

# HR situation deteriorates

## Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 184 people were killed by law enforcement agencies and 35 journalists were injured in attacks, 13 others arrested and 35 others were manhandled last year, according to the Annual Report on Human Rights Issues 2007.

Also, 459 women and children fell victim to rape and 161 others to acid violence during the period.

Pointing to the grim picture of human rights, speakers at a roundtable yesterday said it is necessary to lift the state of emergency immediately as HR situation has deteriorated sharply in the country.

They also criticised the caretaker government for not taking any initiatives to try the war criminals.

Odhikar, a human rights organisation, organised the roundtable on its annual report on human rights at the National Press Club in the city.

There was an absence of due process in political cases filed last year and the issue of trial of war criminals is overlooked by the government, said Dr Dipu Moni, a political activist.

The speakers said the goal of the caretaker government is to establish democracy through a free and fair election, but the state of emergency is the main hindrance to achieving the goal as fundamental rights have been suspended because of the emergency.

Imposing restrictions on the electronic media also implies restrictions on the people of the country and that the government should consider the issue, said Prof AAMS Arefin Siddiqi.

Secretary of Odhikar Adilur Rahman Khan, Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury and Maj (ret) Akhtaruzzaman also spoke at the roundtable presided over by former secretary Asaf-ud Doula.

Farhad Mazhar, a literature and political researcher, read out the

summery report on human rights situation in 2007.

The report recommended lifting the emergency and creating an enabling environment for dialogue, change and democratic polity.

It also called for ensuring freedom of the press, putting an end to extra-judicial killings, torture and indiscriminate arrest and withdrawing cases filed against jute mills and garments workers on charges of violating emergency rules.

It recommended conducting judicial enquiries into the extra-judicial killings and taking action against the persons responsible.

The report also recommended that the government should facilitate an enabling environment by releasing all political prisoners. If there are cases against any persons, trials should be conducted respecting human rights and ensuring due process of the law, it added.



Prof AAMS Arefin Siddiqi addresses a roundtable at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left are Adilur Rahman Khan, Farhad Mazhar, Asaf-ud Doula, Rashed Khan Menon and Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury.

# 'Give due recognition to indigenous people'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday urged the government to give due recognition to indigenous people of the country.

The discussion was organised as part of a three-day-long public lecture programme taken by Research and Development Collective (RDC) to mark its 12th founding anniversary at the Women's Volunteer Association auditorium in the city.

The country cannot go ahead without recognising its indigenous people, said Dr H K S Arefin, a leading anthropologist and president of RDC, while delivering the inaugural address.

In his keynote paper, RDC General Secretary Prof Mezbah Kamal said, "Our history suggests that we have the same root and we belong to the same soil. So we should not divide our nation."

Presided over by Prof Abdul Momin Chowdhury, former vice-chancellor of National University, the discussion was also addressed by Advocate Promod Mankin, a former parliament member.

# Adopt habitat-friendly coal mining

## Speakers call at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Phulbari residents will not oppose coal mining in the area if their habitat and livelihoods remain unaffected, said leaders of Phulbari Rakha Committee yesterday.

"We shall have no objection if mining is done without affecting our habitat and livelihoods," said Khurshid Alam Moti, joint-convenor of Phulbari Rakha Committee, a body which is protesting open-pit mining at Phulbari in Dinajpur district.

"We urge the government to consider our expectations before taking any decision," he said.

Moti made the appeal after the screening of a documentary on Phulbari at a discussion in the city which was organised by the Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

Former chief adviser of a caretaker government Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, Chief of Coal Policy Review Committee Prof Abul Matin Patwari, Advisory Editor of Amar Desh Ataus Samad, Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University and Prof Nurul Islam of Buet spoke on the occasion.

Prof Sakawat Ali Khan, SEHD chairman and a teacher of mass communication and journalism department, chaired the programme.

