

# BDR bailout

**FROM PAGE 1**  
High officials of home ministry, police and BDR, representatives of different special agencies of police and NSI (National Security Intelligence) were present in the meeting.

The meeting to chalk out a "decisive action against crime" was convened in the wake of reports that the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, now on a tour to the USA, in telephonic talks with senior party and cabinet colleagues, expressed deep anguish over the situation.

According to different sources, the meeting was not in favour of a drive all over the country at one go, as it thought such an exercise would not be successful. Rather, it suggested carrying out combing operations in the crime prone areas on the basis of prior specific information.

The meeting felt that efforts should be there so that criminals do not get advance information of any drive.

Suggestions were also made in the meeting to seal the border so that the criminals cannot flee the country, the sources said.

They have given a nod to the drive to arrest accomplices and relatives of top criminals as a strategy to put pressure on them. Detectives in simultaneous raids at the city residences of four absconding listed criminals on Saturday night arrested their family members and relatives.

Meantime security has been beefed up in and around the city with BDR troops seen patrolling certain areas from Sunday night.

People form different parts of the city yesterday said they found BDR personnel patrolling certain areas including Badda.

Traffic police have also been asked to help police to improve law and order.

Yesterday, law enforcers intercepted and checked vehicles in different points of the city.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) in a press release last night said they arrested three listed criminals and another 492 people

## Rice looted

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dent. Customs official reported the incident to the nearest BDR camp and also informed the local district administration and police authorities.

Customs officials have taken refuge at the Benapole land port and border trade has been suspended following a directive by the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

The deputy commissioner and superintendent of police have visited the troubled port last evening.

The customs officials are planning to lodge a case with the Sathkira police against the miscreants.

Our Natore Correspondent adds: Natore police foiled a bid for looting a rice-loaded truck on Saturday night soon after restoration of supply of rice from Naogaon, the northern region's biggest supply centre.

Police exchanged gunshots with the dacoits and forced them to flee.

The gang stopped the truck by putting up a barricade on Natore-Bogra highway at Neugaine in Singra upazila. They stabbed driver Helal Uddin while his helper managed to flee. The dacoits also hurled cocktails at police and fired shots. None, however, was injured.

Rice traders in Naogan had stopped supply of the staple food to other parts of the country on May 9, protesting unabated highway robbery and murder of some truck drivers and helpers in the last eight months.

Supply resumed following government assurance of tight security measures.

from 22 thana areas for their alleged involvement in criminal activities yesterday, the first day of special raid in the capital. Of them, 52 were arrested under Section 54, 236 under DMP Act, 67 on regular case and 22 as warranted criminals.

The sources said the state minister for home along with party men made surprise visits to different parts of the city Sunday night to supervise law enforcers' activities.

## Mashayaki

**FROM PAGE 12**  
This much-talked about stranger entered this village about eight years ago and took shelter in the house of poor farmer Abul Kalam Azad. Apparently a mentally retarded person, he has been residing here bearing the name Mohendra.

Because of his appearance, unfamiliar language and behaviour, he was widely speculated as the missing Japanese engineer Mashayaki, and such stories were widely circulated in the national media. Besides officials of the Japanese Embassy in Dhaka and some relatives of the missing Japanese engineer also visited this village to ascertain the identity of the stranger.

But all such attempts turned futile because of his non-cooperation.

However, yesterday's visit of Michio and her subsequent comments about the stranger made "Mohendra" a different man. Hitherto, supposed to be a retarded person, who always kept mum, Mohendra became furious and started misbehaving with Abul Kalam Azad as well as other people, including journalists who gathered at the village on hearing the arrival of the Japanese lady.

At the heat of the moment, Mohendra claimed himself to be Bhopen Adhikari, a Nepalese citizen. He also uttered some names involved with terrorist and criminal rings of Nepal. It also came out from his utterances that he intruded into Bangladesh through Burma and India to escape criminal charges in his country.

## Mysterious death of detainee at Ctg jail

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg**

A detained youth at the Chittagong Jail died 'mysteriously' here in the city yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Abdur Rashid, 21, an accused in an attempt to murder case. He was allegedly poisoned to death.

Sources said, Abdur Rashid brought to the Chittagong Jail custody on April 1, was shifted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) from the Jail hospital as his condition deteriorated in the early hours. He died at CMCH in the morning.

Rashid, reportedly, knew some information about the top criminals of Raozan and the accomplices of the criminals in the jail are suspected to have poisoned him to death.

## Former jailer

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Another accused AYMA Bashar, now Jail Super of Gaibandha, failed to appear before the court.

