

Teaching has become commercial

Says finance adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday said teaching profession has now become a commercial proposition while schools are a springboard to open up coaching centres.

He also blamed "politicisation" of the entire educational system for poor education quality.

"We must improve overall governance scenario to improve the quality of education," the Adviser told the concluding session of a three-day conference on education governance at the NEC conference room.

"Unless you can prevent the politicisation by the local government institutions, I'm afraid, the desired results will not be achieved," he said.

Over 80 participants from the central and field level in primary and secondary education, academics and representatives from NGOs and other stakeholders participated in the conference.

UNESCO and Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO in cooperation with the ministries

of Education, and Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) organised the conference on "Governance in Education: Transparency, Accountability and Effectiveness".

Primary and Mass Education Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury and Asian Development Bank (ADB) country director Hua Du also spoke at the meeting with MoPME Secretary M Mosharrar Hossain in the chair.

The finance adviser assured of full financial support, as instructed by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, to improve governance and quality in the education sector. "But effectiveness of the expenditure must be assured," he said.

About the sorry state of the education sector, he said the service conditions like promotion of teachers are "determined politically".

He said the education system needs a policy for promotion of teachers giving due importance on merit instead of mere seniority and political consideration.

Dr Aziz added that all the supervisory officers, who are to evaluate promotion of teachers, have become politicians and tend to

give substantially higher marks in the ACR (Annual Confidential Report) to gain popularity.

The conference has developed a 10-point framework for action in improving governance to achieve better outcomes in education, including decentralisation of authority with accountability in educational management at local level and individual institutions.

Other recommendations include policy-making and coordination, comprehensive law for national education, adequate resources for education with quality and equity, education governance free from partisan politics, school as the locus of education, development and use of professional capacity, career growth and better remuneration for teachers and greater voice of stakeholders at all levels.

The finance adviser stressed the need for proper implementation of the recommendations.

ADB country director Hua Du assured donors' support in implementing the recommendations to help improve the governance and quality of education in Bangladesh.

Bodies of four Bangladeshi workers arrive from S Arabia

UNB, Dhaka

Bodies of four Bangladeshi workers killed in a road accident in Saudi Arabia on January 31, were flown to Dhaka yesterday.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury received the bodies at the airport in the morning and later handed over to their relatives.

The victims are Abdul Quader Gabtali Upazila in Bogra, Arifur Rahman of Sreerampur upazila in Nariail, Harun of Begumganj upazila in Noakhali and Selim Bhuiyan of Pakundia upazila in Kkshihoreganj district.

Iftekhar told newsmen at the airport that the government and the nation as a whole are deeply shocked at the loss of 12 Bangladeshi workers in the tragic accident.

He said each family of the victims will be given Tk one lakh as compensation and Tk 20,000 for burial. The money will be given from the Wage Earners Welfare Fund.

Twelve Bangladeshi construction workers were killed in the road accident in Saudi capital Riyadh on January 31. One was buried there and bodies of seven others will be brought home next week.

Bangladeshi worker kills his compatriot in Saudi Arabia Reports Saudi Gazette

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi worker killed his compatriot during a fight between them on Sunday at Al-Baha, a south-western city of Saudi Arabia, reported a Saudi newspaper yesterday.

Without mentioning the name, the Saudi Gazette said the murdered Bangladeshi, 45, was found lying dead with stabs in his neck and back. The motive of the crime was not clear.

Police are searching for the killer Bangladeshi worker aged about 25. "Meanwhile, a Bangladeshi worker has chopped off his right hand with a knife in front of his horrified co-workers in Jizan, a south-western province of Saudi Arabia."

Quoting his colleagues, the newspaper said the expatriate worker had received a disturbing phone call from his family in Bangladesh four days ago.

The man was rushed with his severed organ to a Jizan hospital where the surgeons attempted to re-attach it.

It was not clear at the time of going to press whether the operation was successful or not.