"I don't think any government would be able to take any decision without considering the objections of people. I am sure the present or the next government will go forward considering the issue honestly," said Justice Rahman.

Prof Matin said open-pit mining could be taken on experimental basis.

# Sit-in at DU for release of detained teachers, students

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of students yesterday staged a sit-in in front of the vice-chancellor's office at around noon.

Some 35 to 40 students wearing white cloth around their heads staged the sit-in for, what they said, protesting an injustice.

They demanded that the teachers and students must be released before the university reopens on January 8.

One of the students said the government is taking legal measures against the persons "responsible" for the August violence, but no measure was taken against the army personnel who beat three DU students over the watching of a football match that triggered the violence.

"Students who are participating in different programmes to free the detainees, are being harassed by law enforcement agencies," he added.

# JU Day celebration on Jan 12

BSS, Dhaka

The Jahangirnagar University Day will be celebrated on January 12 with the reunion of former and present students, teachers, officers and employees on the campus.

The day will be inaugurated with the hoisting of national and university flags at 10:00am on the Life Science Institute premises, says a press release.

No registration will be required for participating in the celebration, as the university authorities would not make any extra arrangement for the entertainment of the participants as it decided to stage the 'low profile' festival due to the cyclone devastation in southwestern coastlines.

# Health centre to provide free medicare for urban poor

BSS, Dhaka

An urban health center was inaugurated at Shahjahanpur yesterday aimed at providing free medicare facilities to the distressed people who live in city's slums and footpaths.

The centre will remain open for five days a week in which two full-time physicians and a number of volunteer doctors will provide free treatment to the poor people. To maintain health records of the patients, health cards will be provided by the centre.

The health centre was set up at the Butterfly Kindergarten at North Shahjahanpur under the sponsorship of Tazin Shadid, a Bangladeshi expatriate living in USA and working in Microsoft Corporation.

The Distressed Children and Infants (DCI), a US-based NGO, took the initiative under one of its projects titled 'Free Urban Healthcare' with the help of Asahi Fund Bangladesh.

Diabetic Association of Bangladesh (DAB) and Bangladesh Medical Association of North America (BMANA) will also provide technical support to the project.

