

Mugging

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over to them the bag containing the cash at about 2:30 p.m.

But Swapan locked the muggers in a scuffle and at one stage he threw the bag inside a roadside shop. The muggers then exploded a number of crackers and fled the scene.

Following the incident, angry traders laid siege to Babubazar outpost as the policemen, stationed there, did not make any move while the crime took place. The place of occurrence was adjacent to the outpost.

The traders' siege of the outpost continued for about half an hour and the angry mob also hurled brick bats, police said, adding, none was injured in the incident.

At one stage they went to Kotwali thana with a procession. Senior officials of police went to the spot and took the situation under control.

None, however, was arrested in connection with the mugging till last night. A case was lodged with Kotwali thana in connection with the mugging yesterday.

Road march

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the four parties, particularly the BNP, are going ahead with preparations for it. BNP, JP and Jamaat are scheduled to go for a three-day march and IOJ for a two-day march.

According to the schedule, BNP Chairman Begum Kheda Zia will lead Dhaka-Mymensingh road march, JP Chairman HM Ershad will lead Dhaka-Barisal 'march by launch'. Jamaat chief Golam Azam will lead Dhaka-Chittagong road march and IOJ chief Shaikhul Hadith Moulana Azizul Haq will lead Dhaka-Chittagong road march.

"We are yet to take any final decision regarding postponement of the road march but there is a possibility of suspension of the programme," said a senior BNP leader. "But our preparations for the programme are going on in full swing."

As for the BNP, the final decision in this regard will come from Begum Zia when she is approached by JP and Jamaat's unwillingness, he said.

Another BNP leader said the final decision regarding road march is likely to be taken today.

He said the party has already distributed posters and leaflets among the district and thana units concerned but printing of the 'final posters' have been stopped because of the latest developments.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the road march convoy-control-supervision sub-committee of BNP will be held at the party central office at 7:30 pm today. Convenor of the committee Mirza Abbas and member-secretary Amanullah Aman MP have requested all concerned to attend the meeting.

JP will hold a preparatory meeting at its central office at 7 pm today.

'Govt trying its best for dev of transport sector'

Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

Political Adviser to the Prime Minister, Dr S A Malek, yesterday said the present government is doing its best for the overall development of the transport sector keeping pace with other countries, reports BSS.

He said transport sector, being one of the most important organs of economic progress, was left disarrayed for long 21 years due to the absence of democracy in the country.

Democracy is now in full gear in Bangladesh and the government under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is carrying out tremendous development to improve all key sectors including transport for overall economic progress," he said inaugurating a seminar on Asia-Pacific Road Transport Sector Unions and Disorganised Transport Workers at a hotel.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury described the transport sector as well as those involved in it as the main driving force to keep the nation alive and afloat and said the country's economic progress depended on the improvement of this vital sector.

He said the government is doing its best to improve all key sectors including the transport sector to achieve the national economic goals as being cherished by the people of the country.

"Why we still lag behind in respect of a regional transport network since the SAARC is the region with a vast human resources," he said, adding that surface transports were now plying across all countries of Europe, the ASEAN and the CIS in the light of reality.

The state minister for foreign affairs also referred to the non-stop bus service between New Delhi and Lahore despite the recent Indo-Pak conflicts and said this had amply indicated the importance of continuous transport network between countries of the region that spoke of a great civilisation.

He stressed the need for concrete and well-thought-out plans and enactment of laws to operate a stable transport system in the region keeping in view that this sector could put valuable contribution towards economic progress.

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Among others, President of Bangladesh Truck Owners Association Roy Ramesh Chandra, General Secretary of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal Nazrul Islam Khan, ITF resident representative Hossam and Mahendra Sharma from the ITF headquarters, Shukur Mahmood of the association was in the chair.

Malek said trade union leaders in Bangladesh are desperately trying to organise the transport sector and he assured them of the government's best possible cooperation towards that direction.

He also said that the government headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would help in all efforts to improve the condition of transport workers in the country.

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Senate members pledge to make DU terrorism-free

Dhaka University Senate representatives of Registered Graduates elected from Gantantrik Oikya Parishad (GOP) yesterday reiterated their pledge to make the university free from violence and terrorism, reports BSS.

The 25 Senators who have been elected recently to represent thousands of 'Registered Graduates' in the DU senate, also observed that the voters had elected them as the GOP in the past played a constructive role to maintain congenial atmosphere on the campus.

