

Following is the text of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's address to the nation over Radio and Television yesterday, reports BSS.

Text of PM's address to nation

Bismillahir Rahmani Rahim
Assalamu Alaikum
I extend my sincere greetings to you all on the occasion of holy Ramadan. Let all of us pray to Almighty Allah that he allows us to pass the test of tolerance and sacrifice in all respects on this holy month of practising 'siam'.

Bothers and Sisters:
Independence and democracy are the golden harvests of our great War of Liberation. It is the duty of all countrymen, you and me, to hold aloft the flag of the independence and democracy achieved through sacred blood of millions of martyrs in the War of Independence and those killed and injured in the movement against autocracy. All of us will have to play the courageous role in the future as in the past in discharging this great responsibility.

Dear Countrymen
We all know that a country's constitution is the symbol of hopes and aspirations of the people in any independent and sovereign state and the guideline for their implementation. So the constitution is a sacred document for the people, source of all laws and the highest law. So, all elected persons have to take oath to protect the constitution and abide by it.

But unfortunately we have seen that multi-party democracy was wiped out from the constitution only a few years after independence we have also seen freedom of speech and of the individual being snatched away. We have seen the people carrying on autocratic rule in violation of the Constitution after grabbing power through unconstitutional means. We have seen that the conscious people of this country, that is you, have never liked violation of constitution. You have protected the constitution which

is the symbol of independence, sovereignty and democracy. You have reestablished democracy and constitutional rule.

Dear Brothers and Sisters
You elected us to power in 1991 because we were with you in all your movements and struggles. You have defeated those who had abandoned you in the midway of the movement for restoring constitutional rule and democracy.

We are maintaining the oath that we had taken five years back for protecting the constitution and democracy as your elected representatives and because of this, we had to pass through different obstructions and face conspiracies. But we have kept our promise to you firmly and maintained the dignity of the Constitution.

On the other hand, you know that, a party had once introduced one-party rule by wiping out multi-party democracy from the sacred Constitution, another party had established undemocratic autocracy by ousting your elected government and suspending the Constitution and another party opposed the Liberation War openly. These three parties which destroyed democracy and the constitution had got into an alliance now. They wanted to create undue pressure on the government to establish an extra-constitutional nominated government by ousting the government elected through your votes. They have caused you indescribable sufferings, loss of lives and property and immense damage to country's economy by calling hartal and siege day after day in the name of realising undemocratic and illogical demands.

Dear Countrymen
They are destroying national and private properties in the name of movement at a

time when we are constructing roads, building schools, colleges, madrassahs and hospitals. At the time when we want to create employment opportunity for the unemployed masses by attracting local and foreign investors, they (parties) are discouraging them (investors) by calling continuous hartal. Whenever we want to solve the political problems through discussions, they prevented negotiations by giving preconditions.

The people have sent all of us to the Sangsad to talk about the development of their areas and to work for them but they wanted to deprive the people of their constituencies from achieving development by resigning from parliament in the interest of party politics. The day labourers, rickshaw-pullers, push cart drivers, small shop owners, small income people are now deprived of the right to food because of all these activities by them.

Dear Brothers and Sisters
All of you have seen that we have repeatedly requested the opposition parties to take part in the elections and initiated sincere efforts in different ways. At one stage, we agreed to form a national government comprising equal number of members from the government and the opposition parties under the leadership of the prime minister according to the proposal of Sir Ninian Stephen. I announced to stay away from the responsibilities of the prime minister 30 days before the next elections so that they do not resign from parliament. I requested them to come back to the parliament to discuss and decide in parliament how the country will be run till the next elected prime minister takes responsibility after stay away from the responsibility

of the prime minister. We requested them to sit for discussion with the commitment that the proposal raised by them for solving the political problem would be first taken up. Even I openly declared that if the Constitution allows, I will not have any objection to staying away from the prime minister's post by forming an advisory council comprising equal number of neutral persons nominated by both the government and the opposition under the honourable President. We have given concessions, one after another, like this for the sake of peace and compromise. We have tried for an acceptable compromise through solving the problems through discussion even before the last moment before submission of

nomination papers. They did not come for discussion even after giving time at the last moment.

Dear Countrymen
You must have remembered that the opposition leader had told a public meeting on January 10, 1995, that she would take part in elections under the leadership of the President.

But when we agreed to this she and her allied parties did not agree to take part in the elections. Rather when we agree to one of their proposals they raise a new proposal.

They want to make such a person the head of the government who was not elected by you. But you all know we unanimously passed the 12th

Amendment to the Constitution in 1991 so that no unelected person might take over the state power. All were unanimous during the amendment. But they themselves now are taking stand against their own decision. They want to hand over power to an unelected person removing the elected prime minister — which as per the constitution is in no way possible today. Because, according to the 12th Amendment, it is no more possible on the part of a person to be the prime minister who is not elected by you. Despite their knowledge of this fact, they have raised the demand to appoint a chief advisor who will have the power of the prime minister.

Recently they demanded to shift the date of election by a few months, the government has no power to fix the election date or decide other related matters. The Election Commission, as per Constitution, independently takes decisions on these matters.

The Election Commission has changed the election schedule more than once to facilitate participation of all political parties in the polls. But in no way they agreed to come to the election although as per constitutional provisions, the election must be held within 90 days after the dissolution of parliament. Otherwise after the passage of 90 days, there would be no Constitutional and elected government in the country. As a result the country will face a serious constitutional crisis. Democracy will face inevitable disaster. You must admit that this situation can in no way be allowed.

