

23 passport brokers jailed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday sentenced 23 people to nine months' imprisonment for cheating people, who seek passports, in front of the Department of Immigration and Passports in Agargaon in the capital.

The convicts, aged between 20 to 40 years, have been identified as Mohammad Majmuh, Atiar Rahman, Rabiul Islam, Mohammad Sohel, Nur Mohammad, Rezaul Karim, Mohammad Manik, Mohammad Suman, Abul Bashar, Mohammad Shafiq, Nuru Miah, Mohammad Lavlu, Joydar Ali, Mohammad Shipon, Enamul Huq, Rafiqul Islam, Kamal Pasha, Jahangir Alam, Harun Khan, Mohammad Hira, Golap Miah, Abdul Aziz and Mohammad Sohad.

Raihan Uddin Khan, senior assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of Rab-2, told The Daily Star that a team of Rab-2 conducted a raid around the passport department and arrested the 23.

"Promising to provide people with passports they have been cheating the passport seekers," said ASP Raihan.

"In pretence of providing people with passports, the convicts take money from the passport seekers. But the convicts did not provide the victims with passports," he said adding that when the victims would ask for the passports or their money back, the convicts would threaten them.

The ASP said after members of Rab-2 arrested the 23, Executive Magistrate AHM Anwar Pasha delivered the verdict when the detained confessed their crimes before his mobile court.

The mobile court sentenced the detained to six months' imprisonment and fined them Tk 10,000 each but as they failed to pay the fine the court added another three months to each of their sentence.

ARMED CLASH BETWEEN SHIBIR AND BCL IN RU



Jamaat-e-Islami backed Islamic Chhatra Shibir and ruling Awami League backed Bangladesh Chhatra League activists of Rajshahi University use guns and sharp weapons in a fierce clash on the campus yesterday leaving at least 25 students injured. The clash ensued after Shibir men disrupted a procession of BCL. (Story on Page 1)

PHOTO: STAR

Govt plans to improve rural transport system in 26 dists

UNB, Dhaka

The government has taken an initiative to improve rural transport system in 26 districts of the country to ensure sustainable transportation and enhance market services.

A proposal for the "Rural Transport Improvement Project-2 (RTIP-2)" is likely to be placed for consideration at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) to be held on Thursday.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) under the Local Government Division will implement the proposed project at an estimated cost of Tk 3,343 crore, said an official at the planning ministry to the news agency. The project is scheduled to be completed by June 2017.

Of the total amount, Tk 2,417 crore will come as project assistance from the World Bank while the rest Tk 926 crore from the government exchequer.

When contacted, an official at the World Bank's local office told the news agency that the bank has already approved their US\$302 million assistance for the project on September 20.

The planning ministry official said under the project, there will be 750km road development at upazila level, 503km road development in union level, maintenance and rehabilitation of 3,635km roads at both upazila and union levels apart from performance based maintenance contract of 450km roads.

Besides, some 50 growth centres, including women market sections, will be constructed along with acquisition of 200 hectares of land.

The 26 districts are Dhaka, Gazipur, Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Manikganj, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Netrakona, Kishoreganj, Sherpur, Tangail, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Sylhet, Habiganj, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Noakhali, Laxmipur, Feni, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Pabna and Sirajganj.

The planning commission at the Pre-evaluation Committee (PEC) meeting on the RTIP-2 on March 25 opined that once the project is implemented, it will help increase productivity of both agriculture and non-agriculture sector through improvement of rural communications and transportation system alongside alleviating poverty.

Gandhi's ideology solution to violence

Discussion told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahatma Gandhi's ideology of non-violence is a solution to any kind of violence or conflict, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

They were speaking at the discussion on "Ideology of Mahatma Gandhi and its relevance in the contemporary world" organised in CIRDAP auditorium in the capital.

Gandhi Ashram Trust organised the discussion marking Mahatma Gandhi's 143rd birth anniversary and International Day of Non-Violence.

Addressing as chief guest, Law Minister Shafiq Ahmed said ideology of Mahatma is relevant at all times in every country.

"His ideology should be followed to remove all types of violence and conflict and move towards development," he added.

