

**Cabinet
nods to RAB**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday approved a proposal to form an elite law-enforcement force styled Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) to combat the growing stream of crimes.

RAB would be formed by drawing skilled, physically fit and meritorious serving members from the armed forces, paramilitary BDR and other law-enforcement agencies and forces.

As per the proposal, RAB will be constituted as a striking arm of the Armed Police Battalion (APBn). The force will be equipped with sophisticated weapons and well-trained personnel drawn on a maximum of two years deputation. It will function under the supervision of the inspector general of police.

There is no provision for direct or fresh recruitment and inclusion of retired servicemen in the force.

The new elite force will be formed under the existing Armed Police Battalion (APBn) Ordinance, 1979 by amending two of its articles.

The ordinance will be placed in

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PHOTO: STAR

Contrary to most of the branches of state-owned banks, two security personnel guard the entrance of Agrani Bank at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Banks bank on poor security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers can sneak into most of the city's state-owned banks and walk away with their loots as nearly all the branches hardly have any effective security system.

A top official of Sonali Bank head office said that most of their 156 city branches do not have any armed guard as the authorities had stopped recruiting persons trained to use firearms since 1981.

"We do not have any armed guard in our branch. Like ours, most of the Sonali Bank branches that transact comparatively small amount of money every day are minus armed guards," said manager of Sonali Bank branch at Karwan Bazar preferring anonymity.

Officials at many branches of these banks sent letters to their head offices, seeking more security guards but all in vain, sources said.

"We have sent letters to the head office requesting additional security guards long ago. And we're still waiting for the response," an officer of Agrani Bank, Senpara branch said, with a laugh.

Many branches do have alarm system, but most of those are without close circuit camera.

Contrastingly, the security in private commercial banks is much better and cases of robbery or burglary there are rare. Apart from armed security personnel, many of the branches have their own security arrangements with close circuit camera and alarm systems.

Telephone numbers of different police stations are also hung on the office requesting additional security guards long ago. And we're still waiting for the response," an officer of Agrani Bank, Senpara branch said, with a laugh.

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SC dismisses plea against Ayodhya excavation

PTI, New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed an appeal challenging a three month-old order of the Allahabad High Court directing excavation of the disputed site at Ayodhya by the Archaeological Survey of India to determine whether a temple pre-existed the demolished Babri Masjid.

A vacation bench comprising Justice R C Lahoti and Justice Brijesh Kumar while refusing permission to Naved Yar Khan to file the appeal, said the petitioner could approach the Lucknow Bench of the high court and raise the issue.

The bench, after refusing permission to file special leave petition (SLP), dismissed the petition.

Narrating the sequence of events from construction of the mosque, Khan stated that the order for excavation would prove to be a

Student strike stalls CU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Academic activities stood still at the Chittagong University (CU) yesterday because of a student strike.

Chhatra Union, Chhatra Front and Chhatra Foundation called the strike under the banner of Progotishil Chhatra Jote to demand the withdrawal of enhanced tuition and other fees.

The CU Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) is also to enforce a strike today with the same demand.

Student turn up yesterday was low and all classes and some tests were suspended.

The university students have been agitating for around a month now, as authorities have increased fees in every score. Besides, Tk 2500 is also being realised from each student on a departmental basis without any receipt.

However, authorities in a meeting decided to go for a 15 per cent decrease in fees that had been enhanced by 200 to 300 per cent. But all student organisations refused to accept the insignificant decrease.

The CU BCL in a press release last evening termed the 15 per cent decrease "nothing but a farce".

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RECOMMENDATIONS REVEALED

Read the recommendations of the sensational probe report on Bangladesh's cricket World Cup debacle in its entirety on page 15.

Prayer Timings

| | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|---------|-----------|----------|
| June 10 | | 6:46 pm |
| June 11 | 5:10 am | |

Editorial

Democrats accuse Bush of lying on Iraqi WMDs

Bid to turn it into election issue

AFP, Washington

US Democratic presidential contenders moved Sunday to turn missing Iraqi weapons into an election issue, accusing the Bush administration of lying, and drawing parallels with the Watergate scandal.

The charges came as several candidates gathered in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, for a picnic and rally hosted by state Governor Tom Vilsack, who set the tone for the event by saying that in matters of war and peace, Americans "must be

able to trust our federal government to tell us the truth."

