

Govt to enact new law to end discrimination against women

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the government will enact a new law, if necessary, to eliminate discrimination against women in society.

"The government is pledge-bound to empower women and remove all kinds of discrimination against them. We will repeal the laws which are responsible for creating any bar to establishing gender equality," he said.

The minister said the government would not enact any law which hurts the religious sentiment.

Shafique was speaking as the chief guest at a seminar on 'Status of implementation of national policies and other

commitments related to women in Bangladesh' organised by Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha (BNPS) at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Moderated by BNPS Executive Director Rokeya Kabir, the seminar was addressed by Prof Momtaz Begum, chairman of Jatiya Mahila Sangstha, as the special guest.

The minister urged the women leaders to place to the government their specific recommendations for enacting any law or amending any of the existing laws to establish gender equality and remove any discrimination.

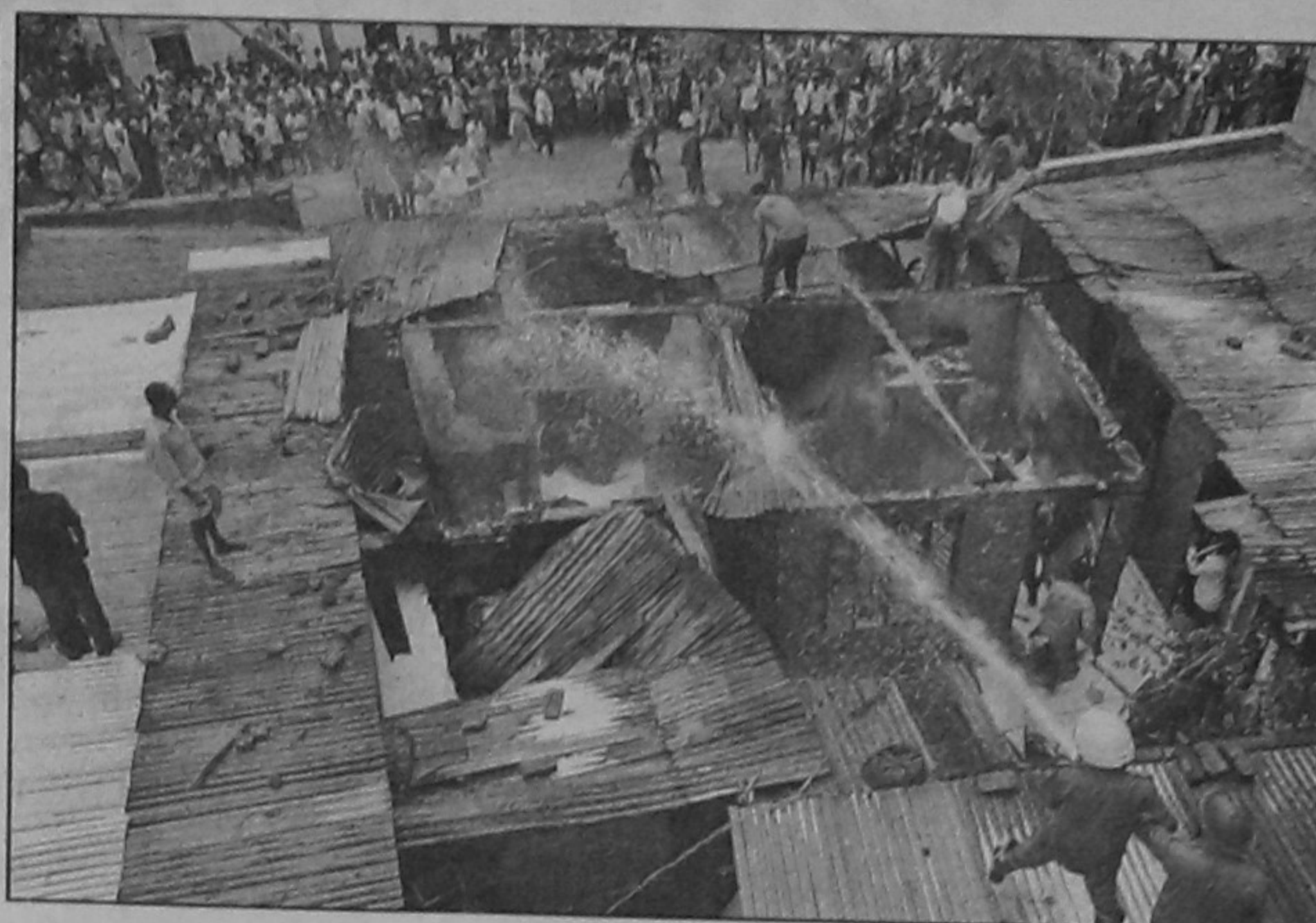
He said the government was sincere to enact a law for making marriage registration for Hindu community compulsory, but a group of Hindu community had seriously