The accused persons have long obstructed the trial. Finally, on order from the High Court they appeared before the District and Sessions Judge's Court on Sunday and prayed for bail.

Rejecting the bail petitions, Judge Mohammad Mofizul Islam sent them to jail hajot.

## HSC exams Secret camera to monitor 37 Rajshahi centres

**ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi**

Rajshahi Education Board (REB) authority has decided to monitor 37 HSC examination centres through close-circuit video cameras to check cheating.

This was disclosed by REB chairman Prof Nazrul Islam at a press conference at the Board's auditorium yesterday afternoon.

At least 1,92,436 candidates, including 71,334 female students, from 882 colleges of 16 districts of Rajshahi Division are likely to take part in the HSC examination scheduled to begin from May 16.

As many as 217 vigilance teams and seven 'summary trial' teams will be engaged to monitor the examinations in 261 centres.

Of the 37 'highly cheating-prone' centres, four centres are in Rajshahi, three in Naogaon, one each in Sirajganj, Bogra and Thakurgaon, Joypurhat, Chapainawabganj, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Dinajpur, Natore, Nilphamari and Panchagarh, two in Pabna and six centres in Rangpur district.

## PJCSS supporter shot in Rangamati

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati**

Niron Bikash Chakma, 36, a PCJSS supporter, was shot during a fresh attack allegedly by UPDF activists at Betchori village under Kawkhali thana of the district yesterday morning, police said.

Witnesses said, an armed gang attacked the residence of Krishno Chakma at around 7 in the morning. They fired indiscriminately leaving Niron bullet injured on the spot. The bullet hit Niron's left knee. The attackers then fled the scene as their targeted person was not there.

Injured Niron was rushed to local Upazila Health Complex and later shifted at Rangamati General Hospital.

## Crime wave

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network providers and furniture shops. The cable network providers of West Shewrapara had to keep their connections snapped for about one month on an order of the gang that demanded Tk 10 lakh from them.

These gangs always try to overpower the other to keep up their dominance. "The more a gang is powerful, the higher is its rate and earning."

Over 500 businessmen brought out a procession and held a rally at Shewrapara on May 4, protesting the criminal activities in the area. The businessmen also observed a daylong strike that covered the areas from Rokeya Sarani to Shewrapara, demanding an end to criminal activities.

## Likud rejects

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has been the traditional position of the Likud, but Sharon has said that under stringent conditions, he would agree to creation of such a state, at one point calling it "inevitable."

Instead of the measure opposing a Palestinian state, Sharon asked the convention to approve a resolution backing his government in its efforts for peace and security. In a secret ballot, delegates voted against Sharon's proposal by a margin of 59 to 41 per cent, a stinging defeat for Sharon.

Looking defiant but uncomfortable, Sharon took the podium and made a brief statement after losing the vote on his resolution. He said he would honor the decisions of his party's central committee, but added, "I will continue to lead the state of Israel and the people of Israel according to the same ideas that led me always -- security for the state of Israel and its citizens and our desire for real peace."

Then Sharon exited the hall, walking behind Netanyahu without looking at him, before the delegates quickly approved the resolution opposing creation of a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu told the AP that the vote showed how the Likud party activists view peacemaking. "In the midst of a terror campaign run by (Palestinian leader Yasser) Arafat, they don't want to envision a terrorist state which would threaten the destruction of Israel," he said.

## Altat

**FROM PAGE 1**  
None of the channels were also allowed to cover the two meetings.

The home minister has been facing public outcry for his 'insensitive' remarks on crime ever since he took over.

But his most enraging comment came during his visit to the residence of Naushin, a 20-month-old toddler killed by muggers last week. Instead of consoling the parents of Naushin, he said, "Allah has taken back its creature!" He also commented, "It is not possible to prevent murders, as criminals do not kill after making announcements."

These comments have irked the prime minister and Altat's cabinet colleagues and prompted them to ask the home minister to hold his tongue.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League leaders console the distressed family members of Marisha Islam Naushin yesterday. Naushin was killed in firing by extortionists on Thursday last.

# Renewed US bid to bring India, Pakistan to table

## Christina Rocca due in Delhi today

**PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi**

As India and the United States are engaged in a fortnight-long exercise in Agra, the historic city housing the abiding symbol of love the Taj Mahal, to combat terrorism, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca arrives here today to help defuse rising military tension between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Washington has decided to rush Rocca to a visit to both India and Pakistan after worrying signals emanated from the two South Asian nuclear neighbours in the last few weeks about the possibility of a limited conflict between them, diplomatic sources here said.

