



Bangladesh Kite Federation and Dhakabasi, an organisation of residents of Dhaka, take out a colourful kite procession in the city yesterday.

Heroin addicts involved in mugging in city bus stands

UNB, Dhaka

At least 200 heroin addicts are active in and around major bus stoppages in the capital, snatching valuables from the passengers in buses and minibuses, intelligence sources said.

The addict-muggers, who normally operate on running buses, mostly target female passengers and those who take window seats.

These muggers prefer to snatch wristwatch, mobile phone and ornaments from unwary passengers as soon as the buses move from their designated stops.

Besides, several organised groups comprising 4 or 5 members are also active in mugging in the capital.

The drug addicts are active in several key bus stoppages, which generally remain crowded from morning till evening.

These bus stoppages include Gabtali, Mohakhali, Sayedabad, Farmgate, Maghbazar, Malibagh, Gulistan, Motijheel, Mirpur-10 'Gol Chakkar', Kazipara, Sheorapara, Agargaon, Sangsad crossing, Karwan Bazar, Bangla Motor and Shabbagh crossing.

A top-ranking official of Detective Branch of Police said that at least 50 organised groups of muggers were active in 29 vulnerable points in the capital a year ago.

Each of these 50 groups was rotation, he said, adding that the number of such groups of muggers has decreased due to repeated drives by law enforcing agencies.

"Instead of the organised groups, heroin addicts and juveniles from roadside slums are now active in snatching," the DB official said.

Witnesses said when a bus stops or slows down its pace, the addict-muggers pounce on passengers sitting beside the window or near the door. Most of the victims are those who wear gold necklace or chain, and carry mobile phone and wristwatch.

In many cases, female passengers receive injuries tearing their earlobes or choking and scratching their throats while snatchers try to



Eminent economist Prof Muzaffer Ahmad hands over a crest to poet Lily Haq at a programme marking the 11th year of Ramna Workshop at Ramna Park in the city yesterday. The first workshop on self-development was held at Gabtali in the park on April 21 in 1995. Since then, workshops are being held every Friday with a view to making the country free from hunger through voluntary activities.

snatch their earrings or necklace.

On a number of occasions, such incidents occurred in front of law-enforcers, yet they look on without taking any action, witnesses said.

"The problem is that neither the drivers can afford to stop, nor can the victims jump out to chase the snatchers," a victim explained.

There is an allegation that several organised groups of muggers operate in the city with the help of some corrupt policemen.

A police official of Tejgaon Police Station, however, denied the allegation saying, "We are very much serious to curb such kind of criminal activities."

He said most of the arrested snatchers were found to be heroin-addicts. Police cannot imprison the drug addicts as they show symptoms of sudden deterioration of their physical condition.

"We produce them before the court and they get bail and again return to mugging," he added.

US hospital ship arrives today

UNB, Dhaka

The 'USNS Mercy', a hospital ship of the United States, arrives in Bangladesh today on an eight-day goodwill visit to share experiences and impart training on treatment assistance.

The hospital ship will anchor off Cox's Bazar seashore and provide treatment service under the leadership of Capt. Moore. Doctors of Bangladesh Armed Forces and Chittagong Medical College Hospital will take part in the programme.

Besides, dentists of the ship will also treat a number of patients under 'Operation Smile' programme.

In January 2005, the USNS Mercy had provided medical assistance to tsunami-affected countries in Southeast Asia. The hospital ship has also conducted such activities in the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and East Timor.

Death of Shawkat Ali condoled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political and professional bodies yesterday expressed deep shock at the death of eminent lawyer Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan.

Leaders of the political parties and professional bodies in separate statements recalled the contributions of Shawkat Ali to the country's politics and social welfare terming his demise as an irreparable loss.

They prayed for salvation of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Bangladesh Bar Council, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Party (Manju-Shahidul), Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Awami Swechchhasebak League, Bangladesh Ganatantrik Ainjibi Samity, Sammilita Ainjibi Samanya Parishad and Sammilita Samajik Andolan also expressed condolence at the death of Shawkat Ali.

New drug policy won't serve users' interest

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new drug policy, formulated last year, will serve the interest of drug manufacturers and traders, and not the interest of consumers, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

Termining the policy as an amended drug policy of 1982 they said it is a 'drug industry policy' where the issues of affordability of common people to drugs in terms of their prices and quality have been overlooked.

The roundtable titled 'National Drug Policy: Present Circumstances' was jointly organised by Doctors for Health and Environment and Pharmacy Graduates Association, Bangladesh at the National Press Club in the city.

The speakers said a large number of counterfeit drugs are prevailing in the market but the policy did not tell anything about their enlistment for cancellation.

"Instead of controlling the import of medicine, the policy rather creates opportunity for multinational companies to sell their products here and there is no provision for price control leading to irrational price hike of drugs," said Prof ABM Farouque of Dhaka University while reading out the keynote paper.

In the name of flourishing country's drug industry and increasing exports, the policy creates scope for marketing the abandoned drugs, said Ishtiaq Ahmed, general secretary of Pharmacy Graduates Association.

The speakers stressed the need for preparing a list of essential drugs and formulation of a consumer-friendly policy where people would get quality drugs at a rational price.

They said the obligation of manufacturing life saving drugs has been withdrawn and the essential drugs are turned into commodity by amending the policy adversely.

"The effectiveness of drugs will not be available to common people if the price is not brought under control," said Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, project co-ordinator of Gonoswasthya Kendra, adding that the counterfeit medicines have been spreading over the market along with increasing profit of the drug industries.

The speakers criticised the role of Drug Control Committee saying that there was no drug expert in the committee, rather most of the members were from the Association for Pharmaceuticals Industries.

They said even two-thirds of the members were from the drug companies and business representatives while amending the policy.

National Professor Nurul Islam was present at the roundtable as chief guest while Dr Pinaki Bhattacharya, Secretary General of Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad Prof M Iqbal Arslan, Associate Professor of BSMMU Dr Muhammad Sayedur Rahman, Dr Moshtak Hossain and Kazi Farouque Ahmed of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (Cab) also spoke.

Former president of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) Prof Rashid-e-Mahbub moderated the roundtable.

TK 63 cr CU budget

CU CORRESPONDENT

The Chittagong University proposed a budget of TK 63 crore and 39.70 lakh for 2006-07 fiscal at the 18th annual meeting of the Senate yesterday.

Acting Registrar Zahurul Islam placed the budget at the meeting. He also presented the revised budget for 2005-06 fiscal.

Out of the total amount, TK 54 crore and 50 lakh will come from University Grants Commission and TK 4 crore and 10 lakh from its own income.

The highest allocation of 68.55 per cent of the total budget has been earmarked for the salary and allowance of the teachers and staffs.

Bullet-hit trader dies in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bullet-hit trader succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

The trader, identified as Md Ripon, was shot by a group of muggers at Shajahanpur in the city while he was returning home by a rickshaw in the early hours of Monday.



Awami League Sangskritik Forum forms a human chain at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding reforms in the caretaker government system and the Election Commission.

