

TRANSBOUNDARY RIVER WATER

Political consensus needed to resolve problems

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Strong political consensus is needed to resolve transboundary river water problems, experts at a seminar said yesterday.

They also urged the government to immediately ratify the 'Convention of Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Water Course' adopted by the United Nations and create pressure on India for properly sharing the transboundary river water.

The issue should be dealt with at regional and international level instead of bilaterally or unilaterally, they added.

Bangladesh Water Partnership

(BWP) organised the seminar on 'Transboundary Water Issues in South Asia' at Agargaon LGED Bhaban in the city, with Chief Election Commissioner Dr ATM Shamsul Huda, a renowned water expert, as the chief guest.

Dr Shamsul Huda said the transboundary river water issue should be dealt with politically and that all political parties should reach a political consensus to this end.

"Lack of political consensus is the main obstacle to resolving the transboundary river water problem. It seems that all treaties signed with the neighbour countries, particularly India, are neglected after the change of government," he said.

He also said that the Awami League government signed a treaty with India in 1996 for resolving the issue, but the BNP government after coming to power in 2001 did not take the treaty into consideration, which is a main problem.

Presenting the keynote paper, Tauhidul Anwar Khan, secretary general of BWP, said India is planning to implement a mega project to link its rivers in order to transfer water from the north to south.

"There will be 30 links and about 9000 kilometres of canals to connect 37 rivers at a cost of 5,60,000 crore Indian Rupees. Bangladesh will face acute water crisis if the

mega project is implemented. The country will have to deal with the issue at the regional and international levels and for this reason a strong political consensus is needed," he added.

Former water resources ministers Anisul Islam Mahmud, Abdur Razzak and LK Siddiqi, BWP vice-presidents Prof M Maniruzzaman Miah and Mohammad Zamir, columnists Farhad Mazhar and Sadeque Khan and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) Director Syeda Rizwana Hasan also spoke at the seminar presided over by BWP Chairperson Quamrul Islam Siddique.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed hold talks with Gono Forum leaders as part of the ongoing dialogue with the political parties at his office in the city yesterday.

DU ROKEYA HALL

A building declared unsafe, students asked to evacuate

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka University (DU) authorities have declared a building of Rokeya Hall unsafe after identifying it vulnerable to earthquake damage.

On Sunday night, the hall authorities asked 130 female students staying in 38 rooms of the two-storied 'Honours Building' to evacuate by June 10 and move to Chameli Building of the hall.

The hall authorities have also

allocated few rooms at Chameli Building for the residents of the 'Honours Building'.

But the students alleged that the hall authorities have asked them to leave the building without arranging proper accommodation facilities for them.

"Most of us are honours final year and master's students and stay in a single bed. And our exams are going on. So, it is not possible for us to leave the building right now," said Hasi, a resident of the building.

Besides, most of the resident students have now gone to their village homes during this summer vacation of the university, which began on June 1, she said.

"The syndicate declared the building unsafe on May 26 while we were informed on June 1, when most of us are out of the campus," Hasi said.

She also said the students would launch a movement if the hall authorities try to evict them without

arranging proper accommodation facilities for them.

They would also meet Provost Prof Laila Nur today in this regard, she added.

Earlier, a five-member committee comprising two experts - Prof Istiak Ahmed of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and Prof Atab Alam Khan of geology department of DU - was formed to examine the building.

The committee has recently submitted a report to the university authorities, saying the building is vulnerable to earthquake damage and cannot be repaired.

The committee also recommended demolishing the building and constructing a new one.

Prof Laila Nur said, "We have taken the decision to evacuate the students from the building as it has been declared unsafe. We will also arrange proper accommodation facilities for them at the Chameli building."

New Building Construction Rules to be published today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Building Construction Rules 2008 is to be published today facilitating the highest 67.5 percent ground coverage while constructing a building.

