

Tk 222cr spent for upkeep of MiG fighter jets

Planning minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has spent Tk 222.49 crore for the maintenance of eight MiG-29 fighter jets since fiscal year 2000-01 and Tk 51 crore for 16 F-7 fighters since FY 2004-05.

Planning Minister Air Vice-Marshal (ret) AK Khandker said this yesterday in a question-answer session in parliament.

The MiG-29 planes were purchased from Russia at a cost of around \$124 million in 1999 while the Chinese F-7 fighters cost around \$129 million in 2004.

While replying to lawmakers' queries, the minister, also in charge of the defence ministry, said the government has already begun the process of purchasing another

16 training aircrafts for Bangladesh Air Force in the current and next financial year.

Awami League lawmaker Israfil Alam submitted a question to the defence ministry through the House asking for the dates of the coups and mutinies in the armed forces.

He also wanted to know who were responsible for those incidents.

The lawmaker then asked whether a list of the victims in the coups would be placed in parliament, and if the government has taken any step to rehabilitate their family members.

Khandker didn't give any detail about the coups and mutinies in Bangladesh armed forces in the years after the country's independence. He however said if

necessary, a complete list of the incidents will be placed in the future.

He said various ministries had taken measures to punish the culprits and rehabilitate the victims' families.

No coup or mutiny has occurred in the navy since the country's independence, the minister said.

He however mentioned that on November 7, 1975, a section of naval officers took a stance against others in Khulna and Chittagong leaving one officer killed.

There was no instance of mutiny or coup in the air force after independence, excepting one incident on October 2, 1977, when some disgruntled air force men revolted and killed 11 officers and injured a few others, the minister said.



Prof Joseph T O'Connell speaks at an international consultation on 'Prospects for Dialogue and Religious Studies in South Asian Universities' at the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University yesterday.

'Dialogues can create culture of peace'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day international consultation on 'Prospects for Dialogue and Religious Studies in South Asian Universities' began at the Dhaka University (DU) yesterday.

The Department of World Religion and Culture and the Centre for Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue (CIID) of the DU are jointly organising the consultation.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the event at the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) as the chief guest, Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said, "At this very moment we are facing cruel and inhuman wars and racial, social and economic violence. Fanatics and terrorists are determined to destroy peace on earth. The religions of the world have a major role to play to ensure peace."

Through dialogues and consultation we can create a culture of peace. We must remember that the moral and religious values cannot be invoked by force, instead they can be achieved through exchange of words and dialogues, he said.

DU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Harun-or-Rashid addressed the consultation as a special guest while Prof Michael Webb of Brijoy Mukherjee and Prof Asha Mukherjee of India, Prof Joseph T O'Connell of Canada and Prof Vellakudy Anagaratnam of Sri Lanka spoke as guests of honour.

Chairman of the Department of World Religions and Culture Prof Kazi Nurul Islam presided over the inaugural session.

Writ petition filed for supply of safe water

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday seeking directions upon Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority to supply pure and hygienic water to the city dwellers.