The senators said this at a get-together programme yesterday at the TSC of the university which was organised to thank the Registered Graduates for electing the entire GOP panel in the DU Senate election.

Presided over by Advocate Syed Ahmed, it was addressed, among others, by Prof Shamsul Huda Harun, Sontosh Gupta, Swapan Kumar Saha, Omidzaman Khan, Advocate Shaha Khutun, Prof Sultan Shafiq, Monayem Sharmin, Mahbub Uddin Ahmed Bir Bikram, Aroma Goon, Sirajul Hug Farazi and Afzal Hossain.

The function was rounded off with a musical soiree.

Major breakthrough needed to increase cereal production

By Staff Correspondent

Major breakthroughs are needed to take up the big challenge of raising the world cereal production by an astounding 50 per cent by year 2025 to feed increasing size of human population.

World Food Award laureate Dr Gurdev Singh Khush said this at a workshop held under the auspices of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) yesterday. The workshop was held at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), Gazipur.

Dr Khush, the Principal Plant Breeder of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), now on a visit to Bangladesh, was presenting the theme lecture on "Cereal Improvement for Food Security in the 21st Century".

Eighty million more mouths to be fed are being added every year, most of them in Asia, while farmlands are shrinking and natural resources like water become more and more scarce," said Dr Khush, who is highly regarded for his contribution to 'Green Revolution', a unique phenomenon that has so far enabled the rice-growing world to compete with the pace of popu-

lation growth. Executive Chairman of BARC Dr Zahurul Karim, Director General of BRRI, Dr M A Hamid Miah, Director General of Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), Dr Idris Ali, IRRI representative to Bangladesh Dr Sadiqul Islam Bhuiyan, and a former teacher of Bangladesh Agriculture University Prof M A Wadud Mian were among others who spoke at the workshop.

Different research papers having direct relevance with the crucial concern of food security were presented at the workshop. The papers were presented by Director General of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Dr M A Razzaque, BRRI scientists Dr M A Hamid Miah and Dr Zahurul Islam, and BINA scientist Dr Abdul Hamid.

Later, Bangladesh Society of Agronomy (BSA) accorded a reception to Dr Khush at the BARI auditorium. BSA honoured the world-renowned rice scientist offering him the honorary membership of the Society. Reciprocating the warm felicitation, Dr Khush told the agronomists that the future of food security lies in their hands.

Myanmar willing to sell gas

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efforts to increase it.

He said a Joint Commission of the two countries have been proposed to be set up for promoting bilateral relations in all spheres and also to look into different economic aspects. Bangladesh Commerce and Industries Minister is also expected to visit Yangon next month to discuss expansion of business cooperation.

Asked about repatriation of some 21,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, of whom 7,000 have already been cleared by the Myanmar government for return home, Aung expressed the hope that the matter would be resolved after his return. Without giving any definite assurance, he said: "I will do my best. I will talk to the relevant ministers on my return."

Myanmar has taken back 2,30,000 Rohingya refugees out of 2,51,000 since early nineties.

A career diplomat, Aung was his country's envoy in London and Berlin before becoming foreign minister recently. His current visit also took him to Sri Lanka and he described it as a "familiarisation tour."

About BIMSTEC, of which Bangladesh and Myanmar are members, he said it holds potential for cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, technology and other related fields "in the spirit of equality and partnership."

Asked if Myanmar would like to become a member of SAARC, the foreign minister replied in the negative and said, "BIMSTEC would act as a bridge between ASEAN and SAARC."

Aung said, "Due to the lack of national unity, we have been fighting for 40 to 45 years, but now we are working for national unity.

"In the past, we had tremendous problems and found ourselves in the scorched son. Now having found an oasis, we do not want to go back under the scorching sun again."

Excerpts from the interview:

On Foreign investment

In the past, we isolated ourselves. We tried to build the economy without foreign participation. This policy has now been abandoned. We now encourage foreign investment.

Presently, we have foreign investments of over seven billion US dollars, most of those in the oil and gas sector and the rest in hotel and tourism industry.

We want to emphasise the tourism industry and we made

that the problem of fighting is solved but it must be noted that a large group surrendered with 8000 men and is participating in National Convention with us. While we are trying to achieve national consensus, the West is accusing us of being slow in the democratic process — they want us to move fast. But we are walking through minefields. We have so many problems that we have to solve maintaining our stability. If we move too fast, we may trip over some mines which may create difficult situations.

Referring to the US, he said, "The US should not turn a blind eye to real development in Myanmar, particularly unprecedented peace and stability which we now enjoy. We are making every effort to improve relations with the US but, as you know, it takes time to achieve desired results."