Democrats have been reluctant to criticise the administration of President George W. Bush over the military campaign in Iraq because of popular support for the effort to oust Iraqi president Saddam Hussein.

A recent CNN/USA Today/Gallup opinion poll noted 56 percent of Americans believed the conflict was justified, even if the United States did not find evidence Iraq was developing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, the main

justification for the invasion trumpeted by the White House.

Moreover, 67 percent believed they were not deliberately misled by the administration by claims of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, compared to 31 percent who said they were.

But with little evidence so far of Iraq's weapons, and key congressional Democrats demanding an inquiry, the presidential contenders turned the table on the White House.

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JS standing body funds remain mostly unutilised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The budgetary allocation for parliamentary standing committees remained largely unutilised as most of the bodies still go un-constituted, 20 months into the Eighth Parliament's tenure.

Only Tk 29 lakh of the Tk 2.79 crore fund was used to fund activities of five committees formed in the first session of the Jatiya Sangsad in October 2001.

The constitution requires the parliament to appoint 50 standing committees -- 39 on different ministries and 11 on parliament affairs -- immediately after its formation.

But the current parliament formed 16 bodies to date, 11 of which were constituted in the seventh session in April.

The Parliament secretariat was allocated about Tk 1.24 crore for the 2002-03 fiscal for the committees, of which only Tk 29 lakh could be used.

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Pro-AL UP chairman murdered in Chuadanga

UNB, Chuadanga

A UP chairman and local Awami League leader was stabbed to death by unknown assailants near the sadar hospital here on Sunday night.

Ali Hossain, chairman of Juranpur Union Parishad in Damurhuda upazila, was inside a shop when some unknown men called him out. They took him to a nearby nursing centre and stabbed him to death, police and locals said.

Protesting the killing, Awami League general secretary Abdul Jalil MP in a statement yesterday termed it as part of the ruling party's conspiracy against Awami League.

He demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the killers.

10-year-old girl raped in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A 10-year-old girl was raped on the campus of Amrita Lal Dey College at Jhautala of Barisal town on Sunday night, police said.

The girl had been all alone in the house when she was picked up by two youths from the neighbourhood who tricked her into believing that her mother wanted her to go with them.

The two youths then took her to the nearby college campus and raped her before fleeing the spot. The girl was later rescued by local people and taken to the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

The victim's father filed a case with Kotwali police accusing two youths, Sohel and Rubel, of raping his daughter.

No one was arrested till filing of this report last night.

OIC Secy-Gen Oman to back Bangladesh's candidature

UNB, Dhaka

Oman has assured all-out support to Bangladesh's candidature for the post of OIC Secretary General.

The assurance was given by the Sultanate's new envoy to Bangladesh Ambassador Salim Bin Mohammad Bin Salim Al-Wahaibi when he called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

Al-Wahaibi further assured that Oman would actively campaign for Salauddin Qader Chowdhury, Bangladesh's candidate for OIC Secretary General.

Ambassador Al-Wahaibi also discussed other issues of common interest with the prime minister, officials said.

Khaleda Zia underscored the need for greater unity of the Muslim Ummah and strengthening the role

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Erez near the West Bank city of Ramallah, destroying two caravans.

It was not immediately clear how many of the some 60 settler outposts established in the West Bank without Israeli government permission would be uprooted. Israeli media reports estimated about 15 would be scrapped.

The evacuation of the illegal

settler outposts has begun," the source said.

A Reuters television cameraman said army tractors dismantled the uninhabited settler outposts of Neve

Erez near the West Bank city of Ramallah, destroying two caravans.

It was not immediately clear how many of the some 60 settler outposts established in the West Bank without Israeli government permission would be uprooted. Israeli media reports estimated about 15 would be scrapped.

The operation coincided with a new appeal by Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas for militant groups to halt attacks on Israelis -- an important obligation

Sharon pledged to begin dismantling

under the road map -- but his call was rebuffed by the Islamic group Hamas.

The road map, which calls for an end to Israeli-Palestinian violence and reciprocal steps leading to a Palestinian state by 2005, mandates the removal of settler outposts set up since Prime Minister Ariel

Sharon took office in March 2001.

Sharon pledged to begin dismantling

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia talks with Ambassador of Oman Salim Bin Salim Al-Wahaibi when the latter called on her at her office yesterday.

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