

Protect migrant workers' rights for shared interests

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While remittances sent by migrant workers plays a crucial role in the country's economy, authorities are not doing enough to protect their rights, said the speakers at a seminar yesterday.

Expressing concern over the fact that a large number of workers are subjected to fraudulent practices on their way abroad by the middlemen or abuses in their workplaces by the employers, they demanded that the government and private organisations take massive programmes for building skill and awareness to protect their rights.

Observing that the problems in labour migration have become an international phenomena and there is no global institutional framework to force countries to follow standard principles, they said the labour receiving and sending countries should be committed to protect workers' rights for shared interests.

The seminar titled 'Migrant workers' contribution to economy and their status' was organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital to mark the historic May Day.

"Protection of labour rights is a serious concern of today," said

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Secretary Abdul Matin Chowdhury while speaking as chief guest.

"But there is no international framework. Therefore, we need to settle down the things on bilateral, regional or multilateral basis," he said, adding, "We however can't do much if sending and receiving countries are not committed to shared interests."

The government is trying to increase facilities for training candidates willing to go abroad and creating awareness to check incidents of fraudulences, said Matin urging the guardians to encourage their children for technical education like nursing, which has huge demands all over the world.

Acting Secretary Mahfuzul Haque of labour and employment ministry said it is unfortunate that most Bangladeshis going abroad with jobs are unskilled, which he said, is very sad and shameful.

"Are we moving towards quantity of migrants or quality," he posed a question, adding, "We are fooling ourselves by not having adequate training before going abroad."

There are at present 36 technical training centres with the capacity of training around 80000 people yearly, he said.

Dhaka University Prof Dr Tasneem Siddiqui in her keynote paper said as per the overseas employment policy, the government will not make any discrimination for females, but the ban on the private universities to introduce nursing education has not been removed.

The policy also mentions clearly that the government will take measures so that the migrant workers are not deprived of any of their rights, she said, posing a question, "For pre-departure orientation, the government should open centres in 64 districts and allocate resources, but did the government do it?"

The overseas employment policy also speaks of human resources development, but unfortunately the education ministry is not involved in it, she said, adding that the foreign ministry has also dropped its name from the policy, denying its responsibility in the matter.

The policy also does not involve any migrants' rights organisations in its implementation, but included the association of recruiting agencies, said Dr Tasneem, urging the government for massive media campaign to stop fraudulences.

Warbe Development Foundation Chairman Syed Saiful

Haque said remittances sent by migrants in 2006-07 fiscal was 8 percent of GDP, but the remitters' stories are full of sad incidents.

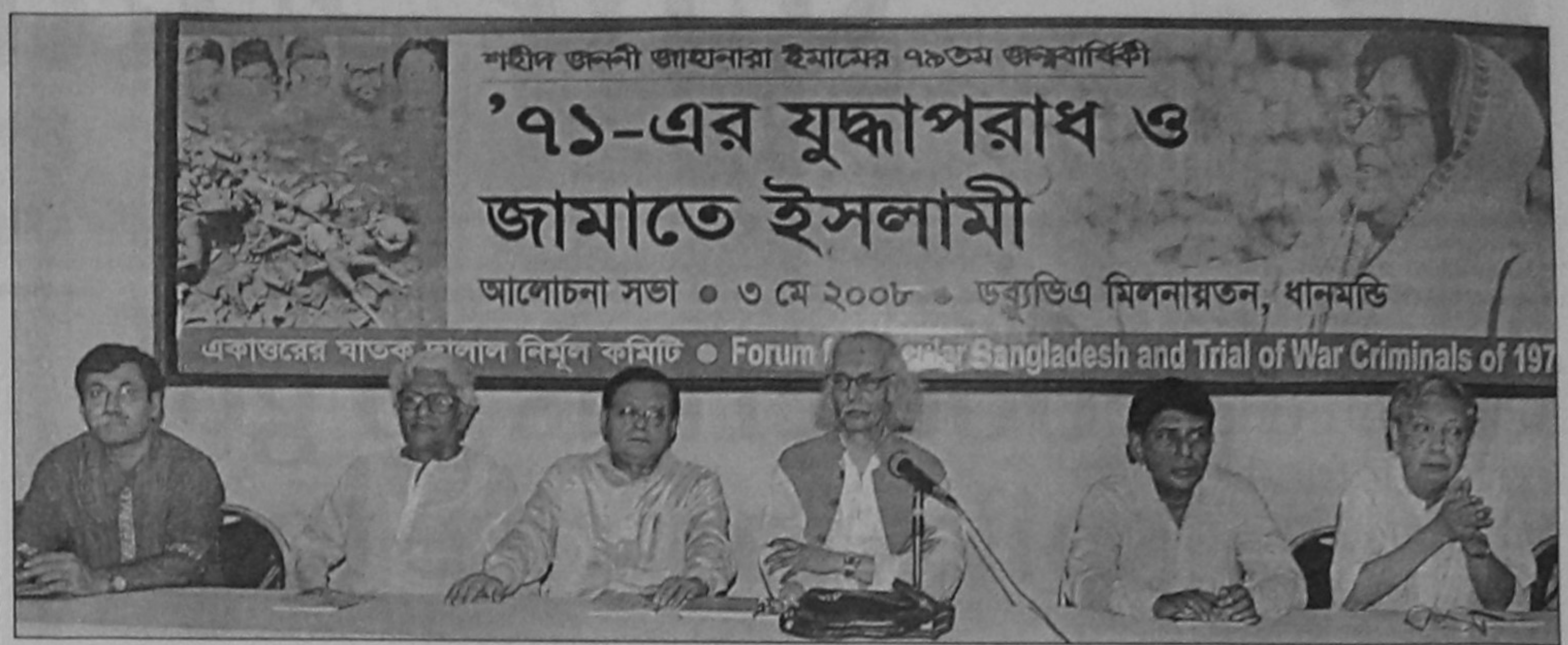
"This huge potential sector of the country therefore gives in public mind an image of cheating and betrayal," he said, demanding ratification of UN convention on the migrants and other multilateral framework on labour migration and framing new laws to protect the migrants' rights.

