

# Make Saarc a real 'people's union'

## Member states urged

BSS, Colombo

The pre-Saarc South Asian People's Assembly began here yesterday with a call for making the regional bloc a real "people's union" to promote closer trade and socio-economic integration among the people of the region.

It also laid stress on more democratisation of the society, saying the establishment of the people's rights in South Asia requires unhindered democracy that is facing impediments in many countries of the region.

The people's assembly has been arranged by various civil society organisations from the Saarc member states prior to the 15th Saarc Summit on August 2-3 to call on the leadership to move the region towards more socioeconomic integration to ultimately end up in an economic union.

Participants from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Maldives and host Sri Lanka spoke at the inaugural ceremony of the event held in the New Town Hall in the city.

They said despite the fact that

Saarc came into being three decades ago the people to people gap is only increasing, not diminishing. They said the people of South Asia dream of a union and leaders must work towards that direction.

Some speakers stressed the ultimate aim of creating a regional supra-national entity.

About 500 representatives of various NGOs are taking part in the three-day event. It will focus on issues like food security, democracy and governance, nation state and its challenges, climate change and ecological justice, WTO and South Asia and conflicts management.

It is being held by SAPA or South Asian People's Assembly secretariat.

About a dozen civil society organisations are participating in the event from Bangladesh including Equity and Justice Working Group.

Senator Iqbal Haider of Pakistan said, "A supra national entity may breed confusion, we must have a clear idea of creating an economic union, not a political union."

He said Saarc is the only unfortunate region that has not opened up to benefit from a functionally effective collaboration. "Every country can maintain the individual political entity and at the same time have an economic union," he said referring to a few such economic unions.

He said trade with USA, Japan or the West has become more expensive now in view of the higher freight, besides poor bargaining power of the South Asian countries.

Indian participant Kamala Vasin said the colonial borders have kept the people of the region divided and open to conflicts. The USA is forging closer ties now with India to keep this region divided under its influence. It must be resisted from a common platform, he argued.

Dr Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad stressed the need for action-oriented programmes to achieve the socioeconomic goals of the region. He said the region must work jointly to achieve higher growth.

## 'Lift emergency, hand over power to elected govt'

CPB urges CG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the second day of the 8th conference of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) in the capital yesterday, the speakers demanded of the caretaker government (CG) to lift the state of emergency immediately.

They also called for holding national election soon to hand over power to an elected political government.

In the first session presided over by Abdul Malek, report of Dhaka Committee was presented by its Secretary Ahsan Habib Lavlu.

Leaders of different thana and unit committees discussed the report.

In the second session, party General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim presented a draft document on the 9th conference of the party. It was followed by a discussion by the party leaders present at the conference.

In the third session of the conference, Dhaka committee will be formed and representatives of the congress will be elected.