Jizan police spokesman Capt Abdulrahman Al-Zahrani said initial investigations revealed that the man had received "bad news" from his family prompting him to cut off his organ.

His colleagues said he had been behaving strangely after having the phone call.

Neither police nor fellow workers had any details about the call.

13 staffs fall sick at AB Bank office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirteen officials and employees of AB Bank Ltd fell sick inside their office at Islampur in the city yesterday.

Doctors at Mitford hospital, where they were treated initially, suspected that the gas leakage from the air conditioner might be the cause.

Witnesses said 22 officials and employees were working inside the airtight office and at around 11:30am 13 of them suddenly fell sick with some started vomiting.

Police said they were later shifted to Square Hospital at Panthapath.

General Manager of the branch Saiful Alam told The Daily Star that they are now out of danger.

86 members of Brotherhoods held in Egypt

AFP, Cairo

Egyptian authorities yesterday detained 86 members of the opposition Muslim Brotherhood, a security official told AFP, as part of a crackdown against the group ahead of key local elections next month.

"Most of those detained were going to register as candidates for the elections," the official told AFP.

The members were detained in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, Beni Suef, south of Cairo and in southern Egypt, the official said.



Air Vice Marshal (ret) AK Khandker, 3rd from left, addresses a view-exchange meeting with the journalists of the Retired Armed Forces Officers' Welfare Association club in the city yesterday. On his left are Maj Gen (ret) KM Shafiqullah, Lt Col (ret) Abu Osman Chowdhury and Lt Gen (ret) Harun-ar-Rashid and on his right are Maj Gen (ret) CR Dutta and Maj Gen (ret) M Mashudur Rahman. (Story on Page 16)

Emergency should go before polls Says Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the state of emergency should be lifted before the next parliamentary election, which is due to be held by the end of this year.

"The government should lift the state of emergency in phases before the election. It is not possible to lift the emergency at a time

all of a sudden," he told reporters after a meeting with the leaders of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) at his Bailey Road residence in the capital.

The Gono Forum leader also said there is no alternative but to forge a national unity to save the nation from the prevailing crises.

He said they have been trying to force such unity since 2004 with a view to ensuring free and fair election, effective parliament having competent lawmakers, empowerment of people and a secular democratic society based on the spirit of the War of Liberation.

But those who would be affected if a meaningful election is held are trying to foil the process of forging national unity, he said and vowed to resist them.

Dr Kamal also called on the government to formulate laws barring the black money holders, patrons of criminals and fundamentalist elements from standing in the election.

He observed that a strong unity is needed to realise this demand.

Briefing reporters, CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan said the government's drive

against corruption should continue and the corrupt people should be punished so that they do not get any chances to contest the election.

He also observed that secular progressive forces have developed into an alternative leadership in the country.

The CPB leader said the local government elections should be free from political influence in order to make the local government stronger.

He, however, said it would not be right to delay the parliamentary elections on the plea of holding local government elections.

The caretaker government has made a number of mistakes, he said, adding that the country would witness a worse situation than in the pre-1/11 period if it continues to make more mistakes.

Replying to a query, the CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said the government's main tasks are to hand over power to an elected government through holding a free, fair and credible election and to carry out necessary institutional reforms.

"Senior leaders of both the parties were present at the meeting."

Death threat to Prof Arefin condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several organisations yesterday condemned the death threat to Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA).

They also demanded proper investigation into the incident and arrest of and exemplary punishment to the culprits.

Expressing grave concern, Peshajibi Samannay Parishad leaders, in a statement, said repeated death threats to a person

who has been playing an important role in brightening the university's image are a major obstacle to strengthening democracy.

Although the culprits issued death threats to Prof Arefin seven times and vandalised his office room twice, the government is yet to take any effective measures to bring the culprits to book, they said.

The Parishad leaders also condemned the death threats to Prof Abul Barakat and Prof Anu Muhammad.

They also called for ensuring security of those who received death threats.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) also expressed deep concern over the death threat.