India has in recent times indicated to United States that it might opt for a limited conflict against Pakistan if infiltration of terrorists from across the border into Jammu and Kashmir state does not stop immediately, the sources said.

India has quietly signaled to US officials that it reserves the right to target the mountain passes used by terrorists on the Pakistan side of the Line of Control that divides the two countries.

Messages from across the border intercepted say the terrorists

are ready to pour into Jammu and Kashmir once the heavy snow in the passes begin to melt soon this summer.

The US is clearly concerned over the signals emanating from New Delhi. In fact, American ambassador to India Robert D Blackwill had met Indian Home Minister L K Advani last week and counseled restraint and patience.

Blackwill held meetings with similar messages to External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra.

A measure of US concern can be had from the fact that US Secretary of State Colin Powell spoke to Jaswant Singh on phone last week soon after he had a talk with Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf and advised India and Pakistan to exercise restraint.

India and Pakistan have mobilized their forces along the border since December 13 last year when Indian Parliament had come under attack by Pakistan-based terrorists.

The US decision to rush Rocca to New Delhi and Islamabad may also have been prompted by the military exercises being carried out by India along the western border, even though as a routine training, and

recent reported remark by Pakistan's military intelligence chief Ehsanul Haq to a meeting of corps commanders in Rawalpindi that chances of Indo-Pak was now at all-time high.

Indian leadership is expected to make it clear to Rocca that New Delhi can no longer put up infiltration from across the border especially in view of the fact that elections to legislature of Jammu and Kashmir state is approaching fast, the sources said.

Security agencies in India estimate the level of infiltration has not come down and terrorists are raring to enter Jammu and Kashmir to foil the assembly polls.

India is also likely to convey to Rocca that Musharraf has paid only lip service to his January 12 address to the nation where he had promised to crack down on extremists and terrorists in his country.

Besides, New Delhi is also going to point out to the US official that Islamabad is yet to act on the list of 20 terrorists wanted in Indian in connection with various crimes. Some of the 20 are Indian citizens.

This will be third visit by Rocca to New Delhi since March this year.

# Major success story

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fisheries, which also accounts for more than 13 percent of its export earnings, the journal noted. Agricultural exports, both bulk commodities and higher-valued processed products, grew by nearly 5 percent over the last five years.

The success in the agriculture sector was attributed to expanded cultivation of dry season irrigated rice (boro). It particularly mentioned the government's policy that allowed the private sectors to market fertiliser and facilitate irrigation pumps.

The journal said, the government's decision, supported by the USAID, to liberalise food import policy is another important factor in

the success story. "The government has removed many agricultural subsidies, eliminated quantitative restrictions, reduced tariff levels, and created an open-market economy that makes agricultural inputs readily available for farmers and guarantees fair commodity prices."

It noted that in 1999, private sector food imports to meet needs after the 1998 flood reached 2.26 million tonnes. The imports were mainly from India. "Had the government itself imported this quantity of foodgrains, the total fiscal cost would have been about \$185 million."

The journal also mentioned USAID food assistance to Bangladesh and the role played by other stakeholders in developing

road infrastructures through food-aided programmes.

However, while casting focus on future challenges for Bangladesh's agriculture, the journal mentioned that rates of malnutrition in the country are among the highest in the world, and nutritional standards are poor. It also mentioned the problems of fragmentation of land holdings and small size farms.

"A further transformation of Bangladesh's agriculture, mostly in terms of diversifying higher-value products such as maize, legumes, livestock, and vegetables, both for domestic and export markets, is the next logical step for the country."

# Floating danger: Launch

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Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering at the BUET, said lack of stability on water and probable structural faults make a vessel extremely vulnerable to wind and small collisions.

Even if a properly designed vessel sinks in bad weather, it takes time. But when a vessel has lack of stability and structural problems, it may capsize within seconds or break into pieces, he said.

Sources concerned said when a prospective vessel owner approaches for approval of design, the 'process' begins with some 'draftsmen' who are employees of the BIWTA reaching a 'deal' with the person. Based on a prototype, these draftsmen design a vessel often ignoring vital safety aspects. As required by law, they get the design signed by a freelance naval architect for a fee of Tk 500 to Tk 1000. The 'deal' with the draftsmen guarantees the prospective owner a 'smooth passage' through the BIWTA official channels.

The law says that after the BIWTA's design approval, a prospective owner must engage a naval architect belonging to a Panel of 19 Naval Architects to supervise building of the vessel, at a cost of Tk 15,000. But in most cases, it is not done. It is widely alleged that the panel's approval could be obtained for around Tk 1,000 only.