Naval base

Asked about Chinese presence in Myanmar and setting up of naval base by the Chinese in Coco's island, as alleged by Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes, he replied: "It is totally false. We will not allow any country to have base facilities. We are not sheltering anybody. You can put it on record that there is not a single Chinese soldier in Coco's island or in Myanmar. In Coco's island, we have a 40-year-old base, where some renovation is being done."

Beheaded body

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on Saturday and he had been missing since then, the sources added.

None, however, was arrested in this connection till last night. The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

In the other incident, Jalal Mandal, 28, the rickshaw puller, was critically injured when a group of local youths beat him up at Babupura slum on Friday evening.

Jalal, who lived at a slum at Paribagh, went to the slum with his van loaded with goods. He had an altercation with the local youths over his payment and was subsequently roughed up.

He was admitted to DMCH and later shifted to Pangu Hospital. He succumbed to injuries Sunday afternoon.

None was arrested regarding the attack on Jalal till yesterday. A murder case was filed with Dhanmondi thana Sunday.

SKOP

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solve various problems that exist in jute, textile transport and other sectors through discussion with the leaders concerned and to implement the agreement signed on January 20," says a SKOP release on the accord.

During today's talks the Labour and Employment Minister assured the union leaders of taking immediate step to pay the dues of the workers of different closed industries and resolve problems of Afif, Ajak and Sonali jute mills in Khulna.

The meeting also agreed to continue discussion on the 8-point demand of SKOP to settle those in phases.

10th batch of KOVs arrives

The tenth batch of the Korea Overseas Volunteers (KOVs) comprising six volunteers of the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), arrived in the city recently on a two-year voluntary service under a bilateral agreement between the Republic of Korea and Bangladesh, says a press release.

KOICA's Resident Representative in Bangladesh Jung Sang-Hoon along with KOICA's medical doctors and volunteers received the new KOVs at the Zia International Airport.

The KOVs will be put into an in-country training programme for four weeks before their actual placement in Savar, Gazipur, Gopibagan and University of Dhaka.

Deputy Director of Family Planning and local social workers, NGO workers and doctors participated in the programme.

World Population Day observed in Chapainawabganj

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, July 19: A day-long programme on World Population Day was held on July 19 at Chapainawabganj Shaheed-Satu Hall, reports BSS.

Family Planning Department and some social organisations arranged various programmes on this occasion.

The day-long programme was inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner Nazrul Islam.

Deputy Director of Family Planning and local social workers, NGO workers and doctors participated in the programme.

Mannan Bhuiyan visits injured JCD leader

By Staff Correspondent
BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday visited injured JCD leader Khamdem Naimul Nasir at Metropolitan Hospital in the city.

Nasir, convenor of JCD, Bagerhat district unit, was injured when a gang of armed terrorists allegedly belonging to ruling Awami League attacked him recently. The terrorists hit him with Chinese axe, said a press release.

Bhuiyan stayed some time with the JCD leader and inquired about his treatment.

Bagerhat district BNP general secretary Shaikh Atiar Rahman, M A Khaleque, district Juba Dal leader Mahbubur Rahman Tutil and others were also present.

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday visited Bagerhat district unit Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal convenor Khamdem Naimul Nasir, who was injured in an attack by terrorists, at Metropolitan Hospital in the city.

Air pollution
Ford offers assistance

By Special Correspondent

0.05 per cent before any significant improvements can be made," he said.

Another factor is that vehicles need to be properly maintained throughout their life according to the manufacturers specifications. Regular enforcement checks should be carried out to ensure that operators are maintaining their vehicles properly, Coulson added.

"Ford will provide Bangladesh any assistance to contain air pollution caused by automobile emission," Coulson said at a news briefing at the Jatiya Press Club. He met high officials of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and Department of Environment (DoE) during his visit to Dhaka and made the offer.

Coulson also said Ford is setting up a car manufacturing plant in Chennai, India to cater to the needs of the Indian sub-continent. The vehicles would conform to the Euro-2 emission standards.

Ford distributor in Bangladesh Abdul Malik Choudhury said that the company has agreed to give a hefty discount to 200 cars which would be used as taxis in Dhaka. We have a plan to raise it up to 2000, he said.

Coulson said that cleaner fuel could help reduce emission. The single biggest factor contributing to air pollution is sulphur in the diesel which is currently up to 1 per cent and it really needs to be reduced to

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