opposed the initiative, saying that such law would hurt their religious sentiment.

"There is such a law in India. If a law is enacted making the marriage registration for Hindu community compulsory in Bangladesh, it will be better for them in many respects, including their jobs in foreign countries," he mentioned.

The minister went on saying that all the people, irrespective of men and women, should work unitedly to eliminate the social and family discrimination against women.

Parliament members Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury and Nilufar Chowdhury, Bhorer Kagoj, and AM Saiful Hassan, director of NGO Affairs Bureau, also spoke.



Firefighters try to extinguish a fire at chemical warehouses on Road No 23 of Rupnagar at Pallabi in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 16)

Two shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals shot and injured two people in separate incidents in the city's Kafrul and Mohammadpur areas yesterday.

The victims were identified as Abdul Khaleque, 50, a security guard of a under-construction house, and Robo Arian, 28, an officer of Sabiha Real Estate.

At East Kazipara In Kafrul, armed extortionists shot the security guard in broad daylight as they failed to realise toll from the house owner, Mofazzal Hossain.

The victim, Khaleque, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

He said three extortionists entered the building, shot the security guard in the stomach around 2:00pm and fled the scene.

Mofazzal told The Daily Star that the extortionists sent a note through Khaleque to him 10 or 12 days ago demanding toll. Following the incident, he filed a general diary (GD) with Kafrul police station.

He added the note also contained a cellphone number, which was also reported to the police station.

Officer-in-charge (OC) Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star that one Masud demanded the toll and threatened the owner of the building.

The police are trying to arrest the criminals.

In the other incident, a gang of criminals shot Arian when he was buying medicines from a shop near Krishi market at Mohammadpur around 1:00am.

The criminals fled the scene by a private car.

The victim was admitted to the Square Hospital.

Proprietor of the Sabiha Real Estate Moniruzzaman filed a case with Mohammadpur police station.

In the case, he mentioned that Ward Councillor Sayeed Bepari and his two sons -- Shamim and Shaheen -- might have been involved in this incident as the company had a feud with them over a land dispute.

Fire at RMG factory in Tongi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fabrics and machinery of a garment factory were gutted in a devastating fire in Tongi last night.

Sources said the fire started on the 4th floor of the factory of Northern Apparels around 9:00pm.

On receiving information, firefighters from Dhaka and Gazipur rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze after three hours of struggle.

Rafiqul Islam, deputy assistant director of Gazipur Fire Service and Civil Defence, told The Daily Star that the fire broke out at the knitting section of the factory, but the firefighter managed to extinguish the blaze before it could spread to other floors of the building.

He suspects that an electrical short-circuit might have sparked off the fire.

However, there was no report of casualty as all staffs left the factory after the working hour at 8:00pm, he added.

60 senior DU teachers honoured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The students of 1969 batch of Dhaka University yesterday accorded reception to their direct teachers.

The reception ceremony was held at Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) auditorium of the university.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique was the chief guest at the function and handed over honorary crests to the teachers, says a press release.

Prof Dr Saia Saia Salhin Quaderi, a student of '69 batch and a teacher of biochemistry of the university, presided over the function.

Emeritus Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury, Prof Saaduddin Ahmed, Prof Mizanur Rahman Shelley, Prof Hadiuzzaman and Prof M Aminul Islam spoke at the function.

Prof Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique lauded the initiative and said this would help maintain a permanent relation between the teachers and students.