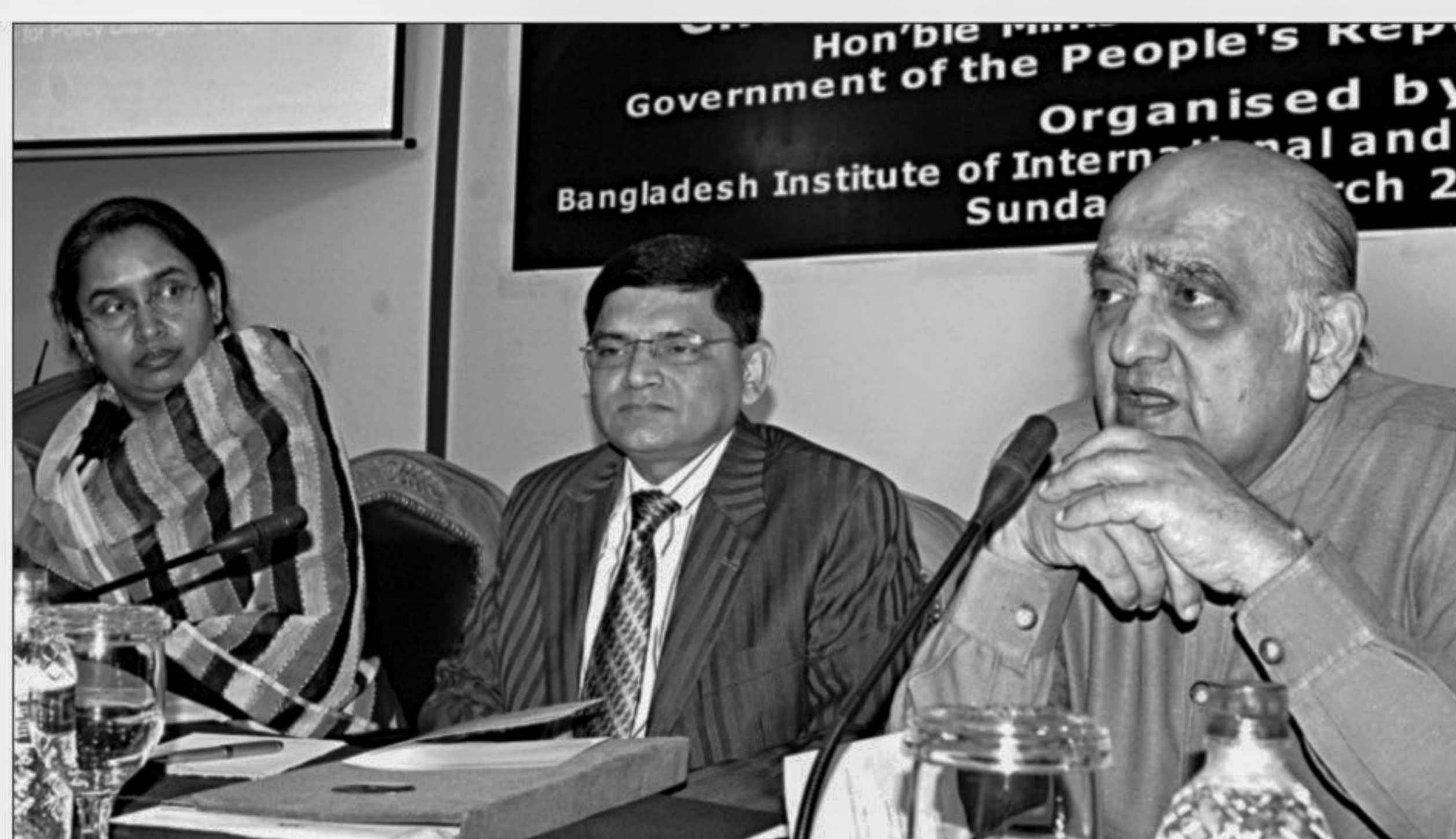
Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) filed the petition praying to the HC for its direction upon the government to collect test reports from Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) and Bangladesh Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) on water supplied in the city's different areas.

It also asked the court to direct the government to collect a test report from World Health Organisation on the level of trihalomethane (THM) in water, claiming that the presence of THM beyond a certain level increases the risk of cancer.

Advocate Manzill Murshid filed the petition on behalf of HRPB.

In the petition, he stated that Wasa has been supplying stinky and unhygienic water as per newspaper reports.

The secretary to the LGRD and cooperatives ministry, and the chairmen of Dhaka Wasa and BCSIR, the managing director of BSTI, and the mayor of Dhaka City Corporation have been made respondents to the petition.



Prof Rehman Sobhan speaks at a roundtable on 'Bangladesh-China dialogue' organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) at its auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right are Maj Gen Ferdous Mia and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni.

Govt to honour friends of '71

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The government will honour the personalities and the groups of different nations across the globe that had supported the country's liberation war in various ways, including mobilising public opinion and donating money.

The Ministry of Liberation War Affairs will place a proposal in today's cabinet meeting in this regard for approval. Earlier, the ministry took an initiative to honour those who had supported and helped Bangladesh during its nine-month bloody war against the Pakistani occupation forces in 1971.

We are now listing the persons and organisations that helped us achieve independence 38 years ago, State

Minister for Liberation War Affairs ABM Tajul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said some 40 people of different countries, including the UK, Pakistan, the USA and Russia, as well as several organisations have already been listed.

"The list will be a lengthy one," Tajul said, adding that the persons include politicians, philosophers, intellectuals, artists and eminent citizens.

"We want to honour them to express our gratitude for their valuable contribution to Bangladesh and its freedom fighters. By honouring them, we also want to inform the international community that Bangladesh still remembers them," he added.

Tajul said that the initiative would also encourage the persons and groups across the world to do the same if any

country in future fights rightfully for independence or establishing human rights.

If the cabinet approves the proposal, the liberation war ministry will start inviting the people and the organisations.

A special programme will be organised where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will present them with crests and citations.

