

Speakers at seminar Arsenic contamination in groundwater nat'l calamity

Speakers at a seminar in the city yesterday said arsenic contamination in groundwater is a national calamity that calls for mobilisation of local expertise and use of traditional wisdom to mitigate, reports UNB.

They observed that the time has come to think twice if the country should allow any more overseas funding as loans to make "only investigations" instead of any curative programme for the exposed victims.

Addressing the seminar as chief guest, Environment Secretary Syed Marghub Morshed said arsenic contamination in the groundwater of Bangladesh is severe and needs to be addressed immediately.

The seminar on "Arsenic Contamination in Groundwater of Bangladesh" at the National Press Club was jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF) and the Forum for Environmental Journalists, Bangladesh (FEJB).

It was organised as part of the Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP) of the Environment Ministry.

Presided over by FEJB chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, the seminar was also addressed by UNDP assistant resident representative Shirin Kamal Sayed, Department of Environment (DOE) director general A R Khan, Dr Babar N Kabir of World Bank, Prof A H Khan of Dhaka University, and FEJB vice chairman Gaziur Rahman and general secretary Bakhtiar Rana and Shehabuddin Ahmed Nafa.

Giving an account of the problems relating to arsenic contamination in groundwater in Bangladesh, Dr Babar Kabir said 59 out of 64 districts were already affected by the problem exposing 24 million people to arsenic contaminated ground-

water. Quoting latest information presented at the coordination meeting of the National Arsenic Committee, he said that 7,000 people were identified as suffering from arsenicosis and another 75 million people are at risk.

"Merely marking of red or green" on tubewells in the rural areas will not solve the problem, Dr Kabir said adding that the community should be allowed to decide their options to operate and maintain their water sources.

UNDP assistant resident representative Shirin Kamal Sayed said the world body had come forward with the biggest global programme at a cost of 26 million US dollars to address various environmental issues, including arsenic problem — a national disaster in Bangladesh.

She said the arsenic contamination was basically related to drinking water, which later manifested as a health hazard.

The primary responsibility of providing safe drinking water to the people should be entrusted with the local government bodies or the public health department, the UNDP representative said.

She lauded the role of FEJB in advocating environmental issues and urged the journalists also to focus the social and economic impacts of arsenic contamination, particularly on rural women and the poor.

A R Khan, DG of the Department of Environment, stressed the need for alternate drinking water sources other than groundwater.

He favoured integrated pest management to minimise contamination of water sources by pesticide and fertilisers.

Khan also suggested hygienic use of surface water from rural ponds to avoid the risk of getting intoxicated by groundwater.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the inaugural function of Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib Eye Care Project at Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib Eye Care Project opens 13,500 community health clinics to be installed: Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the social workers and philanthropists to come forward in serving the humanity by contributing more to the health care services, reports UNB.

She also urged the private entrepreneurs to invest in health services for the rapid expansion of the very important sector.

Inaugurating the Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib Eye Care Project at a function at Sonargaon Hotel, Hasina said the government is working to ensure health for all by the year 2000 and continuing the projects to remove blindness in the country.

She said the government is going to install a total of 13,500 community health clinics — one for every 6000 people — to reach the essential healthcare services to the doorsteps of the people.

Bangladesh National Council for the Blind (BNCB) has taken an initiative to set up nationwide camps named Begum Fazilatunnesa Eye Care Project to perform cataract surgeries.

Under the project, more than 20,000 cataract surgeries, with or without intra-ocular lens (IOL), will be performed in two years time.

With assistance from Sight Savers International, the BNCB

has taken up two pilot projects in 24 thanas of Gopalganj, Sylhet, Sunamganj and Habiganj districts to provide full range ophthalmic services to the poor people.

The project was named after Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib, the wife of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to pay tribute to the great lady for her silent services to the nation.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), the major cause of blindness is cataract, a curable affliction. Bangladesh has 15 lakh blind people representing 1.2 per cent of the total population. Of them, at least 60 per cent are blind due to cataract.

Blindness due to cataract can be cured. Through Intra-Ocular Lens surgeries vision can be restored almost at normal level, and the Fazilatunnesa Mujib Project will mainly concentrate on IOL surgeries and provide essential eye care services, said the organisers.

The Prime Minister said thousands of blind patients would get back their eyesight through the operations under this project. Initially, the blind people of Gopalganj and greater Sylhet will benefit.

Hasina thanked BNCB and Sight Saver International for

their noble gesture in the services to humanity and naming the project after her beloved mother, who silently sacrificed her life for the welfare of the people of this country.