Under the new rules, which are amendments to the Building Construction Rules 2007, owners of up to two kathas of land will get the highest 67.5 percent ground coverage for constructing a building, said Kazi Golam Nasir, deputy chief architect of the architect department.

Besides, an owner of two-katha plot will now have to leave 0.8 metre of land on both sides instead of one metre, he added.

The changes have been made as small land owners had been expressing their dissatisfaction since the formulation of the Building Construction Rules 2007, said an official of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk).

Under the new rules, a landowner of two to three kathas will get 65 percent ground coverage, an owner of three to five kathas will get 62.5 percent, an owner of five to nine kathas will get 60 percent, an owner of nine to 12 kathas will get 57.5 percent, an owner of 12 to 14 kathas will get 55 percent, an owner of 14 to 18 kathas will get 52.5 percent, and an owner of 18 to above 20 kathas will get 50 percent ground coverage.

According to the new rules, land owners who constructed their buildings following the old rules will be able to do internal modification keeping intact the length, width, height and total floor area of the buildings.

The new rules also allow the highest 67.5 percent ground coverage while constructing a building in areas within the Key Point Installation and under the Civil Aviation Authority.

There is also a provision for special cell in the new rules for giving approval to special projects replacing one-window cell of the Building Construction Rules 2007.

As a result, an owner will have to take permissions again separately from different government agencies to construct any high-rise building, said an official of Rajuk.

The amendment has been made in line with the suggestions of the sub-committee of Urban Development Committee of Rajuk, formed on September 26, 2007 to review the rules, said sources in the committee.

'Debate effective instrument to promote democracy'

DU CORRESPONDENT

With a view to orienting students with the art of public speaking and techniques of debate, a four-day debate and public speaking workshop began at Dhaka University (DU) yesterday.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz inaugurated the workshop as the chief guest at Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban auditorium. The workshop is being organised by the Centre for Debate and Public Communication (CDPC) of Bangladesh and the International Debate Education Association (IDEA) of the Netherlands and the USA.

Marcin Zaleski, director of training, IDEA, Associate Professor SM Shameem Reza, director of CDPC, and Anjum Husain, principal of Summerfield International School, were present as special guests at the inaugural ceremony.

Prof Faiz expressed hope that young debaters would learn effective techniques of debate from the workshop and said debate is a very effective instrument to promote democracy.

Shameem Reza said the workshop has been arranged with an aim to promoting debate and public communication in Bangladesh in collaboration with various international organisations.

The rest of the sessions of the workshop would be held at Harco International School, Manarat International School and College, Summerfield International School and American International University Bangladesh (AIUB).

The Daily Star is the media partner of the workshop.



Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz speaks at the inaugural ceremony of a four-day debate and public speaking workshop at Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban auditorium of the university yesterday. Centre for Debate and Public Communication (CDPC) of Bangladesh and International Debate Education Association (IDEA) of the Netherlands and USA jointly organised the workshop.

First of six costly rental power plants starts

FROM PAGE 16

Sources said Moazzem, brother of former BNP lawmaker Mosharraf Hossain of Feni, is being backed by a strong lobby.

The other project was awarded to Kaltimax-GBB under the banner of Venture Energy Resource. GBB is an inexperienced local power company that failed to install a rental plant in Bogra in the past.

Apart from Aggreko, all other rental power plant contractors are supposed to pay \$500 per MW a day as compensation for failing to bring their plants online on the scheduled date May 15.

Aggreko's scheduled date was May 28 subject to the supply of fuel, which the Power Development Board (PDB) failed to provide on time.

However, none of the power companies are paying any fine as the Power Development Board (PDB) did not even make any claims. Energy Prima should be paying \$85,000 and Venture Energy \$16,500 a day from May 15 for failing to meet the deadline.

Sources said of the five, only the 50MW plant in Kumargaon may be operational after June 15 - a month

behind schedule.