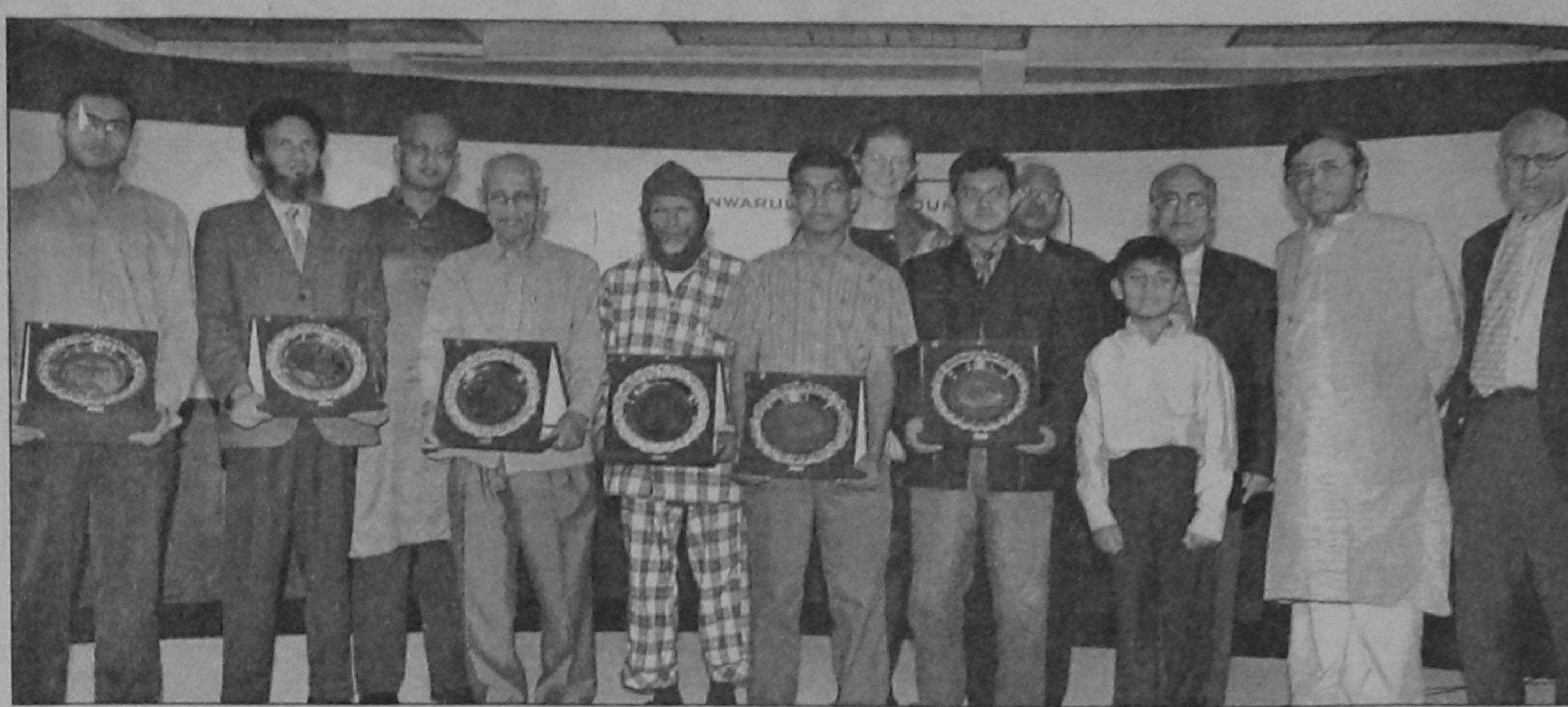
Chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) Muhammad Abdul Mazid inaugurated the center as the chief guest.

Chaired by President of Asahi Fund Bangladesh Dr M Sirajul Huq, the opening ceremony was also addressed by Executive Director of DCI Dr Ehsanul Huq, BMANA Secretary Dr Maksud Chowdhury, Director of the project Dr Romena Helal and Headmistress of the kindergarten Meherunissa Islam.

Mazid urged the rich people living at home and abroad to come forward for contributing to the development of the country's health and education sectors, which are the most important prerequisites of the prosperity.

Describing his dream of setting up a free hospital in the city, Tazin said urban poor people could not get proper medical treatment comparing with the rural poor as many NGOs are providing healthcare support to rural areas.

Dr Ehsan said DCI has a target to set up many free health centres in all parts of the capital for ensuring medicare of the urban poor.



Winners of Anwarul Quadir Foundation award pose with the guests at the award giving ceremony at a city hotel in the city yesterday.

# Build a society encouraging innovations

## Speakers say at Anwarul Quadir Foundation award giving ceremony

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Educationists at an award giving ceremony yesterday called for building a society where people would feel encouraged to develop rational thinking and make innovations in order to solve problems and improve their lives.

The culture of innovation has not been developed in the country in the last few decades because of the faulty education system, which keeps students confined to only textbooks instead of encouraging them to think freely, they added.

At the ceremony titled 'Innovative Bangladesh', the USA-based Anwarul Quadir Foundation awarded four persons and a research organisation of Bangladesh in recognition of the innovations. Two winners of Global Essay Competition for Bangladesh were also awarded for their innovative ideas.

Sheikh Helal Uddin of Jhenidah was awarded for developing the process of manufacturing fertiliser with locally available raw components and Munira Begum of Rajbari for achieving great success in running a dairy farm and using cowdung for multipurpose use.

Hyder Husyn, an aeronautical engineer who is now a renowned singer, was awarded for developing

innovative techniques for multi-surface cleaning, while scientist Dr Khalilur Rahman for promoting solar energy system.