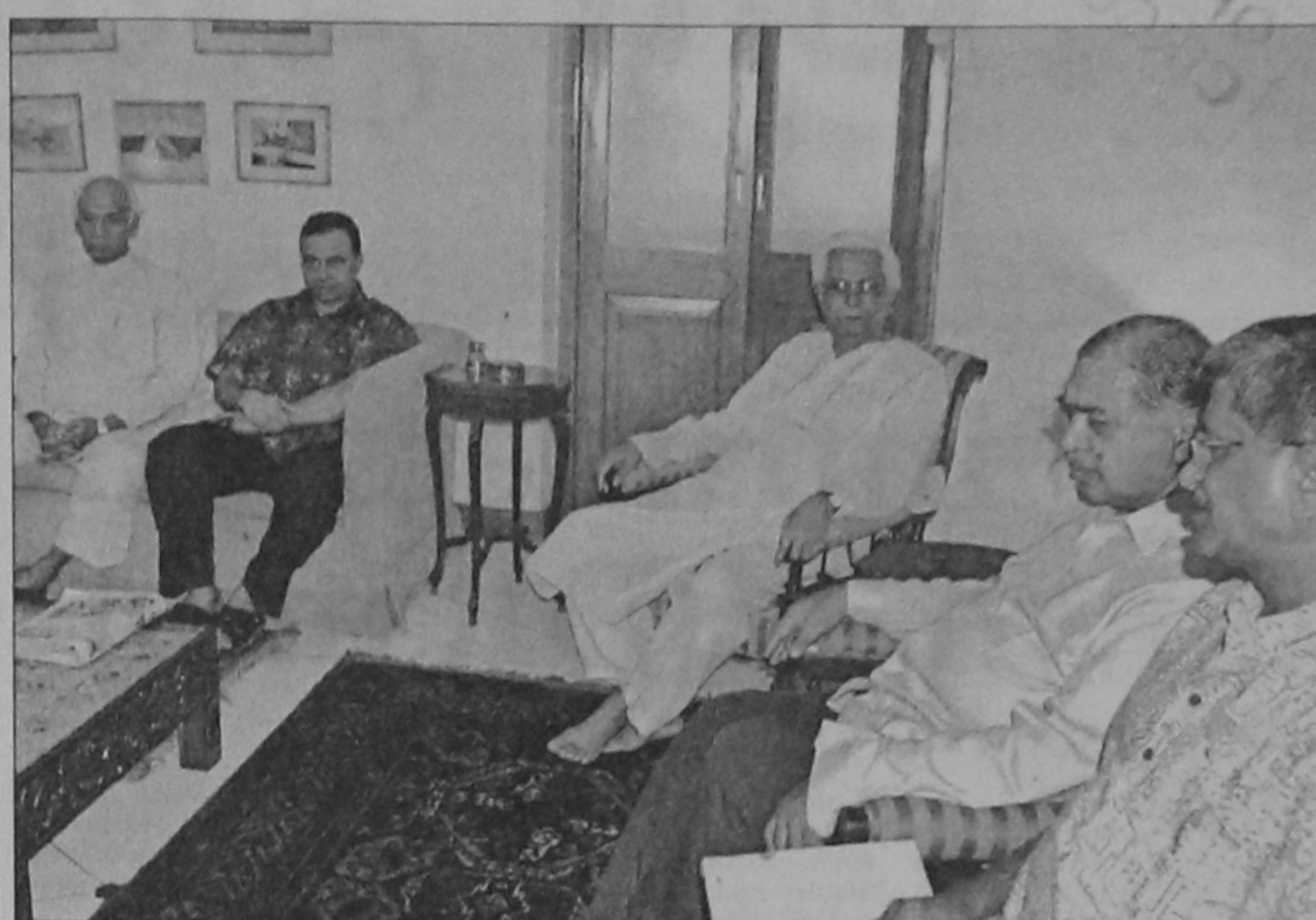
A total of 118 representatives and 24 observers from different parts of the country took part in the conference at Maity Auditorium at Purana Paltan, says a press release.

At the inaugural session of the conference at the Institution of Engineers auditorium on Thursday, the CPB Leaders said release of corrupt big fishes might push back the country to pre-1/11 situation.