United Nations Resident Representative Neal Walker urged all to come forward and establish the culture of non-violence.

Indian High Commissioner Pankaj Saran said Mahatma's message is not only valid for India and Bangladesh but the whole world.

Educationalist Prof Anisuzzaman said since the ideology possesses an ethical aspect, it will be useful in stopping all kinds of violence that occur in the state, society and family.

Economist Debapriya Bhattacharya, chairman of Gandhi Ashram Trust, lawmaker Mahub Uddin Khokon, among others, spoke at the programme.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Ganatantrik League also organised a discussion marking the pacifist's birth anniversary in Bir Uttam Khaza Nizamuddin auditorium in the capital.

Awami League Presidium Member Yousuf Hossain Humayun, lawmaker HN Ashikur Rahman, among others, spoke at the discussion.

Narsingdi AL leader murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A former ward councillor of Narsingdi municipality and Awami League leader was killed by some unknown miscreants at Puranpara in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The victim is Mohammad Shahjahan Mia, 50, also the AL general secretary of ward no.2.

Sources said some unidentified people used to throw brickbats at the residence of his neighbour Abdur Rashid very often.

To identify these people, Shahjahan along with Rashid and Altaf Mia was watching the house from an adjacent place around 7:30pm.

All on a sudden, the miscreants swooped on Shahjahan and hacked him to death.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said Md Asaduzzaman, OC of Sadar Model Police Station.

Kasalath recognised as Bangladeshi rice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Manila-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) has finally recognised "Kasalath" as a Bangladeshi rice variety, which was initially termed as an Indian variety.

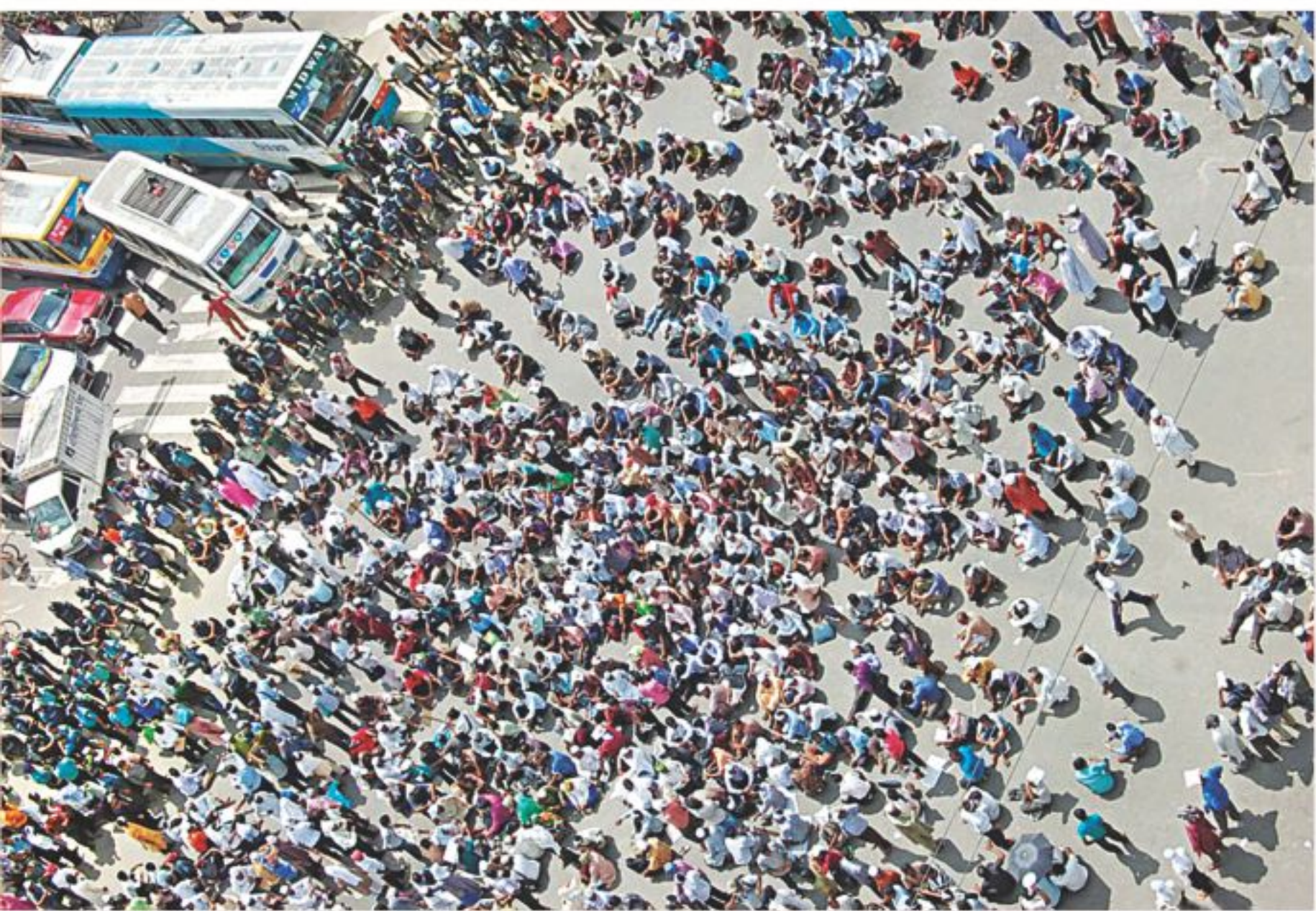
Kasalath, a traditional rice variety, is grown in Sylhet region and in parts of north-eastern India, and IRRI has recently developed some varieties from Kasalath, which could increase rice production by 25 percent, said Abed Chowdhury, a Bangladesh geneticist living in Australia, who took the initiative to get the IRRI recognition.

