

Poor farmers at money lenders mercy

MADARIPUR, Jan 22 : Poor farmers and the low-income group people all over the district are becoming victims of the high-interest money lending business, reports UNB.

During the months of Chaitra and Baisakh, the farmers are forced to take high-interest bearing loans from the moneylenders.

It is alleged the interest rate charged by the local money lenders are more than 200 per cent.

The interest extracted by the money-lenders on a Taka 100 loan is either Taka 20 per month or 1.5 maunds of paddy. Paddy fields, houses, cattle and gold ornaments are also collected as collateral for the loans made.

Another report says: Despite government restrictions, trees are being used as fuel in the brickfields hastening the process of deforestation.

Local people alleged that brickfield owners are using

trees despite availability of coal in the depots.

They said bamboos are used as fuel in the 10 brickfields of the district while age-old pine-trees, mango and other fruit bearing trees are also pulled down for brick burning.

Indiscriminate felling of date trees are also affecting production of molasses, they added.

Experts and environmentalists fear that the unabated trend to pull down trees will affect the ecological balance of the area.

Local people urged the authorities to take immediate action against the lawbreakers.

Meanwhile, About 1,500 ponds in ten thanas of Madaripur and Shariatpur districts could yield fish worth about Taka 3 crore per annum if developed under proper pisciculture.

About 50 per cent of the ponds under share ownership is silted and dried up due to a lack of maintenance and dispute among the owners.

A large number of them are covered with water hyacinth, creating an environment unsuitable for fish cultivation, local farmers said.

The catching of large amounts of fish fry, unabated in the ten thanas of the two districts, is also disrupting the fish production.

Fish measuring less than four inches in length are sold in the market everyday regardless of a government prohibition in catching fish less than nine inches in length.

Current nets, used in catching the fish fry, are openly sold in the market of the two districts despite the government's ban on such nets, they added.

According to the experts the rampant catching of fish fry could result in a fish scarcity in the near future.

The law-enforcing authorities concerned are yet to take any positive steps to stop the illegal practice of catching fish fries.



SYLHET: Visitors at a stall in the book fair organised by the local librarians' association recently. —Star photo

Notes from Jamalpur

JAMALPUR, Jan 22: Day-long workshop on co-ordination in family planning activities was held at local Regional Agriculture Research Centre under the auspices of district Family Planning Association recently, reports BSS.

A total of fifty persons representing government offices, NGOs and local journalists took part in the workshop.

The workshop stressed the need of more coordination among all family planning workers.

Tk 50 lakh property gutted

Property worth about Taka 50 lakh was gutted in a fire at Sanandabari Bazar under Dewanganj thana in the district recently.

Sources said that fire originating from a cotton shop rapidly spread to other parts of the market and burnt to ashes 30 shops.

Local people brought the fire under control after four hours of fighting.

Social welfare body meets

District social welfare committee held a meeting in the Deputy Commissioner's conference room recently.

Hamidur Rahman Khan, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Gen), presided over the meeting. Syed Ahmed, Deputy Director of Social Welfare Department, Muhammad Hossain and S M Zahangor social welfare officers spoke at the meeting.

The meeting forwarded 31 applications for sanctioning aid by the national social welfare committee for the year 1993-94.

A villager died Sunday as coldwaves swept the district, keeping people mostly indoors.

The dead was identified by villagers as Sikander Ali (53) of village Khashurber in Kazipur thana.

Miscreants cutting shade trees forcibly, tea gardens face destruction

MAULVIBAZAR, Jan 22 : Tea gardens in the district are threatened with destruction due to rampant felling of shade trees by the miscreants, reports UNB.

Garden owners said, the hoodlums cut away shade trees, loot timbers and cattle of the workers, steal leaves and sometimes humiliate the managers for protesting their misdeeds.

The garden managers of Luhauni, Itah, Karimpore, Aneanabad, Changbhag, Uttarbhag, Monipore and Mohincherra alleged that the law enforcing agencies are not taking any step to curb the activities of the miscreants for mysterious reasons.