A total of 60 teachers were accorded reception at the function.

Independent EC can leave CG system redundant

Speakers tell BBC Sanglap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If the Election Commission (EC) can work independently and neutrally, there is no need for the caretaker government system, panellists at the Bangladesh Sanglap, a talk show of BBC radio, said yesterday.

They also said the Tipaimukh dam issue is a national issue and a national unity is needed to protect the country from the disastrous impacts of the dam.

The programme was recorded at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

Jute and Textile Minister Abdul Latif Siddique, a panellist, said some MPs of the ruling party have called for abolition of the caretaker

government system, but it is only their personal opinion. The government would think about it, if the countrymen want the same, he added.

The minister, however, said that if the Election Commission becomes totally independent and neutral, then there is no need for this system.

BNP leader Abdul Moyeen Khan said the caretaker government system is an abnormal system, but the demand raised by some Awami League lawmakers for its abolition indicates that they would benefit if the system is not in place.

Former election commissioner Justice Abdur Rauf said the caretaker government system is a unique system, which does not exist in any

other country of the world. The system was introduced as there is a lack of trust among the political parties.

"The system should be abolished for the sake of democracy," he said.

About the controversial Tipaimukh dam project, Textile Minister Latif Siddique said the BNP government was silent about the Indian project during its tenure, but the party is now trying to make it an issue.

The government would decide its stance on the dam after the expert team visits the site and submits its report, he added.

Prof Firdous Azim said it is a national issue and division among the political parties regarding the issue is unfortunate.

Sufia Kamal a symbol of equality, freedom

Speakers tell memorial lecture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a memorial lecture yesterday said poet Sufia Kamal is a symbol of equality, freedom and human rights which is a source of inspiration to build a peaceful society, says a press release.

"We can respect the memories of Sufia Kamal only by pledging to implement her set of values - equality, freedom and rights," said Dr Shahdeen Malik, while delivering the lecture titled 'Movements for democracy and good governance and Sufia Kamal'.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) organised the event, marking the 98th birth anniversary of the poet at Biam

Auditorium in the city where Shapthabik Begum Editor Noorjahan Begum and anti-British movement leader Hena Das were conferred Poet Sufia Kamal Honorary Award 2009.

Begum Sufia Kamal was the founder president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad.

The eminent jurist said the principle of equal distribution is absent in the conventional definition of good governance.

"Without principle of equal distribution, disparity will increase between the rich and the poor, and ultimately there will be rise in conflicts and impatience, and democracy will be defeated," he added.

BMP General Secretary

Maleka Banu said Sufia Kamal was a revolutionary leader, cultural and social activist, but she had no link with power.

"She struggled for democracy and good governance until death," Banu said, adding that she is the source of inspiration for women empowerment and establishing a humane culture.

Chairing the programme, BMP President Ayesha Khanam said Sufia Kamal's birthday is a day to promise for democracy and human rights.

Laila Afroz and Ahkam Ullah recited poems, while Ifrat Ara Dewan, Mita Huq, Auditi Mohsin and Bijan Kuma Mistri rendered songs in the cultural event.

Healthcare initiative for rural people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Grameen Healthcare Trust and GE Healthcare jointly kick-started a new healthcare initiative titled 'Healthymagination' to offer more efficient and cost-effective healthcare services in rural Bangladesh.

Under the new initiative, GE Healthcare will provide Grameen Healthcare's primary care clinics with easy, affordable and technically suitable machines for rural Bangladesh to diagnose diseases at an early stage.

The announcement came at a press conference organised by GE Healthcare at a city hotel yesterday.

"We will produce machines and technology that will be tailor-made to the healthcare needs of the country, helping diagnose many diseases in rural Bangladesh," said V Raja, president and CEO of GE Healthcare India.

GE Healthcare is a unit of GE Technology Infrastructure which is a unit of General Electric.

The organisation has a broad range of products and services, including medical imaging and information technologies, medical diagnostics, patient monitoring systems, performance improvement solutions, drug discovery and biopharmaceutical manufacturing technologies.

The partnership will start its journey by providing services to pregnant women in rural areas.