"That noble lady, my mother, was a trusted friend and companion of the father of the nation... from behind the screen, she inspired Bangabandhu for continuing movements for the freedom of the country," she said expressing gratitude to the organisers for showing respect to Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib.

Inaugurating the Begum Fazilatunnesa Eye Care Project, she hoped that this project will be expanded to every district to ensure service to the common people and assured all possible help from the government to the project.

Prime Minister's Advisor on Parliamentary Affairs and Sylhet Division project chairman Suranjit Sengupta, Gopalganj district project chairman Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Bangladesh Ophthalmologist Association president M Mubarak Ali, Sight Saver International (UK) country director Jalaluddin Khan, BNCB member secretary Prof Syed Mudasser Ali, Prof AQSM Harun, MA Mubin Khan and Nazmunnesa Ali also spoke at the function.



BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia distributing crests among the winners of different events at Kamal-Kuri Puroshkar '98 organised by 'Amra Zia Hobo' at the auditorium of Jatiya Press Club yesterday. —Star photo

Nasim tells newly appointed BDR personnel Play significant role in resisting illegal border trade

SATKANIA (Chittagong), Mar 23: Minister for Home, Post and Telecommunications Mohammad Nasim today directed Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel to play significant role in resisting illegal border trade and curb trafficking of drugs, women and children across the frontiers, reports BSS.

The minister called upon the newly appointed BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) personnel to perform their duties with utmost sincerity, patriotism and courage.

Mohammad Nasim was addressing as the chief guest at the

passing out ceremony of the 54th batch of BDR at the Rifles Training Centre and School at Satkania here.

Director General of BDR Major General Mohammad Azizur Rahman Bir Uttam, and commandant of the Rifles Training Centre and School Colonel SM Shawkat Ali and senior officials were present.

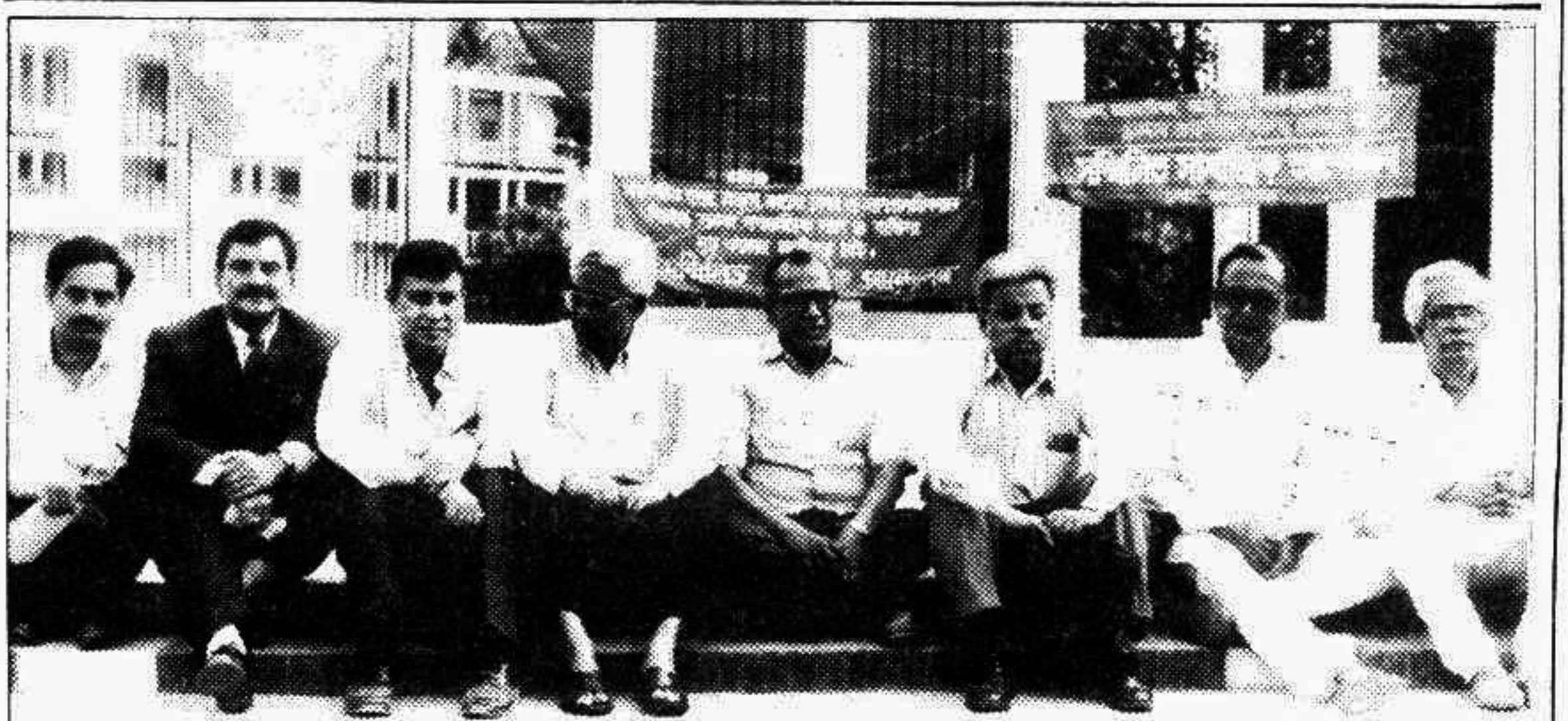
The minister observed that cross border smuggling is a serious threat to socio-economic progress of the country and it is a major obstacle for macro economic development of the country.