Several sources confirmed that only two naval architects in the 19-member panel are now active. The

rest are either abroad or have lost interest in the whole process. Surprisingly, only one of the two active members who is also an official of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) gives approval in 90 per cent of the cases, stating that he had supervised every step of building of the vessels. The remaining 10 percent approvals are given by another naval architect working for the BIWTA. On an average, about 50 passenger vessels and 100 cargo vessels are built every year in the country.

Once a vessel is ready to operate, the Department of Shipping's marine engineers are brought to conduct various fitness tests including the vital 'inclining test', which checks whether the vessel can withstand a certain degree of inclination on each side. Once these tests are completed, the BIWTA issues registration on condition that the vessel must appear before the engineers before a year ends for its renewal.

But some official sources said many vessels were given registration before they left the dockyards. Sources in the Department of Shipping said 'non-existent supervision' when vessels are built often lands them in troubles, particularly in cases of influential owners.

"During inspection, we invariably find gross deviations from original design but we cannot do anything to force a rectification before issuance of fitness certificates because a handful of

owners controlling the sector are so influential," said a Department of Shipping engineer, requesting anonymity.

He instantly referred to about a dozen large passenger vessels with such gross deviations, now plying on the Dhaka-Barisal route at a risk of major accidents any time.

## Afghan security

**FROM PAGE 1**  
ress of the UN Trust Fund being raised for this purpose.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told The Daily Star about Bangladesh's sincere desire to 'play a meaningful role' in Afghanistan. However, it will depend on the Trust Fund.

"We have the capability but not the ability to participate," the foreign minister said. Khan is expected to discuss the likely role of Bangladesh in Afghanistan when he meets US Secretary of State Colin Powell and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan during his current US tour.

There is still no major development in building a national army and a police force in Afghanistan, according to sources. The British-conceived International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) whose strength has recently been raised to 5000 is generally involved in maintaining security but its operation is limited to areas in and around Kabul.

# US, Russia reach arms cut deal

**AP, Washington**

President George W. Bush announced yesterday that he will sign a landmark accord in Moscow this month to dramatically shrink American and Russian nuclear arsenals. "The treaty will liquidate the legacy of the Cold War," he said.

Under the agreement with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Cold War-era arsenals will be reduced to 1,700 to 2,200 warheads, Bush said.

The United States has about 7,000 strategic nuclear weapons, Russia about 6,000.

Bush and Putin agreed to the nuclear reduction targets in principle last year, leaving difficult negotiations over details to their diplomats.

Putin welcomed yesterday announcement. "We are satisfied with the joint work," he said. "With-

## Judgement in Jahangir

## Master murder case May 21

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

Verdict in the sensational Jahangir Master Murder Case will be pronounced on May 21 by Md Didar Ali Fakir, Additional District and Sessions Judge.

Notorious criminal Ershad Shikder is the prime accused in the case.

Arguments in the case ended yesterday after cross examination of 27 prosecution witnesses.

Jahangir Hossain was private tutor of two sons of Ershad Shikder.

He was brutally killed allegedly by Shikder and other accused on the night of March 18, 1998 in the ice factory at Skid Ghat. Shikder suspected that Jahangir had illicit relation with his wife Khodeja, sources said.

## Gas committee

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Vice-Chairman of BUET Prof Nooruddin Ahmed.

On the crucial issue linked with a tricky question of whether or not to go for export of gas, differences cropped up in the committee last month and it decided to submit a split report.

Later, they agreed on presenting a unanimous assessment, but again the divisions sharpened, indicating a split estimation of gas reserves.

With the latest development, a committee member said, they would try to hammer out an identical estimation on which the major policy decision of export depends. "If the members finally failed to reach a consensus, again a split report is likely."

The committee will sit again on May 20 to discuss the two figures of appraisal 15.5 TCF by the petroleum engineers and 11.7 TCF by geologists trying to reach a common stand. The difference in quantities of recoverable gas between the two groups is 3.8 TCF.

The petro-engineers' reckoning is based on geological and production data as well as the report of Hydrocarbon Unit (HCU) of the Energy Ministry and Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (NPD). The HCU-NPD estimated the reserves at 16.1 TCF.

On the other hand, the geologists' assessment is similar to the survey of IKM of Canada, conducted in 1992. The survey showed the reserves at 11.1 TCF.

out the interested, active position of the American administration and the attention of President Bush, it would have been difficult to reach such agreements."

One sticking point had been Russia's objections to US plans for storing some of the nuclear weapons rather than destroying them. Senior administration officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said some of the arms will be stored and others destroyed under the accord.

Details of the agreement were not immediately available.