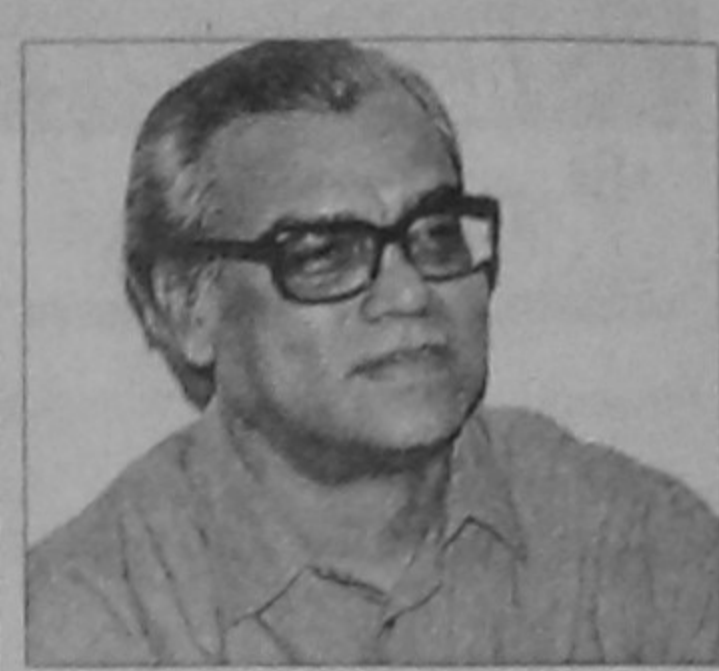
They called for forming left-leaning alternative forces under the leadership of CPB to resolve the present crises.

They also urged the government to start rationing system in rural areas.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan, General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim, Abdul Kader, Ahsan Habib Lavlu and Dr Tonuj Kanti Dey spoke on the occasion.



Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain, 2nd from right, presides over a presidium meeting of the party at his Bailey Road residence in the city yesterday.



## Condition of Abdullah Al Mamun remains unchanged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The condition of Abdullah Al Mamun, a noted playwright, actor and director, who suffered a brain haemorrhage on July 10, remained unchanged as of yesterday.

He is now undergoing treatment at the intensive care unit (ICU) of Square Hospital in the city.

Family members said the condition of Mamun has remained unchanged.

He has also been suffering from kidney problems for long and underwent dialysis in the last three days, said a family member.

Hospital medical board said an 11-member medical board was formed on Thursday for the treatment of Mamun.

## Ashraf Hossain released on parole to attend mother's funeral

UNB, Comilla

BNP leader and former whip Ashraf Hossain was released on parole for six hours yesterday to attend the funeral of his mother Majeda Khatun.

Majeda Khatun died due to old-age complications at her residence in the town at about 6:00am yesterday.

Family sources said Ashraf reached his residence in the town from Kashimpur jail in Gazipur at about 4:30pm.

He, however, could not attend the namaz-e-janaza of his mother as he reached home after the janaza.

The former whip was taken back to Kashimpur jail after he spent some time with his family members.

His mother was buried at their family graveyard at Nalhi village in Brahmanpara upazila after Maghrib prayers.

## Obituary

UNB, Sherpur

Comrade Mazharul Islam, a freedom fighter and former general secretary of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Sherpur district unit, passed away at his village home on Thursday at the age of 60.

He had long been suffering from various ailments.

Comrade Mazharul played an important role in anti-autocratic movement in the 1990s.

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

## Radha Rani Chowdhury

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sakhira

Radha Rani Chowdhury, mother of former Sakhira Press Club president Subhas Chowdhury, passed away due to old-age complications at Munjipur in the town yesterday at the age of 85.

She left behind three sons, three daughters, grandchildren and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

## Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the fifth death anniversary of AK Faezul Huq, an eminent politician and son of late Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, says a press release.

On the occasion, Quankhwani and milad mahfil will be held after Asr prayers at the mosque adjacent to Banani graveyard in the city. Food will also be distributed among the destitutes.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the milad mahfil and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

## Mizanur Rahman

METRO DESK

Today is the fifth death anniversary of Mizanur Rahman, a language movement veteran and journalist, says a press release.

On the occasion, Mizanur Rahman Smriti Parishad will organise programmes including offering fatiha at his grave, milad and doa mahfil at his village home in Tongi. A milad mahfil will also be held after Asr prayers at the National Press Club.

## US reaffirms support to Dhaka in fighting terrorism, graft

UNB, Dhaka

United States highly appreciated Bangladesh for its anti-corruption drives and counter-terrorism efforts.

US Attorney General Michael Mukasey made the remarks while receiving Home Secretary Abdul Karim at his office in Washington DC on Thursday.