The mastans numbering 20/30 raid the garden overpowering the chowkidar in broad day light and loot away goods and valuables of the garden off and on, they added. They said, nobody dares to come out after dusk for fear of the criminals adding snatching and hijacking incidents are rampant during night time.

They urged the authorities to save the shade trees and other valuables from the hands of miscreants to ensure safety of the tea plants and concerned people without further delay.

Another report says: Almost all the Tahsil offices in the district are in bad shape due to its dilapidated condition. The volumes of land records and other important documents piled up in on the floors for want of shelves are being damaged with the passing of time.

Meanwhile, many important documents are destroyed much to the suffering of the concerned people.

Local people said that many of the Tahsil buildings are age-old and may collapse at any time. No initiative is being taken to renovate these buildings.

They alleged that a section dishonest officials of the Tahsil offices realise excess money from the land owners during the collection of taxes and other revenues.

They said, the officials are to give bribe openly to get a copy of old document from the Tahsil office.

BNP leaders, workers asked to follow Zia

PANCHAGARH, Jan 22 : Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz said, Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman had not only declared the independence of Bangladesh but also dreamt for a self-reliant Bangladesh and SAARC concept, reports UNB.

He was addressing as chief guest at a discussion meeting held here Wednesday to mark the 58th birth anniversary of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman.

Describing the late President as the pioneer of freedom of the press and speech, the Law Minister said, "Zia was the first to introduce multi-party politics in the country so as to give democracy an institutional shape."

Mirza Hafiz said, Zia did not believe in the politics of 'words' but in politics of development and production. He took many comprehensive socio-economic measures to materialise his 19-point programmes.

The Law Minister added due to progressive and independent foreign policy of Zia, the country's image was raised to a great extent abroad.

The Minister urged the BNP leaders and workers at all level to strictly follow the foot print of late President as the guiding principle of their personal and political life.

'No change in the living standard of commonman'

Jan 22 : Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain Tuesday lamented that terrorism in educational institutions could not be stopped even three years after democratic process had begun in the country, reports UNB.

"A total of 40 students died, and about 3,000 were injured and 70 educational institutions closed due to campus terrorism, he told a public gathering, organised by the Sherpur district Gano Forum, at the New Market premises here.

Presided over by Convenor of the district Forum Saiful Islam, it was also addressed, among others, by Major General (Retd) Khalilur Rahman, Sree Pankaj Bhattacharya, A U Ahmed and Saidur Rahman Babu.

The Forum President observed there was no qualitative change in the living standard of commonman of the country even after 23 years of independence.

"People have earned victory off and again through movements and struggles, but they have not witnessed any change in statecraft, corruption-free administration and establishment of the rule of law," he added.

Dr Kamal said, Forum's movement didn't aim to oust the present government, but to realise the rights of the people, guaranteed by the constitution.

The Forum chief called upon both the ruling and opposition parties to resolve all problems on the basis of national consensus, shunning differences and meanness.

In the event of any move to rig the mayor elections there would be countrywide violent movement to overthrow the government", Barrister Maudud said.

Termining the Ershad period as the period of development, he urged the city dwellers to cast their votes in favour of JP nominees.

The JP leaders Anwar Hossain Manju, Ruhul Amin Hawlader, Mia Musa Hossain, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar addressed the rally.

The BNP Secretary General Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder urged the city dwellers to cast their votes in favour of BNP

Govt firm to maintain democratic atmosphere

ARAIHAZAR, (Narayanganj), Jan 22 : Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury said, the government is firmly determined to sustain the prevailing democratic atmosphere in the country, reports UNB.

He was addressing as chief guest at a public meeting organised by Narayanganj district BNP at Shatgaon union of Araihaazar thana on Wednesday.

He said, the present democratic government is an outcome of a great revolution and sacrifice adding the government has been working tirelessly for overall development of the country.

Among others, Prof Rezaul Karim MP, Advocate Abul Kalam MP, Advocate Ataur Rahman Khan MP, BNP central member Badruzzaman Khan Khashru, Chhatra Dal

President Fazlul Haque Milon, Chhatra Dal leader Shirin Sultana, Narayanganj district BNP Vice-President Md Kamal Hossain, Rupgonj thana BNP President Fazlul Haque Rokan and other local leaders addressed the meeting. Narayanganj district BNP President Alhaj Rokonuddin Mollah presided.