In a victory for Putin, the president dropped his desire for an informal agreement and will sign a treaty. That means the deal must be approved by the Senate, which is controlled by rival Democrats -- a step Bush had hoped to avoid.

The president said he would sign the treaty May 24 in Russia while meeting with Putin.

Officials have said for weeks an agreement was virtually certain to be ready for the May 24 meeting, but Bush's announcement Monday was a surprise.

He said that with the treaty signing, "We will begin the new era of US-Russian relations and that's important."

US Undersecretary of State John Bolton and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov worked in Moscow in recent days on the agreement.

"This is good news for the American people today," the president said. "It will make the world more peaceful and put behind us the Cold War once and for all."

As a presidential candidate, Bush pledged to reduce the number of US nuclear arms in conjunction with an effort to modernize US defense systems. Soon after he became president, he directed the Pentagon to consider cuts in nuclear weapons regardless of Russia's plans for its arsenal.

Putin had suggested reductions to 1,500 warheads each, because his nation can no longer afford to maintain the Cold War-sized stockpiles.

Under the START II agreement with Russia, that number will fall to between 3,000 and 3,500. In 1997, President Clinton and President Boris Yeltsin agreed in principle that a START III treaty should cut numbers to 2,000 to 2,500.

## BNP's allies

**FROM PAGE 1**  
explained one leader.

The Jamaat-e-Islami, the Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) and the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) -- all partners of the alliance -- are concerned at fast-deteriorating law and order. They are learnt to have pressed the key party to the government to take pragmatic steps to help net the trouble-mongers. Otherwise, the image of the government would be tarnished and public confidence in the government would fast erode.

BJP leader Nazir Rahman Manzur said they would try to meet the prime minister upon her return home from New York.

"At our recent meeting of the four-party liaison committee, we've expressed our willingness to have a meeting with the prime minister," said Manzur. He declined to say anything about the agenda of the meeting.

ARM Matin, an IOJ leader, expressed concern at escalation of violence over the last few days.

Matin underscored formation of a national-level steering committee consisting of four-party leaders to monitor law and order.

# Nasty nine

**FROM PAGE 1**  
At northwest Shewrapara, the gangs led by Jahangir, Korban Ali and Shukkur Ali control the Prierbagh area and WASA Road. Although the trio has been in jail for the last one month, their followers Rubel, 'Kala' Babu, Nayan, Billal, Shaheed and Badsha, among others, are continuing mugging, forced contracts and even murders. They are accused of killing Khaleq, Rana and Nazrul and two siblings, Mizanur Rahman and Ziaul Haq, Masud and local people said.

In Jamtala area, East Shewrapara, the 'Hatkata' Masud group dominates extortion, mugging and other criminal activities. Bhutto, an associate of 'Kala' Jahangir, a gangster, backs up the Masud group of 15 to 20, aged between 20 and 25. There are two other criminal gangs -- the Monir-Munna group and the Anis-Rony group.

Formed by two brothers, the Monir-Munna group is at war with the Masud group that killed their father 'Bhua' Mannan. Followers of the Monir-Munna group include Rafiq, Khokon, Sentu and Mamun, among others. It is alleged that this group was involved in the murder of Lal Mia, employee of a hardware shop at Kazipara.

Members of the Anis-Rony group of 15, another rival of Masud, include Nazrul, Kalam and Tuhin. The group spread its network from Monipur to Mirpur Section No. six. Backed by JCD leader Tuhin, the

group is involved mainly in robbery and extortion from furniture shops.

The most crime-prone area is Matbarer Pukurpar between East Shewrapara and East Kazipara, controlled by the Kala Jahangir group with its local leader Asu. Shawkat, Palash, Jewel, Milon, and Nirab back Asu. They control Ashirdaag, East Senpara, East Kazipara and North Ibrahimpur. The Kafrul thana JCD general secretary, Tapan, provides legal protection to them. More than a dozen murder cases were filed against the group.

The 'Killer' Abbas group, backed by Ward-16 JCD President Mahfuz, dominates the Ibrahimpur area. Abbas and Sujon, the second man of the outfit, are known to be professional killers. With backups of the hired gangsters like Shahadat, Khurshed, Bauwa Shamim and Taaj, the Abbas group is also active at Mirpur Section No. 1.

In North and South Kafrul, the Ashik group -- backed by 'Kala' Jahangir -- dominates the crime scenario.

The west Kafrul and southwest Shewrapara areas are controlled by Shaheen group backed by the Julu (shot dead Saturday night) group of the BNP slum at Agargaon. Faruk, Liton, Nadim and Amin, among others, form this small yet strong group.

The members of the group are accused in two murder cases -- of Humayun Kabir and Tuhin.