GE officials said eight paramedics and a physician from Grameen Kalyan Centres have

already been trained on the use of diagnostic imaging technology. They have been provided with portable, battery-operated ultrasound systems to give healthcare services to patients at their homes.

A total of 200 pregnant women have already benefited from the project since its introduction in May this year.

GE will spend globally \$6 billion over the next six years on research and development that will help deliver better care to more people at lower cost.

The MAC 400, an electrocardiograph (ECG), Lullaby Baby Warmer, a baby warmer priced 70 percent lower than imported warmers of the same class, and LOGIQ P3, an ultrasound imaging system, were three of the affordable and technically suitable machines shown at the programme.

General Manager of GEMS Bangladesh Farrukh Alam was also present.

Hydrographic Day today

UNB, Dhaka

The 4th World Hydrographic Day (WHD) will be observed today.

The theme of this year's WHD is "Hydrography-Supporting of the Marine Environment".

Like all other member states of International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO), Bangladesh will celebrate the effective hydrographic activities to minimise damage of marine environment, said an ISPR press release.

6,114 mobile phone sets seized at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials seized 6,114 pieces of cellphone sets and 1,118 pieces of MP3 and MP4 sets in 22 hand luggage left abandoned at Zia International Airport (ZIA) on Friday night.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Customs at ZIA Mohammad Mujibur Rahman told The Daily Star that they found 6,114 pieces of cellphone sets of different brands, including Nokia, Motorola, and Philips, and 1,118 pieces of MP3 and MP4 sets worth around over Tk 3 crore.

The luggage were carried by a Bangladesh Biman flight from Hong Kong to ZIA around 11:00pm, he said, adding that customs officials found the luggage left abandoned at the passenger lounge.

But none was arrested in this connection.

Govt mulls special BCS for deprived candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special examination for recruitment in Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) would be arranged for those who have faced discrimination in the past seven years, Prof Alaaddin Ahmed, prime minister's adviser for education, said yesterday.

The age limit for the candidates would be 35 years, he added.

He said this during the foundation stone laying ceremony of Shaheed Rafiq-Zabbar Hall at Jahangirnagar University (JU) in Savar.

The adviser also said that the government has already started preparing database of unemployed youths to fulfil its election pledge to give job to at least one member of every family.

JU Vice Chancellor Prof Sharif Enamul Kabir, Prof Md Muniruzzaman, Prof Farhad Hossain and Prof Nasir Uddin were present at the ceremony.

Bulbul elected IPI board member

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, head of News & Current Affairs, ATN Bangla, and executive editor of daily Sangbad, has been elected an executive board member of the International Press Institute (IPI) for next four years (2009-2013).

The election was held on June 9 at the 58th general meeting in Finland's capital of Helsinki. The office-bearers were elected through secret ballot, says a press release.

The newly elected executive board officials are chairman -- Janne Virkkunen, senior editor-in-chief, Helsingin Sanomat, Finland; vice chairmen -- Mark Damazer, controller, BBC Radio 4 and BBC 7 of London, Carl-Eugen Eberle, director of Legal Affairs, ZDF of Germany and Simon Li, former managing editor, Los Angeles Times, USA.

N Ravi, editor of The Hindu, India, has also been elected as a board member.

IPI is a global network of editors, media executives and leading journalists.

Disabled Welfare Act to be updated: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the government will update the Disabled Welfare Act 2000 and take special measures for education, employment, movement and communications of the physically challenged people.

She also urged all to cooperate with the physically challenged people with love and fraternity to ensure flourishing of their merit and talent.

A team of players with disabilities from Bangladesh won 21 gold medals in an Olympic competition in the USA in 1996. So disability is not a disease. People's cooperation and feelings of fraternity can play a great role in developing the talent of the physically challenged people, the prime minister said.

She was addressing a function arranged on the occasion of distributing wheelchairs to war-wounded freedom fighters and physically challenged people at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city yesterday.

Rotary Club of Motijheel arranged the function patronised by Green Delta Insurance Company Limited.

