

## BDR bailout for Dhaka

STAR REPORT

On the heels of rising crimes, the government yesterday decided to deploy one platoon of BDR at each thana in the city for joint drive with police and Ansar to net notorious criminals and improve law and order.

This and some other "important decisions" were taken at a closed-door meeting of the national committee for fighting crimes, held at the home ministry, sources said.

But details of those and the timing of BDR deployment could not be known.

After the three and a half hours'

National committee on crime targets vulnerable zones for special drive

crucial meeting, the home minister and the state minister were tight-lipped and avoided a volley of questions from newsmen.

The meeting reviewed the current situation and took "some important decisions for a drastic joint operation by police, BDR and Ansar to arrest criminals and seize illegal arms", one source said.

The meeting of the 'National Committee to fight daring criminals

and to Conduct Joint Drive' beginning at 3:15 was chaired by home minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury.

As the home ministry put an embargo on the participants not to talk to the press, all of them avoided newsmen who waited on the corridor of the home ministry from about 3pm.

Even frantic efforts by journalists could not bring out a single word from the otherwise outspoken home

minister.

This is for the first time that the home minister preferred to keep mum in front of newsmen, possibly because of an embargo from the ruling party policy makers.

"We discussed the overall situation," was the brief comment by State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar while leaving the meeting venue at around 6:45pm.

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## Altaf off BTV focus

STAR REPORT

The government has instructed the Bangladesh Television (BTV) not to cover Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury sources said.

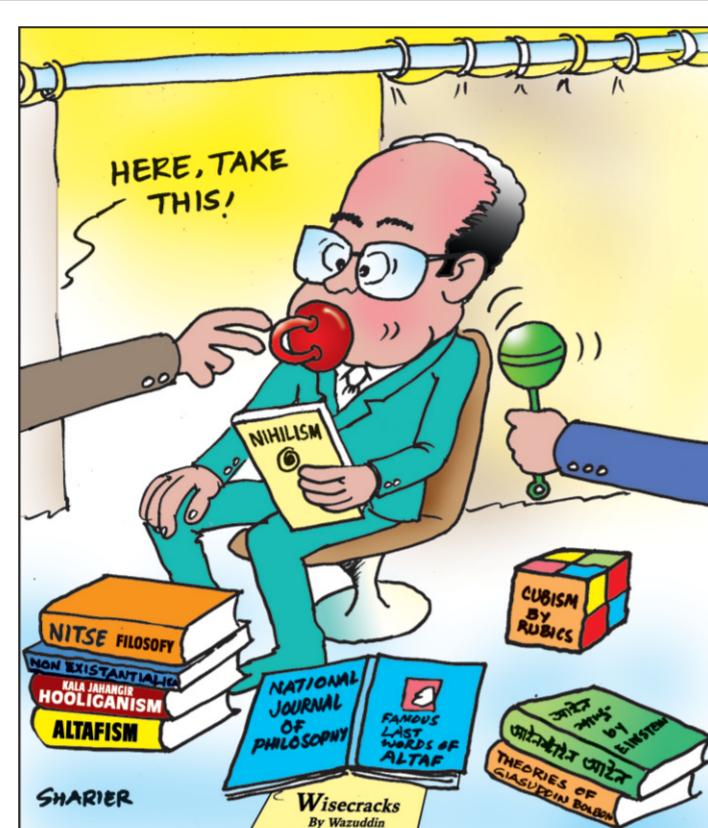
Top policymakers have instructed the BTV authorities yesterday not to send television crew to any function of Altaf.

Earlier, on Sunday they also asked the home minister to take advice of the higher authorities before making any comment on crime incidents.

Meantime, Altaf himself refrained from giving comments to any TV channels yesterday.

Yesterday, he held two important meetings at the ministry. After the first meeting with immigration authorities, the BTV and three private TV channels sought his comments. But Altaf avoided them.

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## BNP's allies want jt body on crime

REAZ AHMAD

Three affiliates of the BNP-led four-party coalition government will pursue formation of a steering committee on law and order.