The Home Minister said present government gives special importance in solving unemployment and poverty eradication in the country. Compulsory Primary Education Programme and Food for Education Programme have been taken up to educate the people.

Besides, subsidy has been given by the government in poultry, dairy and fish projects to gear up self employment.

District roundup

SAVAR

Minor boy strangled to death

Jan. 22: Kidnappers strangled a minor boy to death after his father failed to turn up with the ransom money in village Thirghat in Savar thana last week, reports UNB.

Rubel, the 3-year-old son of Abdul Mannan of the village was kidnapped at gunpoint by a gang of miscreants. The miscreants about five in number demanded Taka 50,000 from the victim's father.

Later, the baby was found dead, dumped into a marshy field of the village when his father failed to meet the kidnapper's demand, police said.

Police arrested Abdur Rahim and Tomizuddin for their alleged involvement in the incident.

It has been alleged that the abductors took Rubel to the house of Tomizuddin and from there they demanded the ransom money.

TANGAIL

Reception to brilliant students

Jan. 22: English Merit Club recently held a reception to the meritorious students of the district at the local Bhasani Hall, reports BSS.

Students who secured star marks in the last HSC and SSC examinations were given prizes by guests from the capital city of Dhaka. Md Nazrul Islam was among those who paid tributes to the meritorious students.

Speakers expressed the hope that the future of the nation largely depended on the younger generation.

KUSHTIA

Two notorious dacoits held

Jan 22: Two notorious dacoits were arrested in the afternoon recently at Kushtia Mazampur Raigate, reports BSS.

On secret information police waited at the raigate in civilian dress. The two dacoits Sarekha (34) and Moniruzzaman (35) reached the raigate by motor cycle and the police took them to custody.

They were wanted by police in connection with dacoity committed on December 15 at Daulatpur Health Complex.

FARIDPUR

Help build prosperous Bangladesh

Jan 22: Chief Whip of Awami League Parliamentary Party Mohammad Nasim called upon the Chhatra League workers to work with dedication to help build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh, reports BSS.

He was addressing the day-long district conference of Bangladesh Chhatra League here recently.

He also asked them to strengthen the hands of Sheikh Hasina in her relentless struggle aiming at alleviating the suffering of the masses. Criticising the economic policy of the government, he said that due to their incapabilities and foreign dictations thousands of people are being removed from employment and the country is being flooded by foreign goods. Due to withdrawal of subsidies in Agriculture Sector the farmers' economic backbone has been broken, he added.

He termed the present foreign policy as subservient and total failure.

The conference presided over by Faridpur district BCL President Habibur Rahman Habib was addressed among others by Mosharraf Hossain MP, Dr Qazi Mohammad Abu Yusuf MP, Abdur Rouf Mia MP and Imamuddin Ahmed.

SHERPUR

Eye camp inaugurated

Jan 22: A week-long eye camp was inaugurated at Jhenagati Hazil Uchi Amir-nessa Girls' High School recently under the joint auspices of the local administration and Leo-club of Mymensingh Progressive, reports BSS.

A function held in this regard was presided over by Alhaj Abul Hossain Sarker, Chairman of the Jhenagati Union Parishad. The eye-camp was inaugurated by Dr. Serazul Hoque MP. It was attended, among others by Sakander Ali, Chairman, Hatibanda Union Parishad and Dr Gulam Murtaza.

NARAIL

Call for using appropriate technology

Jan 22: Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control M Majid-ul Haque called for comprehensive use of indigenous and appropriate technology for attaining self-sufficiency and poverty alleviation, reports UNB.

"The Minister was addressing as chief guest at a seminar on 'Application and Expansion of Country Innovated Technology' held at District auditorium on Wednesday.

He said, it has become imperative to boost agricultural production through utilising such technology for improving the condition of the people as the country's economy is based on agriculture.

Majid-ul Haque called upon the agronomists, agriculture scientists, and research scholar to reach all innovated technologies and know-hows to door the steps of the farmers to help them multiply their production.

