noapara under Razoan Police Station, Rab held another member of the gang, Fayed Ahmad alias Faiya, at Rubi Gate under the city's Bayezid Police Station yesterday.

During interrogation, the arrested robbers disclosed the names of their three accomplices. They are Jane Alam of Boalkhali, Salim of Rangunia, and Jahangir.

They arrestees were later sent to Hathazari Police Station where two separate cases were filed against them in connection with possessing firearms and an attack on the law enforcers, sources said.

**SATHKHIRA**  
Shyamal Kumar Sarkar, a leader of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), was killed during a "shootout" between his cohorts and Rab members at Nagarghata under Patkelghata Police Station early yesterday, reports our Sathkira correspondent.

Rab arrested Shyamal at his village home on the night of May 24. According to his statement, Rab members took him to Nagarghata

## Bomb kills 9 in Baghdad

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the Islamic weekend.

A bomb also exploded in a popular outdoor market in the western Baghdad neighbourhood of al-Baiyaa, wounding 13 civilians, police Lt. Maitam Abdul Razzaq said.

Elsewhere in the capital, a roadside bomb missed an American convoy but injured three Iraqis on a minibus, police officer Maitam Adurrqaq said.

A roadside bomb also hit a police patrol at 8:30 a.m. in the northern city of Kirkuk, killing one policeman and wounding four others, police Brig. Khadim Omar said.

Capt. Khudair Aji, a security officer in Tikrit General Hospital, said US soldiers brought 14 bullet-riddled bodies, including those of two children, to the morgue in Saddam Hussein's former hometown late Thursday. It was unclear who had killed them.

Police also reported the explosion Thursday of a bomb left in a sack in a liquor shop in Sinjar, 200km west of Mosul. The shop's owner was killed and two customers were wounded.

Al-Zubaie did not provide details on al-Maliki's plans to restore security in Baghdad. However, President Jalal Talabani said securing the country would probably require a unified unit of soldiers and police.

"We are forming a force to protect Baghdad by the best and trained elements in the interior and defence ministries. They will be under one leadership and under the direct supervision of the prime minister," Talabani told al-Furat TV.

The various Iraqi police and army units now wear a variety of uniforms. Talabani said the new unit would wear one uniform, "be the only authorised force to travel in Baghdad." The goal is to eliminate death squads and other armed groups who roam the capital disguised as security forces.

There has been little discussion about al-Maliki's announced plan for a phased security takeover of Iraq's 18 provinces, or how it would lead to the eventual withdrawal of foreign troops.

The strategy has been for American and international forces to hand over security control for specific regions and redeploy to larger bases where they could act in a support or

## 5 murdered

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general secretary of Kushtia district Nasiman Transport Association, was returning home from Alamdangan in Chuadanga.

Two robberies also took place in the district this week. One was at Bheramara on Tuesday night and other was at Kumarkhali on Thursday night.