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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 close-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 during 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 journalist 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 6.45 pm.

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Dhaka to attend Afghan security meet in Geneva

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is set to participate in an important meeting on future security set up in Afghanistan, due to be held in Geneva on May 17.

Dhaka is contemplating playing a major role in rebuilding a Afghan security umbrella.

The "Afghan Security Assistance Meeting" is being sponsored by the UN and organised by the US.

It will work out a strategy for building an Afghan national army, a police force and maintaining internal stability bordering on security.

The Geneva meeting is a follow up of last month's Afghan reconstruction meeting, also held in Geneva. Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury took part in it.

Ambassador to UN offices in Geneva Dr Toufik Ali will represent Bangladesh in the forthcoming Geneva meet.

Bangladesh recently expressed its desire to offer its existing training facilities and a specific number of seats in its military and police academies for training Afghan army and police officers.

Dhaka is likely to be involved in the Afghan reconstruction process and is learnt to be monitoring prog

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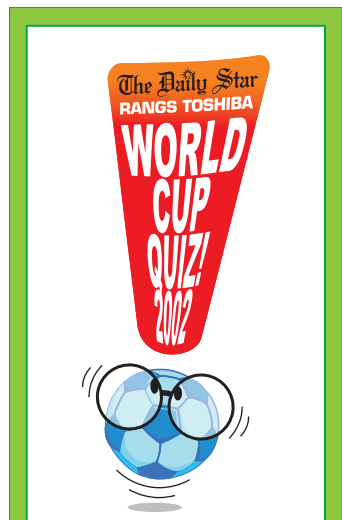
Miladunnabi on May 26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The holy Eide-Miladunnabi will be observed on May 26 across the country.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Committee on Moon Sighting yesterday at the Islamic Foundation.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan presided over the meeting. Secretary to the Ministry of Religious Affairs Khwaja Abdur Rahman and Director of the Islamic Foundation Syed Ashraf Ali, among others, were present at the meeting.



See the rules and coupon of



	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		

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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Khaleda admitted to NY hospital for treatment

BSS/UNB, New York

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was admitted to Manhattan Hospital for Special Surgery here Sunday for the treatment of her leg.

The prime minister, who has been suffering from arthritis, may be operated upon at the hospital.

Khaleda flew into New York on May 7 as leader of Bangladesh delegation to special UNGA session on children.

She addressed the General Assembly of the UN on May 8 and as co-chairperson she conducted a session titled "A Smart Start for Children: The Network for Sustained Elimination of Iodine Deficiencies" and presented Bangladesh perspectives.

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Floating danger

Flawed structurally, most passenger launches run without fitness certificate



PHOTO: STAR

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

MORSHED 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 Shitalakhya. 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

vendor has to pay a gang of 15 teenage boys every month -- a case in point. "We have nothing to do but pay regularly to run our business here," the vendor said. He refused to say more about the gang, however.

Even residents are not insulated from extortion. The gang threatened some family members with death on 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

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.

Rivalry over the control of trade in 'cut-piece' cloths has lent a desperate edge to criminality in the area, where most killings are linked to feuds over the business.

Gangsters also zero in on cable

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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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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

during the last session, which was sent to the standing committee for scrutiny.

The bill defines publishing reports on documents, statements prepared for presentation in the House, debates of a parliamentary standing committee and confidential decisions, reports or proceedings of the parliament as punishable

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 Raizan, 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 Beltoli, 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 Mohastobir was killed in his bedroom at the Hingala Buddha Bihar at around 12.30am on April 21.