During their meeting, Karim briefed the US Attorney General on the ongoing reform initiatives in Bangladesh, including the judicial reforms and re-structuring of the key institutions.

US Attorney General Mukasey also reassured the home secretary of continued US assistance in

combating terrorism and eradicating corruption from Bangladesh.

On July 16, Karim had a meeting with Assistant Secretary of the State Richard Boucher at the State Department.

About the preparations for holding general elections, Boucher reiterated the US support to the caretaker government and hoped that all necessary preparations will be made in due time for a free, fair and credible election.

Boucher also reassured Karim of all possible US support for development of Bangladesh. He further informed that the US is actively considering providing food assistance to a number of countries, including Bangladesh.

Karim is now leading a Bangladesh delegation in the USA to explore avenues of necessary cooperation in furthering Bangladesh-US relations with particular focus on counter-terrorism and upgrading of financial regulations in the banking sector.

Ziaul Hassan Siddiqui, deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank, is the other member of the delegation.

Karim also had extensive meetings with high officials of the Department of Justice, Department of Treasury and Department of State during the visit.



Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz visits a stall after inaugurating the 'Gender Book Fair' at the British Council in the city yesterday. Department of Women and Gender Studies of Dhaka University organised the 3-day fair.

## Gender book fair begins

DU CORRESPONDENT

With a view to creating awareness about gender issues, a three-day 'Gender Book Fair' began at the British Council yesterday.

Department of Women and Gender Studies of Dhaka University organised the fair that will remain open for all from 2:00pm to 8:00pm everyday.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz inaugurated the fair as the chief guest while Social Science Faculty Dean Prof Harun-or-Rashid and Arts Faculty Dean Prof Sadrul Amin were present as special guests.

Around 50 publication houses and NGOs are participating at the fair with over 3,000 gender related books, journals and articles.

## Centre for Languages opens at Brac University

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac University (BracU) has launched Centre for Languages (CfL) with an aim to assist students in developing their language skills.

The centre was formally inaugurated at a ceremony at the auditorium of Brac Centre Inn in the city on Thursday.

University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam formally launched the language centre at a programme as the chief guest with BracU Vice Chancellor (VG) Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury in the chair.

Pro-VC Salehuddin Ahmed, Dean of Business School Prof Ifekhar Gani Chowdhury, chairpersons of different departments and directors of Brac also took part.

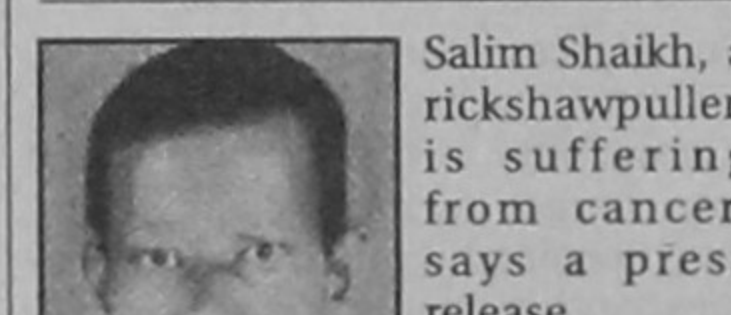
The CfL offers a number of general and basic courses in Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian and other foreign languages including Bangla.

CfL, previously known as English Language Programme, was formed by students and teachers in 2005 to improve the English language skills of the university students.

The centre aims at assisting students in developing their language skills, which will enable them to succeed not only in their post-graduate studies, but also in their forthcoming professional careers.

## Appeal for help

DU CORRESPONDENT



Salim Shaikh, a rickshawpuller, is suffering from cancer, says a press release.

He is now under treatment at the National Cancer and Research Institute in the city.

Salim has already sold out all his properties to bear the cost of his treatment.

So he has appealed to well-off section of the society for financial assistance.