If anyone fails to attend the function, he or she will be honoured through the Bangladesh missions abroad.

"We will also honour those who are no more," said Tajul.

A proposal to ratify the Rome Statute of International Criminal Court (ICC) will also be placed in today's cabinet to be held at the Secretariat.

Another batch of BDR mutineers goes on trial today

UNB, Dhaka

Another batch of BDR mutineers goes on trial at the Pilkhana headquarters of the border force today as part of the judicial proceedings over the last February 25-26 mayhem.

The special court-5 formed under the Bangladesh Rifles Order-1972 will try the BDR members of 36 Rifle Battalion today, official sources said.

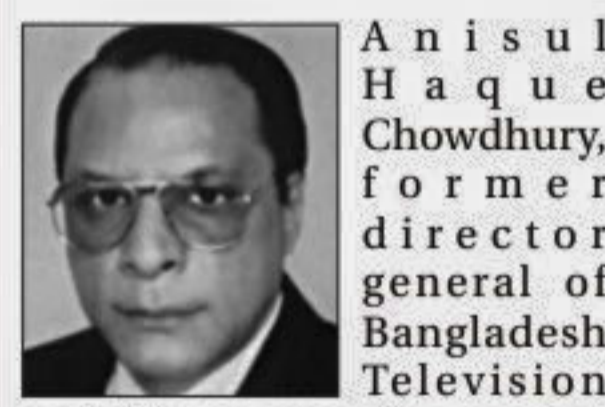
Set up in the haunted Darbar Hall of the BDR Headquarters, the special trial court will sit in the morning for trying the offence of the mass mutiny.

Earlier, the same court started trial of mutineers from Dhaka Sector headquarters on February 23. The court was adjourned on February 24 till 9:00am on April 15 for charge framing against the accused.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Director General Maj Gen Mainul Islam will preside over the special trial court consisting two other BDR officers.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Anisul Haque Chowdhury, former director general of Bangladesh Television and a former secretary, passed away at a city hospital early yesterday at the age of 65, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two sons, a daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Mohakhali DOHS Mosque after Zohr prayers today.

His relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the 20th death anniversary of Mohiuddin Ahmed, a renowned publisher and founder of Ahmed Publishing House, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at his village residence and different mosques and orphanages.

His family members have requested all to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

BNP out to tarnish image of PM's son

Alleges AL leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Joint General Secretary of Awami League (AL) Mahbubul Alam Hanif yesterday alleged that main opposition BNP has been conspiring to tarnish the image of the prime minister's US-educated son by bringing false allegations against him.

"BNP wants to bring the highly qualified US-educated son of the prime minister, Sajeb Wazed Joy, in the row of corrupt Tarique Rahman by bringing false allegations. However, people won't accept this evil design," he said at a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue.

Jubo League, the youth front of AL, organised the rally to protest the opposition chief whip's allegation that the prime minister's son has involvement in illegal VoIP business in the country.

Saying that the main opposition has been plotting conspiracies against the government one after another, Hanif called on the countrymen to remain alert about the conspiracies and anti-government propaganda by the BNP-led coalition.

Acting Chairman of Jubo League Omar Faruk Chowdhury chaired the rally while Whip Mirza Azam MP, Farunur Rashid and Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury also spoke.

Earlier on Saturday, AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam, also LGRD and cooperatives minister, asked BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia to disclose the evidence of allegations brought against Joy within a week.



Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members in connection with the bomb blasts that killed five people during a Communist Party of Bangladesh rally in 2001. (Story on Page 16)

KIBRIA KILLING CASE

Babar placed on five-day remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A judicial magistrate of Habiganj yesterday placed former state minister Lutfuzzaman Babar on a five-day remand in connection with the case for killing former finance minister SAMS Kibria and four others.

The magistrate granted the remand as CID ASP Rafiqul Islam filed a petition for a ten-day remand on March 10 for the second time. On the same day, the official also filed a petition for remand of Huji operative Mizanur Rahman Mithu and he was placed on a seven-day

remand. Babar was taken back to the capital yesterday evening after judicial magistrate Shamsul Islam granted the remand prayer. He was brought to Habiganj district jail on Saturday night from the capital.

Babar was earlier sent back to jail after the end of his six-day remand in the same case on February 18.

SAMS Kibria, his nephew advocate Shah Manzurul Huda and local AL leaders Abdur Rahim, Abul Hossain and Siddique Ali were killed in a grenade attack at a public meeting at Baiderbar of Habiganj Sadar upazila on January 27 in 2005.