Presided over by Additional Divisional Commissioner, Khulna, Shamsul Karim the seminar was participated, among others, by Shamsun Nahar MP, Dharendra Nath Shah MP, Adviser of Science and Technology, BCSIR, Dr Osman Ali.

RAJSHAHI

Varsity teachers stage sit-in

Jan 22: Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) observed Wednesday one-hour long sit in from 11 am to 12 noon in front of the Vice-Chancellor's office, reports UNB.

About 50 members of RUTA demanded the withdrawal of VC's order to deduct the pay scale what they have used to receive during study leave.

After the assurance of the Vice-Chancellor the teachers withdrew their programme.

Meanwhile, the officers of the university observed the third consecutive day of their 13-day long work stoppage demanding officers representation in syndicate and senate.

SATKHIRA

Four arrested with arms

Jan 22: Police arrested four people from different parts of sadar thana and recovered arms and ammunition on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Acting on secret information, police arrested Nazrul (35) and Hamid (30) of Alipur village while they were going to Jessore for committing a dacoity. Police recovered one pistol and four ammunition from their possession.

They were sent to jail hajat. Ruhul Amin and Raju Ahmed of Palashpole were arrested with 7 gram ganja and 18 bottles of phensidyl syrup from the old bus stand in the town.

A case was also registered with the police.

41 FWP projects implemented

PATUAKHALI, Jan 22 : Implementation of 41 projects under Food for Works Programme has been completed in Bauphal thana, official sources said, reports UNB.

About 750 metric tons of wheat were utilised for the execution of the projects which included construction and repair of kutchra roads, embankments, bridges and tree planting.

It is further reported that 15 projects will be implemented in the thana during the current fiscal year. A total of 490 metric tons of wheat has been sanctioned for execution of the projects.

Meanwhile, Local Government Engineering Bureau will construct 86 primary schools, financed by Asian Development Bank in Barisal district during the current financial year at an

estimated cost of Taka 81 lakh.

The repair works of 54 primary schools have already been completed recently.

Another report says: Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) has taken up a programme to construct TCCA Bhaban at Daulatkhan thana in Bhola district during current fiscal year.

Official sources said, Taka 15.10 lakh has been sanctioned under Bhola Irrigation Project to construct the bhaban. The construction work will be started soon.

Another amount of Taka 23.11 lakh has been sanctioned for construction of BRDB residential quarters in the same thana in the current financial year.

Besides, a number of infrastructures will be constructed by BRDB in the thana soon.

Meanwhile, a scheme has been undertaken to bring 6000 acres of land under mustard cultivation in six thanas of the district in the current rabi season.

According to Agriculture Extension Department, of the total land, 2400 acres will be brought under high yielding variety and 3600 acres under local variety.

Thana wise breakup of mustard cultivation are as follows: 900 acres in sadar, 2000 acres in Galachipa, 800 acres in Bauphal, 800 acres in Kalapara, 700 acres in Dasmina and 800 acres in Mirzaganj.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation will supply necessary seeds and fertilizers to the growers at fair prices for the successful implementation of the programme.

Anti-social elements on rise

MAULVIBAZAR, Jan 22 : Anti-social activities in various parts of the district have increased alarmingly in the past few months, reports UNB.

According to informed sources, eve-teasers, drunkards, gamblers, pickpockets and prostitutes are on rise at the town causing social unrest and tension.

Guardians complained that eve-teasers are frequently passing indecent remarks at school and college-going girls at different points of the town.

Gay girls are often seen alluring the people openly at the station road, cinema halls and business centres. Gambling has also become a common feature at the residential hotels.

Local leaders have urged the authorities to take necessary steps to contain the anti-social elements and restore law and order in the district.

Another report says: Acute

seed scarcity has been hampering potato farming in the district.

A large number of the farmers could not bring their prepared land under the farming due to short supply of the seeds. The Agricultural Extension Department and Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation could not supply the seeds to the deserving growers.

A few farmers got meagre supply of seeds while many others finding no other way out purchased smuggled Indian seeds for use in their fields.

The newly harvested potato seeds are also scarce in the market and are being sold at Taka 16 per kg.