he said the prime mission of

the BDR personnel is to curb smuggling for boosting the economic growth.

Lauding the role of BDR in curbing smuggling and maintaining law and order in the country, the minister said that the BDR had a glorious record in performing duties with strict devotion, sincerity, patriotism and courage.

Earlier, the minister inspected a smartly turned out contingent of BDR and took the salute of the parade of the 54th batch comprising 428 personnel. The minister also distributed awards to eight Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOS).



Sammilito Samajik Andolon held a meeting protesting the political killing, terrorism, black money and terrorism at central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday. —Star photo

New bust of Madhuda to be unveiled April 24

By DU Correspondent

The new bronze bust of Madhusudan Dey, a Liberation War martyr, more popularly known as Modhuda will be unveiled on April 24.

This was disclosed at a meeting of 'Shaheed Madhusudan Dey Mrititbarshiki Udjapan Parishad' at Madhu's Canteen on Dhaka University campus yesterday. Former student leaders of different student organisations participated in the meeting.

The meeting informed that DU Vice Chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury will inaugurate the bust and preside over a memorial meeting at the canteen premises.

Some unidentified elements damaged the bust of Madhuda on November 14 last year. The nose and ears of the bust were damaged. The damaged bust, now wrapped in black cloth will be removed and the new one will be installed in its place, Arun Dey said.

Arun, Madhuda's son, who now runs the canteen also said that the new bust will cost Tk 25,000. The university authorities have allocated Tk 10,000 for the work and rest will be provided by the different student organisations. Touliq Hasan Khan, who sculpted the original bust will sculpt the new bust as well.

PIB to honour freedom fighter journalists today

By Staff Correspondent



Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) will honour five freedom fighter journalists at its auditorium today on occasion of the Independence Day.

The five freedom fighters are Shaheed Serajuddin Hossain, late Abul Kashem Sandip posthumously, M R Akhter Mukul, Santosh Gupta and Kamal Lohani.

This is the first time PIB is paying tribute to freedom fighter journalists and it will continue in the years to come, a PIB release said.

The programme will be preceded by a seminar on "Liberation War and Journalism" Akhter Mukul will present key note paper in the seminar.

N'ganj: Musclemen

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court of justice and lingered on for years.

At one point the Baniks challenged the Chakrabortys on their authority to realise the rent and said the money should go to the temple funds rather than to an individual. Bank also said the temple was a public institution — and not a private one as claimed by the caretaker.

Talking to a group of journalists on Monday, Pronob and his wife said they had long suffered due to the existence of the shop. They said there were six other makeshift shops whose owners moved out willingly but Bashudev's shop was a structure that had been built more than 200 years ago along with the temple.

"I was obliged to go to different leaders to help me evict Bashudev and at one stage our local MP SM Akram asked AKM Shamim Osman, another MP, to settle the matter by involving other men," said Pronob Chakraborty showing a document with a hand-written note from Akram.

Pronob went on saying that about six months ago Golam Sarwar, "a well-known figure in Narayanganj" was asked by Shamim Osman MP to help settle the matter. "As a gesture of gratitude and also to keep bad people away I put up the sign-board outside with Sarwar's name in it," Pronob said.

Neither SM Akram nor AKM Shamim Osman could be reached for their comments.