He also proposed establishment of migrants bank for the welfare of the migrant workers and take stringent measures to stop illegal practices in this sector.

Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam said, "We are indebted to migrant workers because of their huge contribution to national economy, but the incidents of their cheating makes us saddened."

Moderating the seminar, she said it should be kept in mind that they are not remittance-sending machines, but human being and therefore all must work so that they can go abroad safely and have a bright future for which they toil in a soil far from their motherland.

Sheikh Rumana, a leader of Bangladesh Ovbashi Mahila Samik Association, also spoke at the seminar.



Prof Kabir Chowdhury speaks at a discussion titled 'War crimes during '71 and Jamaat-e-Islami' at the WVA auditorium at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday. On his left are Principal Abdul Ahad Chowdhury and Ajay Ray while on his right are Kazi Mukul, Kamal Lohani and Barrister Shafique Ahmed.

Card game friends come to aid of poor woman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury and his card game friends last night handed over their entry fees and winnings of Tk 1.3 lakh to a poor woman.

The envoy and his friends had been collecting their entry fees for their weekend games of Bridge for three years, when they started playing together.

They decided to hand over the money with the end of their weekend games, as the envoy's days in Dhaka come to a close.

The money was handed over to Amina Khatun, a widow with five children, at the high commissioner's residence at a simple function last night.

Amina said half the money will be saved for her daughter's wedding while the rest of the money will be spent for three sewing machines and two rickshaws.

Shibir activist assaults CU asst proctor

CU CORRESPONDENT

An activist of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) assaulted an assistant proctor of Chittagong University (CU) in front of the Proctor Office yesterday.

Mentionable, some activists of the ICS also manhandled Proctor Prof Dr Jasim Uddin on Wednesday at CU Railway Station premises centring a trifling matter.

Sources said Maksudur Rahman, a second year student of Bengla department of the university and also an activist of ICS, was overhearing a meeting between activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and the proctorial body at the Proctor Office at around 12:30pm yesterday.

Assistant Proctor Mohammad Alam Chowdhury noticed Maksudur and asked his identity. In reply, Maksudur said he is not a student of the university and looking for his younger brother.

When Alam Chowdhury asked Maksudur to talk to him inside the Proctor Office, Maksudur caught hold collar and punched him, said the sources.

Another teachers and members of the proctorial body rushed the spot and caught him.

During the scuffle, a group of the shibir activist tried to take away Maksudur from the custody of the teachers.

Later, proctors seized Maksudur's identity card and released him.

When contacted Alam Chowdhury, also a lecturer of Political Science department, admitted the incident and said he informed it to the leaders of CU Teachers' Association and dean of Social Science Faculty.

Sources said an emergency meeting of the CU Syndicate would be held at 11.00am today for taking next course of action regarding yesterday's incident and other recent issues of the university.

RAFIQUL ISLAM MURDER CASE Emon remanded again for 2 days

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Top criminal Sanjidul Islam Emon was placed on a two-day fresh remand yesterday in the Rafiqul Islam Azad murder case.

He was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka on completion of his three-day remand in the same case.

Investigation Officer (IO) of the case Sub-Inspector Syed Fazle Rabbi of New Market Police Station prayed for two days remand, and Metropolitan Magistrate Shamsunahar granted it.