It is apprehended that the target of potato cultivation this season would not be achieved if immediate steps are not taken by the concerned authorities to supply high yielding variety

seeds to the growers.

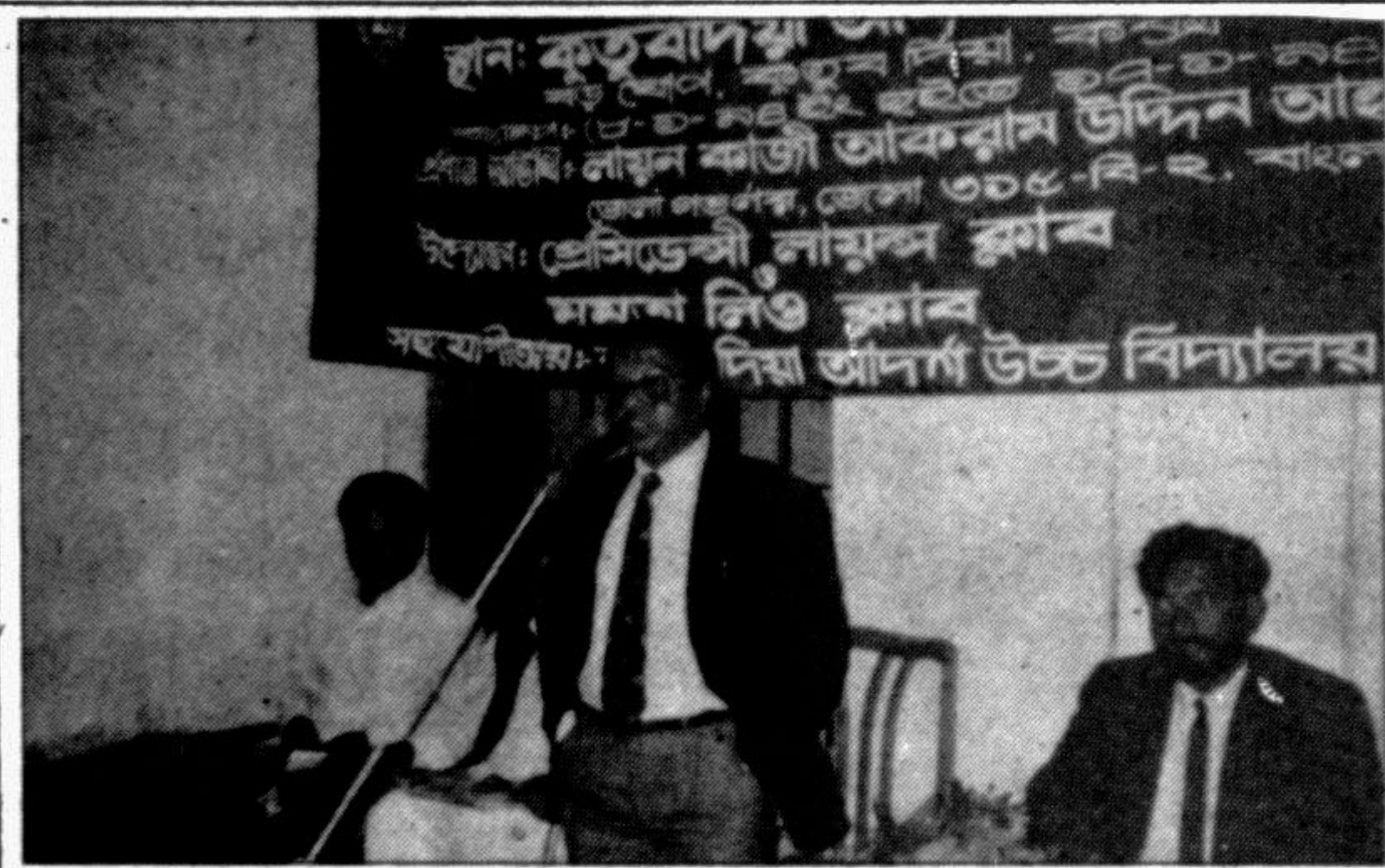
Meanwhile, two people were killed in separate incidents in the district last week.