During a meeting chaired by the power secretary Sunday, Moazzem Hossain claimed that his Shahjibazar 50MW plant may be operational on June 25, 40 days behind the Commercial Operation Date (COD). Fenchuganj 50MW plant on August 7, 82 days behind the COD and a plant in Bogra on July 15, two months behind the COD.

Moazzem blamed cyclone Nargis, which swept through Myanmar last month, for failing to install the Kumargaon plant on time.

Representative of GBB at the meeting claimed that its Bhola 33MW plant may come into operation sometime in July.

As per the contracts, if a contractor fails to bring the power plant online 60 days behind the COD, the contracts will be terminated. The power secretary reminded the bidders of this rule in the meeting.

APDB expert told The Daily Star, "The Kumargaon plant may be operational in June... the others are unlikely to come into operation even in July."

Energy Prima did not do anything in Bogra or Fenchuganj, even though it made some progress at Shahjibazar. Kaltimax-GBB, on the other hand, did not even open a Letter of Credit (LC) to import the turbine for the Bhola 33MW power plant.

Sources said Petrobangla has installed everything required to provide gas to Kumargaon, Shahjibazar, Fenchuganj and Bogra plants. It has also arranged for equipment for gas supply in Bhola but did not install it as the GBB has not built any solid structure at the site.

After Energy Prima and GBB failed to meet their May 15 deadline to launch their respective plants, the PDB served them with notice of default a week later. Aggreko was served with a notice of termination on May 28 for failing to meet its deadline.

Aggreko, however, responded saying that as per the contract the PDB is supposed to supply the fuel for the plant 15 days before its COD. Instead, the PDB supplied the fuel on May 23. As per the contract, the COD will be set 15 days after the

New political party Jago Bangladesh floated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jago Bangladesh, the latest political party in a series since declaration of the state of emergency, was launched yesterday.

Golam Muhammad Sarowar, chairman of the new party, announced the name of the party from a press conference at the National Press Club.

The new party comprises of 21 executive committee members and 101 central committee members.

But the Jago Bangladesh chairman could not tell names more than two members of the executive committee.

The organiser at the press conference said they have launched the party to uphold the spirit of 1/11.

They however denied getting any blessings from any quarter to launch the party.

"The ideology of the party is democracy, welfare economy, religious freedom and fundamental human rights," Golam Sarowar said.

"The country can not afford to go back to the pre-January 11 period. The party will be formed comprising of cross section of people including artists, journalists, teachers, lawyers and workers," he added.

He said that the aim of the party is to fight against corruption, injustice and establishing democracy.

The constitution of the party will be formed later, he told reporters.

A number of new political parties, including National People's Party of Sheikh Shawkat Hossain Nilu, Progressive Democratic Party of Firdaus Ahmad Quarishi, Bangladesh Guardian Party of ATM Shafiuddin and Bangladesh Welfare Party of Maj Gen (ret'd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim have been launched since declaration of the state of emergency.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 16

Hasina's counsel barrister Shaifque Ahmed yesterday told The Daily Star that an HC bench comprising Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Masuque Hossain Ahmed might hear the case today.

The AL chief stated in her application that the case against her concerned what took place 10 years ago, and she was not at all involved in any corruption.

The case is baseless, fabricated, and mala fide, and it is intended to harass her politically, she said.

The petition also stated the HC can grant her bail in this case as per a recent judgment of the Supreme Court.

Barrister Fazle Noor Taposh filed the petition on behalf of Hasina.

Earlier on Sunday, the HC rejected a writ petition filed by her challenging legality of continuation of trial proceedings of this case against her.

TARIQUE CASE
The HC yesterday directed a special court to dispose of the discharge petition Tarique filed with it recently.