MUGGING Pvt varsity student held, firearms seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action (Rab) arrested a private university student who is a member of a gang of muggers and seized three firearms and 17 rounds of bullets from his possession at Pallabi in the city yesterday.

The arrestee, identified as Abdur Rahman, 19, a first year student of Bangladesh University of Business and Technology, confessed that their gang, which consists of eight to ten teenagers, was active in the city's Mirpur, Kafir, Pallabi, Shah Ali and Bhasantek areas.

Flight Lieutenant Khairul Mamun said they tried The Daily Star that they raided his residence on the fourth floor of a five-storied building in the area at around 8:00am and arrested Abdur Rahman and seized two revolvers, one pistol and 17 rounds of bullets from a pigeon's case on the rooftop of the building.

Abdur Rahman told reporters at Rab-4 office at Mirpur that around six days ago his gang shot a pedestrian and snatched Tk 40,000 from his possession at Mirpur-11, he said, adding that other gang members Billal and Babu shot the victim.

Among the gang members, he is the only student while the rest of the gang are illiterate, he said.

Flight Lieutenant Khairul Mamun said they are trying to nab the other gang members.

AMIN BAZAR LANDFILL

SC stays HC restriction on waste dumping

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed a High Court order in which it asked the Dhaka City Corporation not to dump waste at Amin Bazar in Savar for two months.

A four-member bench of Appellate Division of the SC headed by Justice MA Matin passed the order after disposing of a leave to appeal petition by DCC authorities against the HC order.

Counsel for DCC Ruhul Quddus Kajal told The Daily Star that now there is no bar for his client to dumping waste at Amin Bazar.

During the hearing, senior counsel for DCC barrister Rafique-ul-Huq told the court that at least 4,200 tonnes of waste are produced in Dhaka city every day.

Since the dumping ground in Dhaka cannot contain more than 1,700 tonnes of waste, the DCC has to dump waste at Amin Bazar.

Upon a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), the HC directed the DCC authorities on February 28 not to dump waste at Amin Bazar for two months.

Advocate Prabir Neogi and Iqbal Kabir Liton stood for Bela.

Two city areas to be freed from electric poles, overhead cables

BSS, Dhaka

Two new areas in the city -- Purbachal-2 and Uttara-3 -- will be freed from electric poles, overhead wires and cables.

The Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources yesterday directed the Dhaka City Corporation and Rajuk to take necessary steps to install all types of cables and pipes of all utility services in an underground duct in these areas.

As part of the capital city's beautification project and for the safety of electric poles, the government took the initiative to free all electric poles from the tangles of wires and cables in these two areas.

Prime Minister's Adviser on Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi

Chowdhury gave the directive to DCC and Rajuk officials, Chiefs of the utility agencies and also cable and ISPN operators at his office.

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Enamul Haq and secretaries of both the divisions under the ministry were also present.

Officials said that the electric poles are in a vulnerable condition due to tangles of wires and cables.

DCC and Rajuk have also been asked to work out a formula to solve the problem in other parts of the city and submit its report within the next seven working days.

"This task is difficult in other areas as there is no public land. However, we will submit our report to the government," a DCC top official said.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Weather may remain dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said.

It also said day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:07pm today and rises at 6:07am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 37.1 degree Celsius was recorded at Chuadanga and the lowest 13.7 degrees at Srimongal.

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	34.7	22.6	88	58
Chittagong	30.5	20.0	78	87
Rajshahi	35.6	16.4	45	38
Khulna	35.5	23.0	80	54
Barisal	34.8	22.1	86	52
Sylhet	32.4	18.2	44	38
Cox's Bazar	31.7	22.0	88	83



College student missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Al-Amin Sarker Prabna, a first year student of Pabna Edward College, has been missing since February 23.

Prince, son of Md Humayun Sarker, went out of his residence at Safeda Bagan in Pabna in the afternoon on the day to meet his friends but did not return, says a press release.

A general diary was filed with Pabna Sadar Police Station in this regard.

Anybody knowing his whereabouts has been requested to call his family members at 01727003216.



T O D A Y

Conference

Microcredit Regulatory Authority organises a three-day conference titled 'Microfinance regulations: Who benefits'. Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 9:00am.

Roundtable

The Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh organises a roundtable on non-government initiatives in university education. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Convocation

The 1st Convocation of IBAIS Bangladesh will be held. Venue: Bangladesh International Conference Centre. Time: 11:00am.

Conference

The 1st International Conference of Bangladesh Bioethics Society (BBS) will begin. Venue: University Grants Commission. Time: 9:00am.