A 25-year-old Azad, a door-keeper of Gausia Market, was shot dead by a group of miscreants at about 7:30pm on April 4 of last year.

Since his deportation from India on March 7 with another criminal Ishaq Ali, Emon was taken on 46 days' remand in several cases filed with different police stations in the capital on different dates.

Obituary

Dr Hafizul Islam Kusum, a ward commissioner of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), passed away at a city hospital yesterday, says a press release.

DCC Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka expressed deep shock at his death and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members. He also joined his namaz-e-janaza.

BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF JAHANARA IMAM OBSERVED Vow to bring war criminals to book

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday vowed to embody the dreams of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam and try the war criminals.

Ekkattur Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee (Forum for Secular Bangladesh) organised the discussion titled 'War crimes during '71 and Jamaat-e-Islami' at the WVA auditorium at Dhanmondi in the city to mark the 79th birth anniversary of Jahanara Imam.

Presided over by Prof Kabir Chowdhury, president of the advisory council of Nirmul Committee, the meeting was also addressed by Barrister Shafique Ahmed, newly elected president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Ajay Ray, adviser, Nirmul Committee, Principal Abdul Ahad Chowdhury, chairperson, Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Kamal Lohani, eminent journalist, Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury, vice-president, Nirmul Committee, Prof Muntasir Mamun of Dhaka University, and Shahriar Kabir, acting president, Nirmul Committee.

Kabir Chowdhury in his speech said, "We need young leadership who will take the helm from the older ones."

"We need to intensify our movement to press home the demand to try the war criminals."

Barrister Shafique Ahmed said there is no legal bar in trying the war criminals under the International Crime Tribunals Act-1973.

He demanded the government bans religion-based political parties, since they are not allowed under the constitution.

Ajay Ray said, "Aged political leaders like Tofail Ahmed and Abdur Razzaz will not be able to lead us, we need young leadership to replace them."

Ahad Chowdhury said the high-ups of Sector Commanders' Forum, who are trying to mobilise public support against the war criminals and anti-liberation war forces, have committed some mistakes.

Kamal Lohani said, "We have failed to accomplish the unfinished work of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam who single-handedly led the unprecedented movement that gained widespread popular support within a very short time."

He urged all to wage a movement against the war criminals and complete the incomplete task of Jahanara Imam.

One held on charge of kidnapping SUST student

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sylhet Kotwali Police yesterday arrested a close associate of the prime accused in a case for kidnapping and torturing a student of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST).

The arrestee was identified as Shiper Ahmed, son of late Akram Ali, of Rajonpur village at Fenchuganj upazila.

Police said Shiper is the close associate of Mahubur Rahman Shamim, who kidnapped his sister-in-law from the university campus on 21 April.

Police said during the incident Shiper helped Shamim, who managed to leave the country. Shiper went into hiding after Shamim had flown to Dubai from Chittagong airport on April 24 by Air Arabia.

Plainclothes police arrested Shiper from his village house yesterday afternoon.

However, Shiper told the police that he was the personal driver Shamim. So, he had to stay with him.

However, SUST students and teachers have been waging their agitation demanding immediate arrest of Shamim and his accomplices and punitive measures against them.

University student kidnapped, stabbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Armed miscreants yesterday kidnapped a private university student and left him in critical condition in front of the Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital (SOMCH) gate.

There were 11 marks of stab injuries on his body, hospital sources confirmed.

Although the mystery is yet to be unearthed, the victim's father claimed that some known miscreants of the city threatened his son of dire consequences for the last few days.

Earlier, he filed a general diary with the Kotwali Police Station

alleging death threats from the group.

Student of the city's Leading University Arif Lashkar was picked from in front of the varsity yesterday afternoon.

Later, the kidnappers left him in front of the SOMCH gate in critical condition.

Arif's father Ziaul Karim Lashkar claimed that hundi dealer Ahea Khan's son Zahir Khan made the attack as a sequel to previous enmity.

Sylhet Kotwali Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) said attempts are on to arrest the attackers.

Form commission to protect lands of indigenous people

Speakers demand at Rangpur seminar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Leaders of indigenous Shantal community yesterday demanded formation of a special land commission to protect their land from grabbers.

At a seminar held at Rangpur Shilpakala Academy auditorium, they also emphasised the need for a legal aid cell here to help them in land cases with grabbers.

The seminar was organised by Rangpur Jatiya Adhibasi Parishad.

Speaking on the occasion, some indigenous people narrated how their lands were grabbed by local influentials.

Some others said how forest department officials in different upazilas allegedly tortured them on different pretexts.

The seminar also demanded permanent lease of khash lands among landless indigenous people.

Members reject new body of Satkhira Red Crescent Society

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Most of the life members of Satkhira Red Crescent Society condemned reorganising Satkhira Red Crescent unit with local leaders and activists of BNP and Jamaat.