As soon as Sarwar "took over the case", local people said, he asked Bashudev for Tk 3.5 lakh as toll which Bashudev had to pay fearing trouble from some of the most notorious terrorists in town. Few days later, Sarwar returned to Bashudev and again asked for more money.

On March 11, Sarwar allegedly arrived at Bashudev's shop and locked up his shop and asked Bashudev to show up at Sarwar's Chashara retreat before noon next day and collect the keys. When Bashudev failed to return, at around 3pm on Friday, March 13, about 15 men, led by Sarwar and one Robin, a leaseholder of a local baby-taxi stand, raided Bashudev's godown at Amlapara, some 250 yards from his shop.

A godown assistant and an eyewitness alleged that the godown manager and others were held at gunpoint while the men loaded the awaiting vans with goods. The "operation" lasted about four hours. Later in the evening, trucks were brought in to take the goods away.

Bashudev in his shelter in Dhaka said he and his family were so terrified that none could even go to the police. When one of the family members rang up the thana, the police asked the person to show up at the station which they could not think of doing at the time.

A former student leader of Narayanganj and a local resident, said he saw the men loading the vans and trucks but did not suspect foul play until she saw the men on motorbikes. Later she learnt from her friend living in the same building that Bashudev's godown was looted.

"Narayanganj is already under the grip of few warlords who control the police and the administration," she said.

On March 16, the gang allegedly arrived at Bashudev's shop and started to loot. They

stripped the 130-year-old shop of its furniture and goods while some labourers started demolishing and others building a wall in front.

A fearful Bashudev in Dhaka said he was a good citizen and never failed to pay a month's rent for the shop. He said he respected his ancestors' business with his heart and in no way deserved such a treatment. "I would have accepted any judgement from the court of law but the way I have been persecuted is unacceptable in a civilised society," a visibly shaken Bashudev told newsmen.

Narayanganj thana police said they had no criminal list that dates back to more than two years. Asked whether Sarwar had any criminal record, the Officer-in-Charge said,

"After I was posted here I did not find any criminal list in the thana. The one I have made in the two years contains the names of 43 criminals in which the name of Sarwar is not there."

Golam Sarwar, reached by phone, said one person was enjoying the property by force for about six months. "I have made history by changing the history of 130 years. I did not have to touch anyone. All I did was to beg by holding the 'hands and feet' of both the parties and settle the matter."

When asked about the go-down looting, he replied, "Quite impossible. I could not have done it."

He learnt last night that after correspondents from different newspapers visited the spots in Narayanganj, several employees of Bashudev were allegedly made to sign a paper that said, "We have received all the goods which were inside the shop of Bashudev."

Newsmen reject

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The meeting said like other citizens, journalists are also entitled to enjoy public holidays. The limited number of holidays hitherto enjoyed by journalists are under the purview of laws passed in parliament. Thus, no single organisation like BSP has any right to annul them, it added.

The meeting also demanded two days' weekly holidays for the newspaper industry.

The meeting further called upon the managements of various newspaper and news agencies to pay all arrear dues, festival bonus, implement the Fifth Wage Board Award, and urged the government to appoint inspectors and create special tribunals for redressing due benefits of the journalists.

The meeting, decided to hold a protest rally on March 26 at 11 am at the National Press Club.

The Chittagong Union of Journalists at a protest meeting also called upon the BSP to withdraw its unilateral decision.

The meeting, held at the Chittagong Press Club observed that BSP had no right to impose its unilateral decisions. The meeting said that journalists in Chittagong would not cover the National Day programmes if the BSP does not withdraw its decision.

The meeting called upon the BSP to declare one-day holiday each for Janmasti, Boudha Purnima and Christmas in addition to the existing holidays.

Obituary

President of the Daily Ittefaq Karmachari Union and Secretary General of Bangladesh Sangbadpatri Karmachari Federation Mahtab Uddin Khan died of liver cancer at Delta Medical Centre yesterday. He was 50, reports BSS.

He left behind his wife, two sons, one daughter and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

His funeral-janaza was held at his Jafarabari residence, Ittefaq Bhaban and the Jatiya Press Club and the body was buried at Mirpur Shaheed Intellectuals Graveyard.

EWU English Society seminar

A seminar was organised yesterday by the English Society of East West University (EWU). Harunur Rashid Khan, assistant professor of English, presented the keynote paper on "Speaking Strategies to Overcome Communication Difficulties", says a press release.

Dr Mohammed Farashuddin, Governor of Bangladesh Bank and the founder Vice Chancellor of the university inaugurated the seminar. The seminar was followed by a questioning and discussion session.