The endeavour for formation of the four-party committee, a long-neglected proposal, came in the wake of worsening law and order in the country.

Some leaders of the coalition partners told The Daily Star yesterday that they would seek an audience with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for this upon her return home.

"The idea is that there would be a committee comprising senior leaders from all four components of the alliance and it would help the government curb crimes,"

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## Floating danger

Flawed structurally, most passenger launches run without fitness certificate



Even after the May 3 Meghna tragedy, the BIWTA overlooks overloading. A launch carries passengers more than its capacity yesterday.

MOSHED ALI KHAN

Most of the 2,100 passenger launches run on river routes without any fitness certificate and passed the surveyor's tests even with gross structural faults.

According to officials of various government agencies concerned, most of the launches were built at private dockyards in the most rudimentary way without proper design or supervision. Of these 2,100 'registered' vessels, only 800 went for renewal of 'fitness' certificates last year.

Officials, marine engineers, naval architects and owners of vessels blamed the persistent lack of coordination among Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), the Department of Shipping and the supervisory panel of naval architects for creating such a 'mess' in the water transport sector. But they said the government could still improve the situation by creating a separate wing for 'inland shipping' under the Ministry of Shipping. They felt that a single office should be responsible for designing of vessels, supervision of those when built, surveyor's tests and registration of those.

Sources in the relevant departments said unskilled people build most of the vessels based on outdated prototype designs at around 200 dockyards on the banks of the rivers Buriganga and Shitalakha. Without any 'supervision', mostly untrained welders, fitters and other laymen just weld the recycled steel plates together and build the passenger vessels.

Dr Reaz Hasan Khondaker, Professor and Head of the

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## Shewrapara-Kazipara-Kafrul

## Caught on high crime wave

STAR REPORT

Hardly a day passes without violence in the city's Shewrapara, Kazipara and Kafrul areas that have turned into criminal hubs over the years. Violence is born mostly of rows over extortion between rivals.

Garment factories, under-construction buildings, cable network providers, shops of electronic appliances and furniture shops are the main targets of extortionists.

Intelligence sources and residents said that at least nine organised gangs on the prowl are involved in extortion and other criminal activities, including killing, mugging and burglary in the areas.

Thriving on its notoriety, each gang consists of 20 to 30 youths and is equipped with a variety of weapons, including firearms. Most area-based gangs have no political affiliation, though. Over the years, these gangs have grown up under the 'supervision' of one or two leaders.

The situation is worsening because of indifference by police to gangsterism, the residents allege. "The gangs have almost kept people as hostage," complained an elderly person at the Shewrapara bus stand. No action was taken against the hoodlums, although complaints were filed with the police station, he said.

At the same bus stand, a fruit

work ahead, said a resident of the area.

Oddly enough, the owner of an under-construction building usually hires a gang that provides 'security' until the work is completed. "This is commonplace at Shewrapara and Kazipara and the gangs often clash over the control of extortion," said a resident of Kazipara.

Even residents are not insulated from extortion. The gang threatened some family members with death if refusal to pay tolls.

At West Shewrapara, some youths demanded money from the owner of an under-construction building and beat him up on refusal.

The owner has to reach an understanding with the gang to get his

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Gangsters also zero in on cable

## Nasty nine

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There are nine gangs operating in Shewrapara, Kazipara and Kafrul areas where the garment factories are a major target.

Waste cloths sales - locally known as 'jhoot' business - alone generates between Tk 50 lakh to Tk 1 crore a month for businessmen and criminals together, said sources in the industry.

The areas have become infested with criminals because of two factors - the laid-back attitude of law enforcers and the growth of housing schemes.

Most criminals have come from the greater Mirpur area, when the area was rural. The locals say that these criminals were born to the families of lower income bracket, but now they deal with lakhs of taka, some with crores even.

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At the same bus stand, a fruit

## On-arrival visa rules relaxed

### Spouses, children of foreign investors included

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to reduce hassles at airports for on-arrival visa and ease foreigners' entry into the country, the Ministry of Home Affairs yesterday relaxed visa rules for the second time in a month, sources in the ministry said.