They said the committee has to be abolished as Bangladesh Red crescent society is a non-partisan organisation and demanded a committee comprising honest and dedicated members of the society.

While talking to this correspondent yesterday, Advocate Abdur Rahim, Advocate Mostafa Lutfulah, Nazrul Islam, Ruhul Amin, Rifat Amin, Shariful Islam and other life members of Satkhira Red Crescent society said they will submit a memorandum to the authorities concerned soon.

'Temple for RU Hindu students within 2 months'

RU CORRESPONDENT

The teachers, students and employees from Hindu community of Rajshahi University (RU) urged the university authorities to immediately construct a full-fledged Puja mandir (temple) on the Mather Hall premises of the university.

Hindu community students under the banner of 'Sanatan Dharmo Sangha' yesterday met RU Vice Chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain at his office and press home their two-point demands.

Another demand is building a separate residential boys hall for Hindu community students.

RU vice chancellor received their demands and said the authorities will construct a full-fledged temple complex on the Mather Hall premises within two months.

The students requested the VC to construct the temple before Janmastami function, scheduled on August 24.

RU Pro-VC Prof Mamnunul Keramat, Proctor Enamul Haque, Chief Engineer Abdur Rahim and other high officials were present during the meeting.

Later, while talking with journalists the students said RU authorities assured them several times of constructing a temple but that was not met in last 10 years.

The Hindu community students also collecting signature from teachers, students, officials and employees on the campus in favour of their demand to present it to the president and the chief adviser.

There have one hundred teachers, five thousand students and one hundred employees from Hindu community on the campus.



Law Adviser AF Hassan Ariff addresses a seminar titled 'Is Amending the Press Council Act, 1974 a Must to Make the Press Council More Effective?' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left are Justice Kazi Ebadul Hoque and Mizanur Rahman Shelly. Bangladesh Press Council organised the seminar. (Story on Page 16)

Trader stabbed, robbed of Tk10000 in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of muggers stabbed a trader and snatched Tk 10,000 in cash and a cellphone from him at Motiheel in the city last night.

The victim, Abdus Salam, 30, a shopping bag trader, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

Hospital sources said a gang of four muggers waylaid Salam's rickshaw in front of Modhumita cinema hall at around 10:30pm while he was returning to his East Madertek residence at Sabujbagh.

The snatchers stabbed him in the abdomen when he tried to resist the miscreants from snatching his money and the mobile set.

Rice back to boost ME peace bid

AFF, Jerusalem

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice returns to the region yesterday to provide a badly-needed shot in the arm for the Middle East peace process ahead of a visit by President George W. Bush.

On her 15th visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories in under two years, Rice is expected to push the sides to stick to their goal of clinching a peace deal by the end of 2008.

She will press Israel to take new steps to bolster president Mahmud Abbas's authority in the West Bank by strengthening the Palestinian economy and easing travel restrictions across the occupied territory.

The talks will be held alongside Egyptian-led efforts to broker a truce between Israel and Gaza militants that would ease an Israeli

blockade on the Hamas-ruled territory, which has been sidelined in the current peace talks.

The top US diplomat was to dine with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem upon her arrival on Saturday evening after holding talks with the Middle East Quartet partners in London.

She was scheduled to meet Abbas in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Sunday.

Senior Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat told AFP that Olmert and Abbas would then meet early next week, though no firm time has yet been agreed on.

Rice will also host a three-way meeting with top peace negotiators Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and former Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qorei, who have been holding closed-door talks for several months.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over all six divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

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

The sun sets in the capital at 6:29pm today and rises at 5:21am 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 | 35.7 | 22.0 | 54 | 55 |
| Chittagong | 34.3 | 25.9 | 73 | 71 |
| Rajshahi | 35.5 | 22.6 | 73 | 64 |
| Khulna | 36.4 | 23.5 | 75 | 60 |
| Barisal | 35.8 | 23.2 | 78 | 75 |
| Sylhet | 34.6 | 21.8 | 62 | 56 |
| Cox's Bazar | 35.6 | 27.5 | 69 | 70 |

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar
Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) organises a seminar on 'People's voice, people's participation and community radio'. Venue: UNB conference room. Time: 9:30am.

Discussion
Women for Women in cooperation with Campaign for Popular Education will organise a discussion on 'National Women Development Policy 2008: Perspective national development'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Drawing exhibition
The inaugural ceremony of a drawing exhibition will be held. Venue: Zairul Gallery, Institute of Fine Art. Time: 5:00pm. The exhibition will remain open till May 11 from 11:00am to 8:00pm everyday.

Roundtable
Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Physicians for Social Responsibility in cooperation with National Health Rights Movement will organise a roundtable on health rights and safety of labourers. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.