In one incident, Hannan Miah (11), son of Abdul Jabbar, was crushed under the wheels of speeding jeep near Uttar Varna village in Srimangal thana on Dhaka-Sylhet highway on Jan 8.

According to police, the jeep bound for Moulvibazar knocked him down from behind and ran over while he was crossing the road.

The driver, however, fled away with the vehicle.

In another incident, Hari Sarker Sunar (45), Manager of Jukha Nagar Tea Garden was brutally killed by some unknown assailants while he was returning home from the garden. The reason behind the murder could not be ascertained.



Prasun Kumar Barua, Secretary, Lions Club of Chittagong Presidency speaking at an eye camp organised by the Presidency Lions Club and Leo Club of Chittagong Mamota recently.

City corporation poll candidates asked to abide by rules

RAJSHAHI, Jan 22: Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf on Thursday asked the candidates to strictly abide by the election rules for the sake of an atmosphere congenial for free and fair polls of city corporations to be held on January 30, reports BSS.

Justice Rouf said, the Election Commission was determined to hold the city corporation election in a free and fair atmosphere with the objective to uphold the democratic values now prevailing in the country.

Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf was addressing as chief guest a discussion on 'election campaign' here at Monibazar auditorium Thursday afternoon.

Presided over by Divisional Commissioner Aminul Islam, the discussion was also addressed among others by A Z M

Shamsul Alam, Secretary, Election Commission, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Modabir Hossain Chowdhury, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Malek and Returning Officer of Rajshahi City Corporation poll, Anwarul Islam.

It was informed in the discussion that 88 centres and 303 booths would be opened on election day and law enforcing personnel including BDR would be posted in all the centres for maintaining law and order.

Chief Election Commissioner said that post offices of Rajshahi, Dhaka, Chittagong, and Khulna would remain open on January 30 so that the election results from centres could reach by post to the Election Commission on time. Justice Rouf said, the relations between the candidates and voters should be cordial as it would help for holding election in a

free and fair atmosphere.

He asked the voters to exercise their adult franchise during election from 7 am to 3 pm on January 30.

The Chief Election Commissioner said "We want true projection of peoples verdict in the election and seek co-operation of all concerned including political parties for maintaining the dignity and credibility of the polls."

He said "files, for all candidates have been opened by the Election Commission" and advised them to limit their election expenditure. In this respect, he added that those candidates who failed to submit the proper income and expenditure to the Election Commission, appropriate action would be taken in due course.

He warned that black money and musclemen have no place in the election arena as we want

that the election should be held in a free and fair atmosphere. He said that candidates should not entertain the voters in their camps as it is a punishable offence under election rules.

Six mayor and over two hundred ward commissioner candidates attended the discussion.

Later, the Chief Election Commissioner answered several questions raised by the candidates.

A UNB report from Khulna says: With only eight days left for the Khulna City Corporation (KCC) polls some central leaders of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jatiya Party (JP) now in the city for campaign in favour of their respective nominees.

The BNP Secretary General Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder urged the city dwellers to cast their votes in favour of BNP

nominees in upcoming City Corporation elections for the continuity of development activities.

The "BNP has played a remarkable role in developing the Khulna city", Barrister Salam said while addressing a series of projection meetings in different parts of the city.

Barrister Talukder said, BNP accelerated the development process and brought back stability in the country during its last three years term.

"The country is marching ahead towards progress and prosperity under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia", Salam Talukder said.

He alleged the country's forward march came to a deadstop during the autocratic rule of Ershad.

The BNP leaders Ashraf Hossain and Mayor candidate

Advocate Sheikh Taiyebur Rahman, among others, also addressed the meetings.

In another projection rally, Leader of Jatiya Party Parliamentary Party (JPP) Barrister Maudud Ahmed warned people against dangerous consequences if any unfair means is adopted by any quarters to subvert the election results.

In the event of any move to rig the mayor elections there would be countrywide violent movement to overthrow the government", Barrister Maudud said.

Termining the Ershad period as the period of development, he urged the city dwellers to cast their votes in favour of JP nominees.

The JP leaders Anwar Hossain Manju, Ruhul Amin Hawlader, Mia Musa Hossain, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar addressed the rally.