In a joint statement, BFUJ President Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan and DUJ President Altaf Mahmud and General Secretary Omar Faruque demanded necessary steps to arrest the culprits.

Bangladesh Chhatra Union also condemned the death threats.

South Africa will visit Bangladesh to inquire into possibilities of expanding investment and trade relations.

Italian ambassador The newly appointed Italian ambassador to Bangladesh, Dr Itala Maria Marta Occhi, also met with the adviser at his office and discussed the prospects of expanding economic and political relations between the two friendly countries.

"Italy is an important member of the European Union and so Bangladesh places a great significance on cooperation with Italy both bilaterally and as a member of that important regional group," Iftekhar told the ambassador.

He invited Italian investments and hoped that during the tenure of Dr Itala trade relations will grow.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said Bangladesh wishes to be a key partner of South Africa in bilateral relations and in the international forums.

"Our people have always championed South Africa and seen Nelson Mandela as a hero of our times," the foreign adviser said when visiting South African High Commissioner Buyisive Maureen Pheto, based in Colombo and accredited to Dhaka, called on him yesterday.

Speaking to the media Iftekhar said, "Bangladesh and South Africa have already been cooperating on micro-finance, women's empowerment and social issues. There are great prospects in collaboration in other areas as well."

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Bangladeshi shot by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

A Bangladeshi youth was shot by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in the Kishananda border area under Fulbari upazila yesterday.

The injured identified as Shubhas Chandra Barman, 23, son of Taruni Kanla of Gorak-Mandal village under Fulbari upazila of Kurigram was admitted to Dinhaba Hospital in India.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and local sources said BSF men of Nacobari BOP camp in India fired on Shubhas at about 2:30am on the no men's land near international pillar No. 931 along the Kishananda border. The BSF men took him away with bullet injuries and also manhandled in their camp. They rushed him to Dinhaba Hospital in India as he was bleeding profusely.

Deputy Commander of 27 Rifles at Kurigram, Major Kabir said step has been taken to return him. A flag meeting was held between BSF and BDR at Company Commander level yesterday in this regard.

Death of three Bangladeshis on boat condoled

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday expressed his deep shock at the death of three Bangladeshis on a boat during an allegedly illegal journey to Malaysia.

In a condolence message, Iftekhar, also Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser, said these losses of life reportedly due to starvation were totally unwarranted when in Bangladesh despite so many natural calamities there was no death from hunger.

He said: "today there are all kinds of legal methods of contractual migration to so many different destinations. Therefore, desperate acts such as these are absolutely unnecessary."

"I sincerely hope our people avoid this kind of attempts that can lead to such horrific consequences," he added.

Obituary

Mostofa A Rahman Paikar, an agriculturist and managing director of Marp Bangladesh Ltd, passed away at a hospital in Bangalore of India on February 26 at the age of 55, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, one son and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Death anniversary

Today is the first death anniversary of Suraiya Chowdhury, wife of retired police officer Shaahadat Hossain Chowdhury, says a press release.

On the occasion, her family members will hold Quarnkhani today and a doa mahfil on March 7 at her Moghbazar residence.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the doa mahfil and pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Mahbubuzzaman's janaza today

UNB, Dhaka

The namaz-e-janaza of Mohammad Mahbubuzzaman, a former minister and cabinet secretary, will be held on the premises of Bangladesh Secretariat's Jam-e-Mosque at 11:00am today.

Mahbubuzzaman, who was suffering from heart problem, passed away at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore on Monday.

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday expressed his profound shock at the death of Mahbubuzzaman.