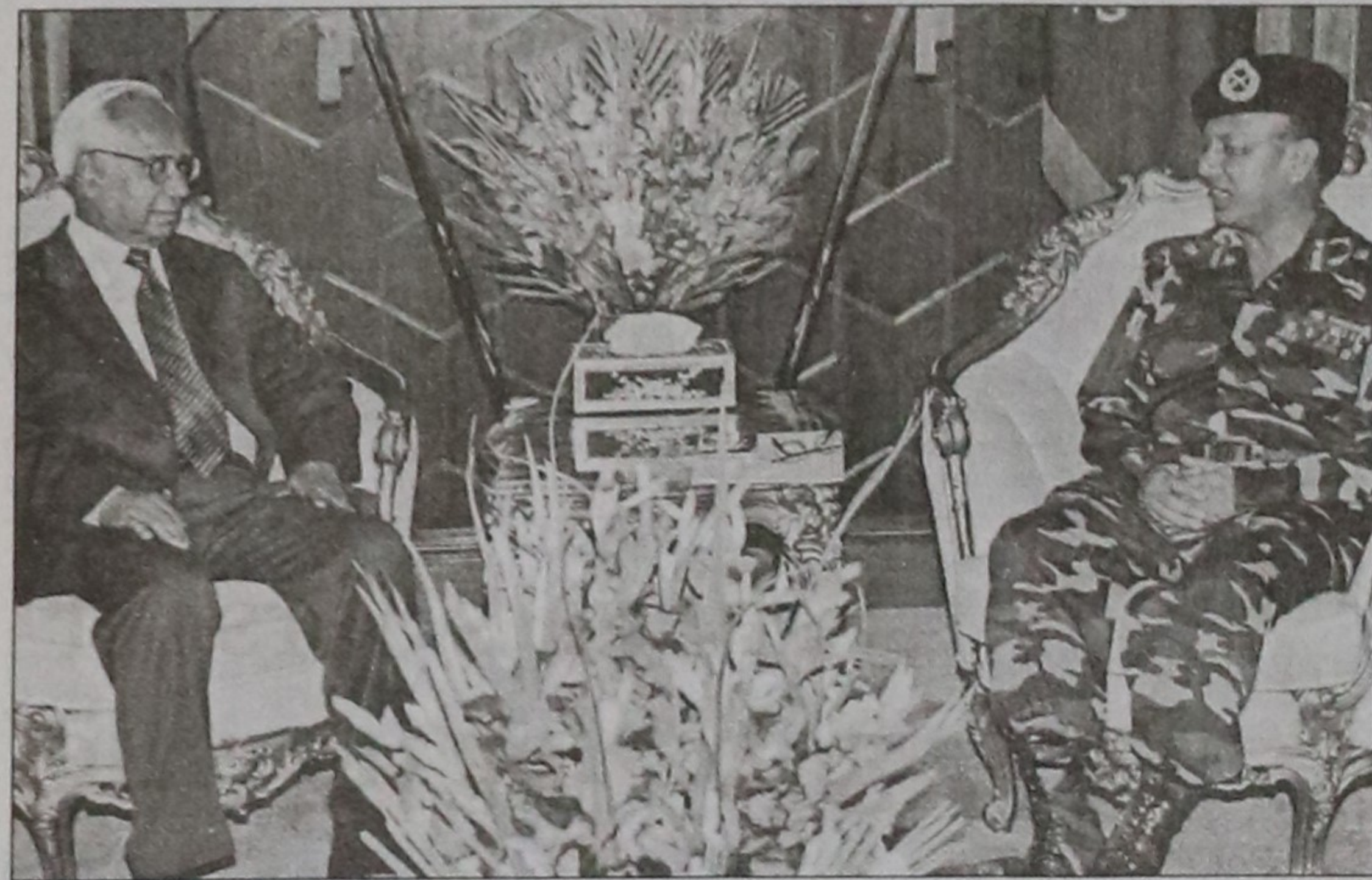
The case that concerned the murder of Bashundhara Group director Humayun Kabir Sabbir is now pending for charge framing in the Special Court of Judge Shahed Noor Uddin on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises.