Kasalath is an "Aush" rice variety and in 1960s he heard about it a lot in Sylhet region, he told a solo discussion at the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

As the international science journal, Nature, published a report on the discovery of the rice variety in August and mentioned it as India's "Bharatiya Buno Dhan" variety, he took the initiative to get the IRRI recognition for Bangladesh, he said.

According to researchers, the rice varieties developed from Kasalath are infused with "phosphorus Starvation Tolerance" gene called PSTOL-1, identified in Kasalath. The gene has potentials to enable rice plants to produce 25 percent more grain by increasing uptake of phosphorus, an important but limited plant nutrient.

Abed said 20,000 or 50,000 varieties of rice were in Bangladesh but now only 6,000 were collected. He termed Kasalath a symbol of potential of Bangladeshi rice and everyone should come forward to save the Bangladeshi varieties even by cultivating limitedly.



Shikhhak Karmachari Oikya Parishad blocks Paltan intersection in the capital yesterday demanding Monthly Pay Order (MPO) for those secondary and higher secondary level educational institutions which are yet to be enlisted. PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

DEMAND FOR MPO Nahid urges teachers to stop demo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday urged the school and college teachers to stop demonstrations staged for demanding inclusion of their institution in the government's payroll.

"Efforts are on to meet the demands [of the teachers]. We are trying to chalk out a way to solve teachers' problems, so please return to home," he told reporters after a meeting with Finance Minister AMA Muhith at his secretariat conference room yesterday.

Educationalist Prof Emeritus Anisuzzaman, Jahangirnagar University Vice Chancellor Prof Anwar Hossain, Finance Secretary and Education Secretary Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury were also present at the meeting.

Teachers under the banner of Non-MPO Shikhhak Pratishthan Shikhhakh Karmachari

Oikyajote have been demonstrating for the last several months demanding inclusion of their institutions in MPO (monthly pay order) facilities.

To press home the demand, they yesterday staged a sit-in before the Jatiya Press Club and later marched in procession to Paltan and blocked Paltan intersection. They announced to continue their programme.

After meeting with the finance minister, Nahid told reporters that they had discussed the matter of MPO enlisting. "We told the finance minister to increase the budget for education as it is tough to work with the current allocated budget," he added.

Nahid said his ministry will monitor the MPO-listed non-government schools and colleges to check whether they use the money properly.

He said his ministry will also monitor the state of education of institutions.

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