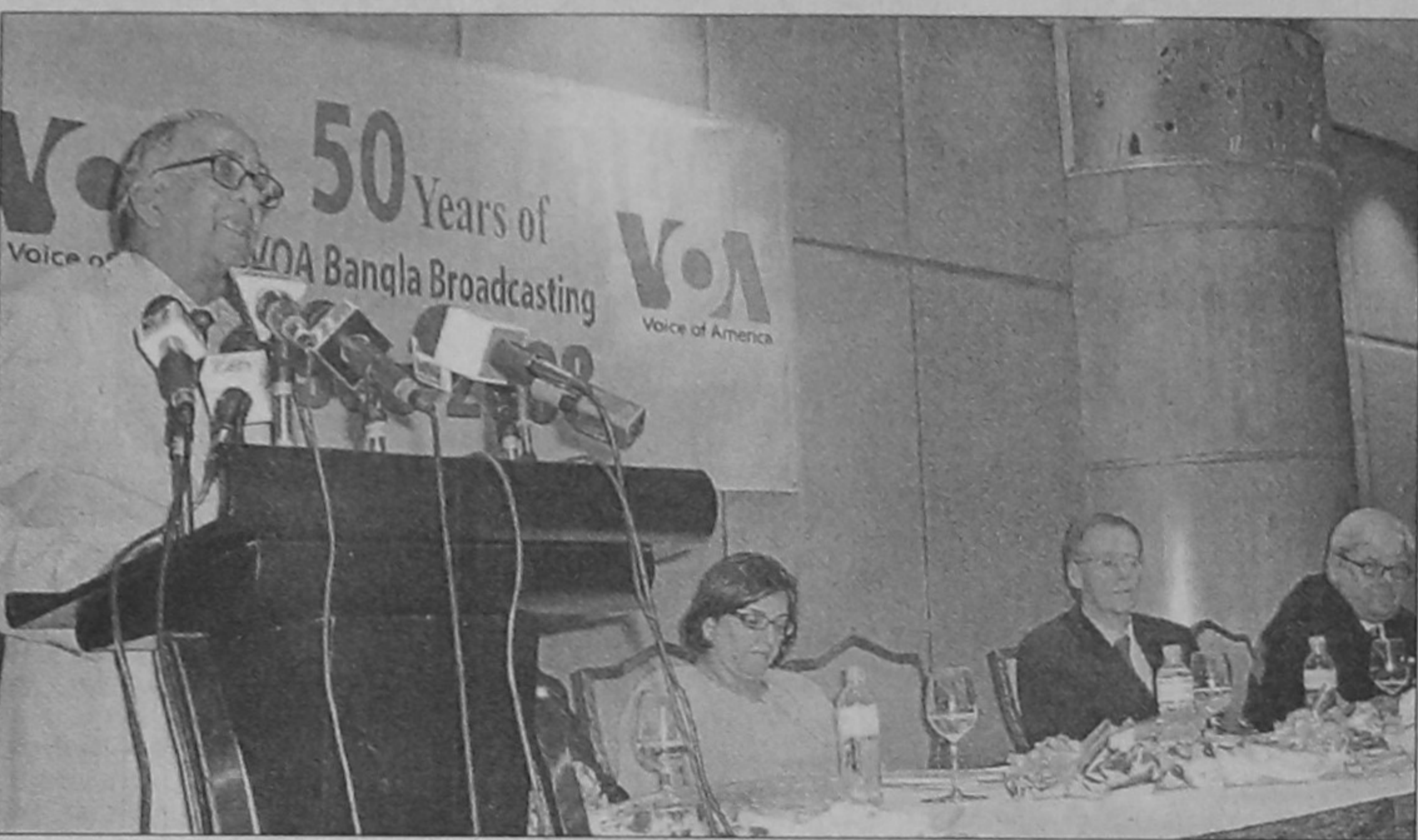
In a condolence message, he said that people of the country would remember his contribution to the activities related to the civil and social services with due respect.

"The country has lost an experienced civil servant and a social activist at his death," he added. Iajuddin also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed his heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed also has expressed his deep shock at the death of Mahbubuzzaman.

In a condolence message, he termed him as a 'brilliant officer' of civil service and also recalled him with due respect for his contribution to the country's administrative sector.

He prayed for the salvation of the department soul and also conveyed his heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family members.



