

## Seven Killed by Police Firing

SEVEN people were killed and over a hundred were injured in a clash between local mob and police in Kansat Bazaar in Chapainawabganj. Six police vehicles were torched at Kansat as cops tried to disperse the mob blocking the C'nawabganj-Sonamasjid Road. Less than three weeks ago, on 4th January a similar incident left two people killed in the same area. The firing took place when locals were demonstrating for the release of three leaders of Palli Bidyut Sangram Committee (PBSC), an organisation of local electricity subscribers, arrested in connection with January 4 violence in the area. On that day two people were killed in police firing in the same upazila when the locals laid siege to the Kansat Palli Bidyut Samity demanding uninterrupted power supply and reduced meter charge. On Sunday night, police



arrested Golam Rabbani, Zahir Chowdhury and Manirul Islam Manna, leaders of PBSC, which is leading a movement on five-point demand including reduction of electricity meter charge and minimum charges. Additional contingents of police and BDR have been deployed in the area, where a tense situation prevailed as a result of the agitating locals.

## Persecuted for Adopting Birth-control Method

IN the Purba-Katakhali village of Hoaikong upazila of Cox's Bazaar a day-labourer has been the victim of persecution on the ground that he has infringed a religious dictum by adopting vasectomy. He has not only been ostracised by the community at the behest of the religious leaders, his house was set on fire.

Shamsul Alam (38), the day labourer, has been making a subsistence living as his family members stood at eight. So, he decided not to enlarge his family any more and went to the local clinic to have the vasectomy done. But he had little inkling of what has followed operation. The imam, the head clergyman, of the local mosque issued a fatwa banning him from the mosque and put an

embargo on his family. The imam declared that "it is najayej (illegitimate) for a man to adopt family planning method." The saddest part of the story is that though it caused an uproar and many from the administration were informed of the incident, the victims -- Alam and his family -- did not receive any kind of official assistance.

Since the day Alam went through the vasectomy operation, he has not only been banned from the local mosque, he has been facing obstruction while seeking employment. According to a newspaper report it was in the night of January 17 that some miscreants set fire to Alam's house. He could only manage to save his family members. He said to the press that he lost all his belongings to

the fire. At present, Alam is living in a makeshift thatch. On top of that, he has received a death threat from the same quarter that issued the fatwa. He was asked to keep mum about the incident of fire or else face death. He has also been asked to leave the village.

The local people have conceded to the press that the imam Moulana Abdul Aziz issued a fatwa during the Eid-ul-fitr congregation asking all to ostracise Alam and his family.

As for the accused Moulana Aziz, he is straight forward in his rebuttal. He said to the press that Alam infringed religious dictum, and the villagers have ostracised him. However, he denied to have anything to do with the act of arson.