

Mugging

From Page 1

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. Indeed, 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

From Page 1

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

According to the schedule, BNP Chairman Begum Khaleda 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-Chattogram 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 apprised of 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'

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 here.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury was the special guest at the function jointly organised by Bangladesh Truck Owners Association and International

Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

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

Dr 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.

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 region with a vast human resources," he said, adding that surface transports were now playing 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.

Senate members pledge to make DU terrorism-free

Dhaka University Senate representatives of Registered Graduates elected from Gano-tantrik 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, Ohiduzzaman Khan, Advocate Shahara Khatun, Prof Sultana Shafi, Monayem Sharkey, Mahbub Uddin Ahmed Bir Bikram, Aroma Goon, Sirajul Huq 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. Speaking before a host of local rice scientists, plant breeders, experts and agronomists, Dr Khush acknowledged that future breakthroughs in cereal production might not be as phenomenal as the Green Revolution was. "We could double the size of production during the Green Revolution but now the challenge is even bigger. We have to increase the cereal production without inflicting further injuries to already depleted natural resource base."

Among other issues, he gave special references to frontier researches now being carried out worldwide. He mentioned about the hybrid technology, genetic engineering evolution of varieties tolerant to salinity, submergence and drought.

Terming Bangladesh as the most agro-ecologically diversified country, Dr Khush said, the country had already shown the world potential of research by doubling up its rice production within two decades. "If you can minimise the yield-gap by better ecology management and ensure judicious and efficient use of natural resources, Bangladesh's prospect for reaping more crops in near future is bright," hoped Dr Khush.

Executive Chairman of BARC Dr Zahurul Karim, Director General of BRRI, Dr M A Hossain, Director General of Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), Dr Idris Ali, IRRI Representative of 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 Razaque, BRRI scientists Dr M A 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 felicitations, Dr Khush told the agronomists that the future of food security lies in their hands.



City Corporation authorities with the help of Kakrail police seized chains and seats of unauthorised rickshaws from the area yesterday.

— Star photo

Myanmar willing to sell gas

From Page 1

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 ministries 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 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

lot of efforts to build a tourism infrastructure. Earlier we had only one hotel room, now we have 7000 hotel rooms.

We are building two large international airports — one at Mandalay and the other near Yangon.

Myanmar never received even one cent of international assistance. We would like to get international assistance but without any strings attached.

On Sun Kyi

She sent videotaped messages asking foreigners not to invest in her home country. She asked ASEAN not to recognise us. However, we need to have contact and build a common ground (between the two sides). We can then have gradual build up for the dialogue.

She did not create a ground where we could sit together. It needs a common ground and mutual trust to talk.

The most important problem is that of national unity. Because of lack of national unity, we have been fighting for 40 to 45 years. We are trying to solve the problems with the armed groups. When we were trying to make peace with the armed groups, she (Aung San Suu Kyi) was trying to ask them to go to the jungles. We have now succeeded in reaching agreement with 17 armed groups out of 18.

On Human Rights Violation

It is not correct that the government is violating human rights. We do not have forced labour, mass killings or mass graves. We have been portrayed by the western media in a negative way. The western powers would like to have a government in Myanmar which is pro-western. Our geographic location is most strategic — whoever controls our country, controls the gateway to Asia. We have long borders with China, Thailand, India and of course Bangladesh. Due to our geographic location, we suffered twice during the Second World War and also during the cold war. Due to our strategic geographic location, we need to stay non-aligned and be able to depend on ourselves.

On Democracy & West

Democracy is a process which has to be built. There is need for stability to build democracy. We want and we are working for national unity. For the first time we have reached agreement with 17 armed groups (out of 18). We cannot say

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

From Page 1

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 rickshawman, was critically injured when a group of local youths beat him up at Babupur slum on Friday evening.

Jalal, who lived at a slum at Parbagh, 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 Dhammdani thana Sunday.

SKOP

From Page 1

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 Afil, Ajax 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.

Air pollution Ford offers assistance

By Special Correspondent

Ford Motor Company has offered Bangladesh technical assistance to contain air pollution by providing expertise and technical know-how, Sam Coulson, Regional Manager of the company told reporters yesterday.