Pi Lab, a technological research organisation, was awarded for developing a power technology. Each of them received a crest.

The global essay competition winners are Saifuddin Ahmed of Bangladesh and Anastasia M Telesetsky, an environmental lawyer of San Francisco.

Saifuddin was awarded for his proposal of managing and increasing productivity in agriculture by using absentee-owned land, while Telesetsky was awarded for her proposal of promoting the use of moringa oleifera (sazne leaves), an indigenous plant, to improve nutrition for low-income people.

"In order to restore human dignity, we need innovations in technology, agriculture, health, management and good governance," said Brac Founder and Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed at the ceremony.

In his keynote presentation, Abed said whatever ideas people have must be practical and should have impact on people's lives. "Problems solving is a matter of great innovation."

Brac University Vice Chancellor Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury said

that in the traditional education system, teachers generally do not encourage students to ask questions beyond textbooks. As a result, students remain confined to only textbooks.

"A culture of innovation has not developed here in the last few decades," he said, adding that whatever innovative ideas are there should be promoted to solve problems and improve the lives of people.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, president of Bishaw Shahitya Kendra, said only freedom of thinking can make people innovative.

Anwarul Quadir's son Iqbal Quadir, daughter Samaria Quadir and granddaughter Anisha Quadir and Prof Robert I Roberg of Harvard University also spoke.

The Quadir family established the Anwarul Quadir Foundation in 2004, inspired by the generous thoughts of Anwarul Quadir to promote economic and social progress in Bangladesh.

Anwarul Quadir (1920-1972) was born in Narail, Bangladesh, and practiced law in Jessore from 1954 to 1972. He believed deeply in a socially just and economically progressive country, and in the power of ideas and individual initiatives to achieve those ends.

# Aggyan Party kills grocer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of 'Aggyan Party' drugged a grocer to death at Dayaganj under Sutrapur Police Station in the city yesterday.

The criminals took away his cellphone set and other valuables from him.

The victim was identified as Shahabuddin, 30, owner of a grocery shop on Distillery Road.

Receiving information, Shahabuddin's brother Moinuddin rushed to the spot and found his brother unconscious.

He took Shahabuddin to Dhaka Medical College Hospital at around 7:00pm where doctors declared him dead.

Moinuddin said his brother might have fallen victim to Aggyan Party, which makes their target unconscious using sedative drug and takes away his or her belongings.

# Trader shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals shot a kitchen shop owner at Dania in Jatrabari in the city yesterday as he refused to pay the extortion money.

The trader identified as Masudur Rahman Rony was shot in his lower abdomen when the criminals fired at him at Dania Kitchen Market at around 11:30am. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

Locals chased the criminals and captured two attackers. They were handed over to Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) after a good beating.

Relatives of the victim suspected that local criminal gang 'Palsh group' demanded Tk 2 lakh as extortion from Rony a week ago. He informed the matter to Rab that infuriated the criminals.

# Electronic media urged to air more programmes on indigenous culture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 25th anniversary of a BTV programme for preserving and highlighting the indigenous culture and heritage will be celebrated amid festivity today.

On this day in 1983, BTV started the programme named 'Banoful' to highlight indigenous culture and heritage. Later it was renamed as 'Lokalaya' and has been airing the programme twice a month.

BTV has so far telecast about 200 programmes on the life and culture of different ethnic communities in the country.

On the eve of the occasion, Tribal Community Development Centre held a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday.

Devi Prasad Majumdar, president of the Centre, said Lokalaya programme is serving as a gateway to project the culture of about 40 ethnic groups living across the country.

He said the mainstream people become familiar with different ethnic groups through this programme while the government and NGOs are getting scopes to work for their welfare.

Chowdhury Ataur Rahman, member-secretary of the organisation and presenter of the programme, said BTV has made a history by airing the programme for last 25 years.