Cricket

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unfortunately run out in the 38th over. Johnson cracked 33 sweetly timed hits to the rope.

Skipper Campbell followed Johnson soon. He was stumped by Otenio for a duck when he went down the wicket to drive Tikolo.

Left-handed Andy Flower then took charge and shared a 54-run stand with all-rounder Guy Whittall. Bare being trapped leg-before by Thomas Odoayo in the 47th over, Andy scored 73 off 86 balls with a six and three boundaries, his third successive fifty in the tournament. Odoayo then showed Viljoen his way to the dressing room in a similar fashion in the next ball.

Guy Whittall, however, kept the scoreboard ticking in the last three overs with a quickfire 34-run unbeaten partnership with Heath Streak. Whittall was not out on 40 off just 30 balls while Streak was undefeated on 10 off 7 balls.

For Kenya, two in-form batsmen Stephen Tikolo and Maurice Odundo scored highest 73 and 50 runs respectively.

The duo, who propelled Kenya to an eight-wicket win over hosts Bangladesh last Saturday with an unbeaten 118-run partnership, raised some hopes for the ICC runners-up with a brilliant 131-run third wicket partnership.

But everything came back to Zimbabwe's way when Grant Flower dismissed both in the space of three overs. Grant returned with his career best four for 32 to put brakes on the Kenyan campaign. Skipper Alister Campbell backed him well, taking two wickets for 33 runs from his 10 overs.

To his credit, middle-order Hitesh Modi was undefeated on 45 when Kenya exhausted their quota of 50 overs.

Zimbabwe maintained their unbeaten run in the tournament, having won all their three matches. On the other hand, Kenya have lost twice to Zimbabwe and won against Bangladesh.

10 shops gutted in Patiya

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 23: At least 10 shops, including a community centre were gutted in a fire at Munsef Bazar under Patiya thana today, police and fire brigade sources said.

—Star photo

Weather Dry weather likely

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kusthia, Pabna and Bogra in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met office said yesterday.

Day temperature is expected to remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

The country's highest temperature yesterday was recorded at 37.0 degree Celsius at Rangamati and the lowest 12.8 degrees in Srimongal.

The sun sets today at 6.11 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.58 am.

Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in Percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	35.7	19.0	48	38
Chittagong	34.5	18.5	80	72
Rajshahi	34.0	17.0	49	43
Khulna	34.5	22.2	80	51
Bairisal	35.0	19.6	80	56
Sylhet	35.5	19.6	47	29
Cox's Bazar	35.0	21.4	65	80

Fighting abuse of women, children 'South Asian govts should strive harder'

By Staff Correspondent

South Asian governments should strive harder to fight abuse of women and children, who are treated as second class citizens in the region, said Nigel Fisher, visiting new director for South Asia of the United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

"There has to be a stronger political agenda for drives regarding violence against women and children to create

people of the world live in South Asia and out of them 50 per cent are malnourished." "This problem can be resolved through education of women as mothers can educate their children," he added.

Education for women is an important area for UNICEF in South Asia where women and children are abused most, he said.

"Without education children are virtually condemned to a life with a general lack of material and intellectual well-being," he said.

More than 130 million children of primary school age, in developing countries, including 73 million girls are growing up without access to basic education, a recent UNICEF report has said.

Media can play a vital role to fight issues like child and women trafficking, abuse of children and women, arsenic mitigation programme and others, the UNICEF director said.

Shahida Azfar, UNICEF representative in Dhaka added that UNICEF is seeking more funds for arsenic mitigation programme in the country. UNICEF has already allocated \$2.5 million for arsenic mitigation programme in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Dhaka will host the next "Media Summit" on child rights and the media scheduled for next March with a view to create awareness among the media personnel on women and children issues.

About 150 media personalities from 27 countries are expected to attend the summit, the last Media Summit was held in Manila of Philippines 1996.



Nigel Fisher, Regional Director for South Asia, UNICEF, addressing a press conference yesterday.

awareness," he said while addressing the local press yesterday.

Nigel Fisher flew here Monday on a three-day visit at Bangladesh as a part of his six-week tour of the South Asia region.

He said: "Twenty two per cent

Khaleda to address meeting at Manikganj today

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia will address a public meeting at Manikganj Dendura University College ground at 3 pm today.

DU information on internet

In an effort to assist the admission seekers both at home and abroad, Dhaka University has put the information regarding admission into its first honours courses on the internet, reports UNB.

The web page, <http://www.univdhaka.edu>, also contains many more information about the university.