"Ford will provide Bangladesh any assistance to contain air pollution caused by automobile emission," Coulson said at a newsbriefing 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 offers.

BRTA has sought to arrange training programme for its staff to improve their skills in testing vehicles and the DoE has asked for help in traffic control, he added.

Commenting on the Dhaka traffic, he said, "amongst the factors mentioned as being contributors to a better environment were improved traffic control, installation of improved traffic light and more stringent policing of road users."

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 its really needs to be reduced to

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. He was assisted by Caroline Hosier, manager vehicle emissions regulations-Europe and rest of the world.

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.

Ford Taurus 1600 cc or above would be introduced in Dhaka from Indonesian plant for the taxicabs by next year. Some 1700 applications have been received by MAM for 200 taxis. Preference would be given to taxi driver-owners. Each vehicle would cost Tk 650,000 and a deposit of Tk 150,000 will be required to get the car.

JFK: Hopes fade

From Page 1

beaches where the young man known to millions of Americans as 'John-John' played as a child.

It was the latest tragedy to hit a family that millions of Americans think of as their own, a family whose talented and sometimes flawed young men seem to die long before their time. President Kennedy and his brother Robert were shot dead by assassins, others died in plane crashes and ski accidents.

The announcement that searchers had given up hope of finding the three alive ended a weekend of waiting on the fate of the young Kennedy — a man etched in the American memory as a 3-year-old, saluting the coffin of his murdered father.

The latest chapter in what many think is a 'Kennedy curse' dominated the thoughts of a nation on Sunday and spurred an outpouring of grief and affection.

Earlier in Washington, President Bill Clinton offered the prayers of a nation, saying the Kennedys 'have suffered much and given more' as a family over the past 40 years.

"At this difficult moment, we hope the families of these three fine young people will feel the strength of God, the love of their friends and the prayers of their fellow citizens," Clinton said.

Jerome Frechette of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), said that recovering the wreckage of the plane

"might take up to two weeks."

NTSB chief investigator for the accident, Robert Pearce, said experts had discovered the plane made a sudden drop of 200 metres to 545 metres in 29 seconds just after 9:40 pm EDT Friday, below radar level.

The search for the wreckage has been narrowed down to two or three sites close to the island and a specially equipped radar ship, the Rude, will return to sweep the areas at dawn today. Divers are expected to go down for a closer look.

State police are speculating the plane went into the sea nose first and broke up, a source close to the investigation told Reuters. The police do not expect to find fuselage or human remains intact.

BFUJ, DUJ to reopen offices at Press Club

Leaders of both the factions of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) held a meeting with the president and general secretary of the Jatiya Press Club (JPC) on Sunday, reports BSS.

The journalist leaders at the meeting agreed to reopen the office of the journalists union at the JPC.

JPC president Khandakar Manirul Alam presided over the meeting.



The condition of roads in various parts of the city have deteriorated following heavy rains. This picture was taken from Madartek area.

— Star photo

Mannan Bhuiyan visits injured JCD leader

By Staff Correspondent

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

Nasir, convener 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 Khaled, district Juba Dal leader Mahbubur Rahman Tutul and others were also present.



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

Agrani MD

From Page 1

the charge of MD after Nazmul Haq's one-month notice period.

Out of four, one has already expressed his reluctance to accept the post of Agrani Bank's MD because "it has become much controversial now," according to a source.

Nazmul Haq tendered his resignation on July 12 following alleged pressure from some high-ups in the government including an adviser to the Prime Minister to change his order transferring 76 high officials at a time. He had ordered transfer of the officials to districts from the bank's head office to bring officials from districts to change the administration.

A group of the transferred officials lobbied with the high-ups who created pressure on him to change the decision.

The Nazmul later stayed the mass transfer order but he tendered his resignation.

The issue was discussed at Agrani Bank's Board meeting on Thursday where some members criticised the MD for his 'harsh decision'.

Nazmul is likely to join a newly approved private bank as managing director.