He urged other electronic media to follow BTV in airing more programmes on indigenous culture and heritage.



The daily Prothom Alo organises a roundtable titled 'Election, Democracy and Future Bangladesh' in its office at Karwan Bazar in the city yesterday. From left are Mahbubur Rahman, Sultana Kamal, Maj (ret) Hafizuddin Ahmed, M Hafizuddin Khan, Dr Akbar Ali Khan, Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud, Syed Ashrafur Islam, AF Hasan Arif, Maj Gen Aminul Karim and Dr Ali Riaz. (Story on Page 16)

# Myanmar issue must remain a priority

## Says EU envoy

AFP, United Nations

Efforts to promote democracy in Myanmar must remain a priority for the international community, European Union special envoy for Myanmar Piero Fassino said here Friday.

After talks with UN chief Ban Ki-moon and his envoy on Myanmar, Ibrahim Gambari, Fassino said they found common ground, particularly on the need to enlist the support of all key Asian countries for diplomatic pressure to secure a political dialogue between the Myanmar regime and the opposition.

The Italian diplomat also highlighted the risk of having the Myanmar crisis eclipsed by emerging crises elsewhere, a reference to Pakistan and Kenya.

"This is a situation we want to avoid," he said. "We want to keep Myanmar at the top of the international community's agenda... Our common goal is unblocking a situation which today appears stalled."

Fassino, a former Italian

# Georgian opposition cries foul in vote

AFP, Tbilisi

Georgia's opposition complained of "serious violations" in a snap presidential poll yesterday, but elections officials and representatives of incumbent Mikheil Saakashvili dismissed the accusation.

"We have the problems we expected. We have seen many serious violations," one of the opposition's leaders, Tina Khidasheli, told AFP.

She said the opposition had filmed numerous instances of people voting two or three times and that some ballot boxes had been tampered with by election officials.

She said that election officials were refusing to register the complaints of opposition representatives at polling stations.

"The authorities are trying to remove any legal basis for contesting the election," Khidasheli said.

Leading opposition candidate Levan Gachechiladze also said "there are violations".

But the Central Election Commission (CEC) denied there was trouble.

# Ebadi slams executions in Iran, hanging of mother

AFP, Tehran

Nobel peace prize winner Shirin Ebadi's rights group yesterday slammed the rising number of executions in Iran, including the hanging of a young mother who murdered her husband.

"The Defenders of Human Rights Centre denounces the nationwide executions and their upward trend," the group of human rights lawyers led by Ebadi said in a statement.

They pointed to the execution on Wednesday in Tehran's Evin prison of Raheleh Zamani, 27, who had been found guilty of murdering her husband and was hanged despite her lawyers' efforts to spare her the gallows.

"Judicial officials had agreed to delay her execution for a month... but she was hanged suddenly," the statement said. "On the evening of January 1 they informed her of the execution and then, after just 12 hours, they hanged her."

"Four reputable lawyers had also cast doubt on the case," it added without giving further details.

Zamani, who killed her husband after discovering he was having an affair and then reportedly chopped his body into pieces, was hanged in Evin along with seven men convicted of murder.

## WEATHER TODAY

### Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Highest temperature 29.1 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 09.9 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:26pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest 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	26.3	16.2	68	53
Chittagong	26.4	16.2	72	60
Rajshahi	26.0	09.9	79	56
Khulna	25.7	14.3	89	67
Barisal	27.0	13.0	89	73
Sylhet	27.5	15.2	76	70
Cox's Bazar	28.0	17.0	65	59

## DHAKA TODAY

**Roundtable**

Workers Party of Bangladesh organises a roundtable on assassination of Benazir Bhutto and politics in the sub-continent. Venue: Shaheed Asad auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

**Lecture**

Research and Development Collective (RDC) organises a public lecture to mark its founding anniversary. Venue: WVA Auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.