Contributions can be sent to Shamima Yasmin, Savings Account No 34132391, Sonali Bank Ltd, New Market Branch, Dhaka, Mobile: 01716110274.

## JU Journalists' Assoc executives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khairul Hasan Munna of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) and Rafiqul Islam Alok of the daily Sangbad were elected president and general secretary of Jahangirnagar University Journalists' Association (JUJA) for the term 2008.

The election was held yesterday at the administrative building of the university.

Other office bearers are: vice-president -- Roknuzaman Pias; treasurer -- Rezaul Haque Kawshik; joint secretary -- Shafiqul Alam Sajju; office and publicity secretary -- Mukimul Ahsan Himel and executive member -- Sazzad Biplob.

## Modernise technical edn to produce skilled manpower

### Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The engineering and technical education will have to be modernised and expanded across the country for creating skilled manpower which is one of the key ways to make the nation prosperous, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

The second shift system in education should be introduced at engineering and technology-based public universities, while private universities should open different engineering, technology and technical departments, they added.

Amda Research Foundation organised the seminar on 'Global Standard Engineering and Technical Education: Bangladesh Perspective' at the National Press Club in the city.

The speakers called on the public and private sectors to set up new Technical Training Institutes (TTIs) for reducing unemployed youths and increasing manpower in the country.

Prof M Keramat Ali of Civil

Engineering department at Ahsanullah University of Science, Engineering and Technology said the entire syllabus and content of technical education will have to be revised and modernised for providing global standard technical education.

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) President Golam Mostafa said it is possible to earn 10 to 12 billion-dollar remittance through sending skilled manpower abroad.

"Bangladesh can become a middle-income country only by sending skilled manpower to foreign countries. For the reason, technical education is essential for

making people skilled. The government and private sectors should set up new TTIs and provide modern training for youths," he added.

Dr Abul Kalam Azad, dean of Engineering and Technology faculty at Eastern University, said the country will not make any progress without making 'technical hands'. So, the number of technical training institutes will have to be increased.

Presided over by Amda Research Foundation Chairman Akbar Hossain, the seminar was addressed by Bangladesh Industrial Technical Assistant Centre Director General Ashish Kumar Pal and Prime University Vice Chancellor Dr MA Samad.



## Moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places during the period, Met Office said, predicting that day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 33.5 degree Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi and the lowest of 23.6 degrees at Sandwip.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:48pm today and rises at 5:22am tomorrow.

The 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	31.0	26.8	80	80
Chittagong	29.0	25.2	82	89
Rajshahi	33.5	26.0	98	92
Khulna	30.0	26.2	92	88
Barisal	28.5	26.0	93	89
Sylhet	32.0	26.5	87	87
Cox's Bazar	29.4	24.0	96	88

## Khurshid Alam's art exhibition begins

DU CORRESPONDENT

A twelve-day solo art exhibition of artist Khurshid Alam Selim began yesterday at Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts in the city, says a press release.

Malaysian High Commissioner Dato Abdul Malek Bin Abdul Aziz inaugurated the exhibition while noted artist Rafiqun Nabi and New York based newspaper 'Thikana' editorial board chief MM Shaheen were present.

A total of 37 art works of the artist will be displayed at the event that will remain open from 12:00pm to 8:00pm everyday till July 29.

**DHAKA TODAY**

**Seminar**  
Energy & Power organises a seminar on 'Bangladesh's main challenge to meet future electricity demand'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

**Roundtable**  
Shaptahik, a weekly news magazine, organises a roundtable on 'Mineral resources: Realising demurrage and public interest'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

**JICA seminar**  
JICA organises a regional seminar on the role of JICA in the Saarc countries. Venue: Biam Foundation auditorium. Time: 9:00am.

**Workshop**  
Young Consultants organises a workshop on 'Sound feasibility studies benefit for banks and financial institutions'. Venue: Brac Centre Inn. Time: 2:15pm.

**Rotary Dhaka Central**  
The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 1:30pm.