A government order on April 18 had imposed some restrictions on immigration and visa procedures.

The home ministry later claimed to have relaxed visa procedures, but in reality it had created 'confusion and ambiguity' regarding on arrival visa, some sources pointed out.

From now on, the ministry sources said, prospective foreign investors along with their spouses and children would be given on arrival visa at airports.

Devotees coming on the occasion of the Biswa Ijtema at Tongi, the second largest Muslim congregation next to Hajj, will be given 45-day visa. Other devotees coming to the country to stay for more than 40 days will be given visa on arrival.

Bangladeshis having dual citizenship and passport of another country and their spouses will be entitled to seek stay permission or visa on arrival in the country.

Previously, Bangladeshis having foreign passports had to seek visa prior to arrival in the country.

The home ministry took the new decisions at a meeting yesterday.

Nearly 200 foreigners were refused on-arrival visa recently following the April 18 restrictions. They included citizens of the US, the UK, Germany, France, Malaysia, Morocco, Japan and Chad.

The meeting yesterday was attended by, among others, State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Major (rtd) Mohammad Quamrul Islam,

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar, Inspector General of Police Modabbar Hossain Chowdhury and the director general of Passport and Immigration.

## JS may talk bill to curb media access in next session

NAZMUL ASHRAF

The Jatiya Sangsad is likely to take up during its coming session a controversial bill aiming to restrict the media from publishing reports on certain matters of the parliament and raise the status and privileges of the lawmakers.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions at a meeting yesterday put the bill on the top while prioritising eight private members' bills awaiting committee scrutiny, meeting sources said.

The committee also decided to have a detailed discussion on the bill and the proposals to amend it in its next meeting on May 27. "The bill would then be drafted in an amended form to return it to the House," said a ruling party member of the standing committee on condition that he not be named.

BNP lawmaker Mohammad Abu Hena placed the bill in the House

offence.

National dailies slammed the bill saying that it would gag the press.

Yesterday's meeting however did not discuss the content of the bill, several committee members told The Daily Star last night.

An Awami League (AL) member of the committee said his party

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## Another Buddhist monastery attacked in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Miscreants have attacked another Buddha Bihar (Buddhist monastery) in Rauzan, about two kms off Hingala Buddha Bihar where a monk was killed on the night of April 21.

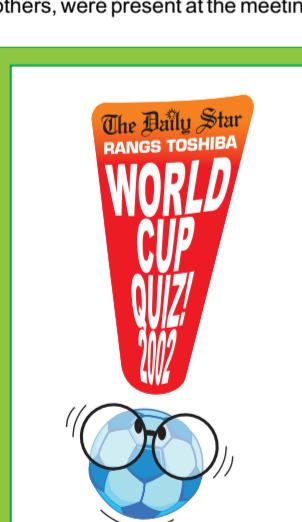
Both the monasteries are under Dabua union.

On Sunday night, about 12 miscreants broke the lock and opened the main gate of Dabua Benubon Bihar at Beltole, sources said.

As the Principal of the monastery Sreemot Priyananda Bhixmu rang the alarm bell, inmates and local people came and chased the miscreants, who fled away firing shots. However, no casualty was reported.

The management of the monastery said yesterday that they were preparing to file a case.

Buddhist monk Ganojyoti Mohasthobir was killed in his bedroom at the Hingala Buddha Bihar at around 12.30am on April 21.



See the rules and coupon of

**The Daily Star**  
Rangs Toshiba  
WORLD CUP QUIZ  
Round 3 on Page 15

|        | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|--------|-----------|----------|
| May 14 |           | 6-33pm   |
| May 15 | 5-16 am   |          |

| Prayer Timings |       |        |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| May 14         |       |        |
|                | Azan  | Jamaat |
| Fajr           | 4-30  | 5-00   |
| Zohr           | 12-45 | 1-15   |
| Asr            | 5-00  | 5-15   |
| Maghrib        | 6-37  | 6-43   |
| Esha           | 8-00  | 8-30   |

Source: Islamic Foundation