On May 25 this year, Tarique also filed a petition with the HC for quashing the proceedings against him in the case.

Taking up the quashment petition, an HC bench comprising Justice Sharif Uddin Chaklader and Justice Md Emdadul Haque Azad yesterday asked the special court to dispose of his (Tarique) discharge petition in accordance with law.

The HC bench also adjourned hearing of the quashment petition until disposal of the discharge petition by the special court.

In October last year, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the bribery case with Ramna Police Station, accusing eight people. The ACC on May 6 pressed charges against Tarique, former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar and six others in the case.



Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed calls on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday.

Army chief calls on president

UNB, Dhaka

Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed called on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

During the meeting, the army chief apprised the president of the ongoing development activities undertaken by the Bangladesh Army.

Iajuddin expressed his satisfaction at the progress in the preparation of voter lists by the Bangladesh Army and in implementing its different development works.

Emerging from the meeting, General Moeen told reporters that it was a part of his routine to inform the president, who also holds the charge of Defence ministry, about the ongoing activities and development works undertaken by the Bangladesh Army.

Military Secretary to the President Major General Mohd Aminul Karim, Secretary of the President's Office Md Sirajul Islam and President's Press Secretary Abdul Awal Howlader were present.

DELIMITATION OF CONSTITUENCIES

Reconsider decision Workers Party urges EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers' Party of Bangladesh (WPB) yesterday demanded of the Election Commission (EC) to hear all complaints about the delimitation of constituencies as per law.

In a press statement, the politburo of the party also urged the EC to reconsider its decision of delimiting the constituencies to avoid legal complexities saying that the law still permits them to do so.

The politburo said they had been protesting the EC's move to delimit the constituencies right from the beginning seeing that it

would hamper the roadmap of the EC which will have to undergo a long legal process in this regard.

"Now about 3000 complaints have been filed with the EC and according to newspaper reports the EC would hear only four to five complaints and it will give only two minutes for hearing each complaint.

This decision of the EC would not only violate law but also the constitutional rights of the people of those areas," the statement said.

The politburo said it is smelling a conspiracy against the holding of the election and urged all to be aware to foil the conspiracy.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy falls are also likely at places over the country. Southwest monsoon has advanced up to Chittagong coast and it may advance up to central part of Bangladesh during next 1-2 days, Met Office said.

Day temperature may fall slightly over the country, it said. Highest temperature 37.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Khulna and lowest 22.0 degrees Celsius at Sylhet.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:43pm today and rises at 5:11am 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	32.6	28.1	68	87
Chittagong	32.2	26.0	75	71
Rajshahi	33.0	27.5	74	100
Khulna	37.0	28.5	72	84
Barisal	34.2	27.5	76	99
Sylhet	26.3	22.0	95	91
Cox's Bazar	34.2	26.1	70	77



Cultural Affairs Adviser Rasheda K Choudhury gives away Nazrul Award 2007 to artist Ismat Ara and researcher Dr Md Abdul Kaiyum, third from right, at a ceremony at the National Museum auditorium in the city yesterday. Prof Rafiqul Islam, extreme right, is also seen. Nazrul Institute organised the event.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

Neeti Gobeshona Kendro organises a seminar on 'Ethnic conflict in Burma and Rohingya issue'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

View exchange meeting

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum organises a view exchange meeting on child rights. Venue: WVA auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Art exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of the art exhibition titled 'Two men's painting show' will be held. Venue: Zainul Gallery, Institute of Fine Arts. Time: 5:00pm.

Seminar

A seminar followed by a photo exhibition titled 'Ecological interface' will be held. Venue: Russian Cultural Centre. Time: 4:00pm.

BGMEA discussion

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporter Association (BGMEA) organises a discussion on penetration into competitive global market and strategies to keep a grip on it. Venue: BGMEA meeting room. Time: 11:30am.

Rotary Dhaka

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5:30pm.