Former chief adviser Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman speaks at a programme celebrating the 50th year of Voice of America's Bangla service at the Westin Hotel in the city yesterday.

LAUNCH CAPSIZE

No more body found in Buriganga

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BIWTA divers yesterday searched for bodies in the river Buriganga, despite they had waded up the search for victims of the launch capsizing on Thursday, as the relatives of a 12-year-old boy continued search for his body.

But neither the BIWTA (Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority) nor the relatives could retrieve any more body.

South Keraniganj police and locals said four BIWTA divers searched for around one and half hours at the accident spot while the relatives of the missing boy Rajib dragged hook on the riverbed for the whole day.

Meanwhile, BIWTA officials could not seize any launch yesterday in its drive against the owners of unfit vessels.

BIWTA Chairman Abdul Mannan Howlader said sensing their drive no such launches anchored at the terminals.

Many launches were found anchored in the mid-stream of the river and passengers were found going to the launches in small boats.

BIWTA usually checks documents of launches that anchored at the terminals.

Radio Today, VOA broadcast joint news bulletin

The broadcasting of news bulletin produced jointly by Radio Today FM 89.6 and Voice of America (VOA) started on Monday, says a press release.

Henceforth the entire English bulletin will be broadcast at 9:45pm and only the international part of the news will be broadcast at 11:45pm directly from the Washington studio of Voice of America.

Speaking at a function at a city hotel on Monday night, Dan Forth Austin, director of VOA, said broadcasting of news produced jointly by a radio station from one part of the world with another radio station from other part, has created a historic moment.

Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury, director of VOA Bangla Service, said this is an initiative first of its kind in the last 50 years.

Rafiqul Haq, managing director of Radio Today, said this initiative has added a new dimension to the broadcasting history of Bangladesh.

US Charge d'Affaires Geeta Pasi and journalists from print and electronic media were present on the occasion.

50TH YEAR OF VOA BANGLA SERVICE News media serves as watchdog for democracy

Says Geeta Pasi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Charge d'affaires Geeta Pasi yesterday said the news media serves as watchdogs for democracy by monitoring government activities, ensure human rights and provides checks against corruption and abuse of power.

The power and freedom of and the public trust in the media come with the media's responsibility to provide readers with news that is fair, authentic and timely, she said at a programme celebrating the 50th year of Voice of America's Bangla service at the Westin Hotel.

"Journalists and editors have a responsibility to themselves, their news agencies, and their audience to report fairly, accurately, and independently. The media must always remember that it serves the public interest," said Geeta Pasi.

"A free press has tremendous power to influence others in a society. The checks and balances provided by that power are crucial for any democracy. With that public trust comes the responsibility to provide the people with news that is authentic and timely."

The media's credibility is deter-

mined by its commitment to truth, accuracy, objectivity and a clear distinction between news and advertising, she added.

"The attainment of these goals and the respect for ethical and professional values may not be imposed. These are the exclusive responsibility of journalists and the media. In a free society, it is public opinion that rewards or punishes the media for the job they do."

Lauding the VOA's standards as the yardstick, Geeta Pasi said the station's success lies in its rigid standards of using several independent sources, accurate and fair reporting, and presenting a comprehensive view to its readers.

VOA broadcasters set aside their personal and political views while performing official duties, she added.

Former chief adviser Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, VOA director Don Austin and VOA marketing head Doug Boynton also spoke on the occasion.

VOA started broadcasting its Bangla service in 1958 and now enjoys a weekly audience of 10 million people worldwide.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Chittagong, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, said Met Office adding that day temperature may rise slightly over the country.

Highest temperature 31.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Fenil and lowest 15.0 degrees Celsius at Bogra.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:04pm today and rises at 6:16am 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	29.6	16.5	69	47
Chittagong	30.4	20.0	78	74
Rajshahi	30.2	16.6	76	70
Khulna	30.1	19.0	72	63
Barisal	29.0	17.8	70	58
Sylhet	27.5	15.9	82	53
Cox's Bazar	28.7	19.5	95	79