Finance Minister AMA Muhiht, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Capt (retd) AB Tajul Islam, Managing Director of Green Delta Insurance Company Limited Nasir A Chowdhury, and Rotarians Masih Malik Chowdhury and Abdus Shakur Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion.

A total of 550 physically challenged people, including women and children, were given



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina distributes wheelchairs among the war-wounded freedom fighters and physically challenged people at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city yesterday.

wheelchairs at the function. Sheikh Hasina said the government would take steps to uphold social dignity of the physically challenged people.

The prime minister said Tk 8,247 crore has been allocated in the proposed 2009-10 budget for creating social safety net for the poorer sections of population which is Tk 729 crore higher than previous year's.

She said the beneficiaries under the disability allowance have been increased to 2.60 lakh from the previous 2 lakh, raising the monthly per-head annuity to Tk 300.

Sheikh Hasina said the government has taken step to introduce One-Stop Service to provide the physically challenged people with every necessary health service and aid instruments.

"The freedom fighters are

the greatest sons of the soil. They fought in 1971 to give us an independent and sovereign state. Our obligations towards the freedom fighters are limitless," she told her audience.

Sheikh Hasina said the state is supposed to take care of the freedom fighters, but, after the killing of Barigabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, anti-liberation forces were rehabilitated instead of the liberation-warheroes.

The prime minister said the monthly allowance of the poor freedom fighters will be increased to Tk 1,500 from the previous amount of Tk 900 and the number of recipients be raised to 1.25 lakh from the present 1 lakh.

Besides, freedom fighters of 65 years of age or above will be given facility of free travels by rail, bus and launch, she said.

'Increase allocation for research'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former adviser to a caretaker government Rasheda K Chowdhury at a book launching ceremony yesterday stressed the need for increasing the government allocation for research and development issues, saying research is a must to develop the economy.

She called on the government to allocate more funds in this regard to develop the country as well as its society.

Mentioning different developed countries where research and development issues get priority and a large amount of funds is allocated in this regard, Rasheda said, "It is a matter of regret that the government fund for research is very little in our country."

Research and Development Collective organised the launching

ceremony of book titled 'The Hidden Matrix: Women's Positions and Gender Relations in Adivasi Societies' by Dr Eshani Chakraborty, associate professor of History department at Dhaka University (DU), and Ayub Ali, executive director of Society for Research and Development Steps.

Rasheda unwrapped the cover of the book as the chief guest at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city. The book is one of the rare collections which portrays the indigenous women's development status and their rights.

She said, "To draw the government's attention on indigenous women's development issues, media should publish more news and articles on issues related to indigenous rights, their education system and textbook status."

Sanjib Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, said indigenous people are presented negatively in most cases, but the issues related to indigenous women's position, gender relations, economic, education and health were presented positively in this book.

He demanded steps to include indigenous women issues in the national women development policy.

With the support of Oxfam GB, the book was published from Pathak Shamabesh.

Presided over by Dr HSK Arefin, the function was also addressed by Meghna Guhathakurta, executive director of Research Initiative Bangladesh, and Sanjida Akter, lecturer of Women and Gender Studies department and writer Eshani Chakraborty.

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

The daily Ittefaq organises a roundtable on 'Global economic crisis, proposed budget and housing industry'. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 10:30am.

Seminar

Bangladesh-India Friendship Society organises a seminar on 'South Asian connectivity: Bangladesh perspective'. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 10:40am.

Conference

Right to Information Forum organises a conference on 'Right to information: Law, institution and citizens'. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 10:00am.

Dialogue

Centre for Studies in Social Transformation organises a dialogue on plan of government and national interest in building the Padma Bridge. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4:00pm.

WEATHER TODAY

Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Mild heatwave, which is sweeping over the regions of Rajshahi, Ishwardi and Jessore, may continue, Met Office said.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 7:49pm today and rises at 6:12am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 37.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 22.4 degrees Celsius at Faridpur.

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	35.6	28.0	80	76
Chittagong	30.5	26.0	78	76
Rajshahi	37.5	28.6	84	68
Khulna	35.0	27.2	84	70
Barisal	34.0	29.4	82	80
Sylhet	32.1	25.2	96	82
Cox's Bazar	31.5	25.5	83	83