Under the circumstances, despite the Ramadan, election must be completed within February 21 for the sake of the country and protection of democracy and constitutional rule.

Dear Countrymen
All of us were supposed to play our due role to fulfil the expectation of the people for the continuation of the triumphal march of democracy achieved through the great mass upsurge of 1990. It is you who will judge our performance in playing our respective role. Our role to protect the hard-earned democracy today will remain part of history.

We wanted to take part in the election with all and there was no lack of interest and sincerity on our part in this regard. If we could take part in the election irrespective of political parties and opinions, as the prime minister I would be the happiest person. You know, we tried our best in this regard, and made concessions as much as possible under the constitution.

But as your elected representatives, we are compelled to abide by the constitution. Even if I wish, I cannot hand over power to any unelected or nominated person. It is not possible on our part to violate the Constitution even for political settlement. As a result, we are compelled to take part in the election under the obtaining situation. There is no alternative to it. Constitutional continuity must be maintained for survival of democracy and to maintain the continuity, the election must be held within the stipulated time.

Dear Brothers and Sisters
The forthcoming election is the election for maintaining democratic process. Through this election, an atmosphere will be created to ensure participation of all parties in future elections. Our sincere efforts in this regard will continue.

Dear Countrymen
I extend my hearty thanks to those who have come for-

ward to uphold the democratic process by taking part in the election despite different types of propaganda and obstruction put by some opposition parties. I also thank those who had taken initiatives in different ways to resolve the existing political crisis.

I know, many of you support the politics of a political party or person. But I know it too, that you love your dear motherland and its independence and democracy most. I believe that all of you will give higher priority to the interests of the country than to the interest of a person or a party and protect democracy at any cost. Because only in a democratic atmosphere alleviation of poverty and achievement of progress will be possible through economic development.

All of us must keep in mind that if we fail to hold the Jatiya Sangsad elections smoothly in time, constitutional rule and democracy will be endangered. Such a situation cannot be desired by any patriotic citizen. Therefore, I request you all to place the country and democracy above all political parties and opinions, to take part in the forthcoming election, to elect the candidate as per your choice. As your elected prime minister, I firmly announce, the government is and will be extending all out cooperation to the Election Commission.

I know, it is comparatively more difficult to conduct election activities and casting of votes in the month of Ramadan. But we are compelled to hold the election in this month to uphold the continuity of the constitution. I strongly believe that you will have the patience to bear the unavoidable trouble. At the same time I urge the countrymen and all political parties to extend their cooperation in holding the election in a peaceful manner for the sake of the country, democracy and the people.

Allah Hafez
Bangladesh Zindabad



National



JHENIDAH: A common scene in Jhenidah town. In absence of a bus terminal the interdistrict buses specially from Khulna, Kushtia, Faridpur, Satkhira and few other neighbouring districts make short stoppages to pick up passengers. Consequently the waiting buses create traffic jams seriously disrupting traffic movement in the entire city centre. — Star photo by Delwar Kabir

Pisciculture faces set-back in Pabna

PABNA, Jan 23: Pisciculture has been facing setback in the district due to lack of necessary inputs and siltation of ponds, rivers, canals and beels, reports UNB.

According to a survey report, some 38,000 ponds have been lying unused for the last 35 years which remained covered by water hyacinths and garbage. These derelict ponds are the ideal breeding centres of mosquitoes.

The survey conducted by a regional news agency, PIP, also reveals that these ponds could have produced fish worth about Tk 20 crore per annum if these were brought under systematic pisciculture.

It said that the silted canals in rural areas are further hampering irrigation as well as river traffic.

About 1,000 canals remained silted for long five years, flooding the crops and washing away the fish fry every rainy season.

However, most of the marshy lands which were used for cultivation of fish naturally have now turned into cultivable lands for IRR and Boro crops.

As a result, breeding of fish is also being decreased rapidly.

The local fishermen have also been facing financial crisis as they do not have nets and boats of their own. They are to borrow money from the local money-lenders at a high rate of interest.

Local leaders urged the concerned authorities to organise fishermen cooperatives and help grow pisciculture by re-excavating the derelict ponds, canals and other waterbodies.

Hope for the blind patients

CHUADANGA, Jan 23: The only eye hospital of Chuadanga district 'Dr A M Muttalib Red Crescent Eye Hospital' has been playing a vital role in the field of eye treatment in the district.

With the help of the local people the 9-bed eye hospital was constructed 1983-84 FY at a cost of Taka 5 lakh. The land for the hospital was donated by the renowned Mallick family of Chuadanga town. The hospital is constructed on 33 decimals of land which started functioning in 1986. After seven months the operation of the hospital was stopped temporarily due to financial crisis and other technical problems for about two years.

The local Red Crescent unit took the hospital under its direct control in October 1993 and introduced outdoor treatment. On December 5, 1993 the indoor treatment facility was introduced in the hospital. Syed Shahidul Haque Jamal, the Chairman of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society formally opened the hospital and started the operation treatment in the hospital. Every year over 15,000 eye patients are being given free of cost outdoor treatment and nearly 300 eye patients are being operated upon in the eye hospital at reduced cost.

There are 10 staff in the hospital including one eye specialist, one nurse, one peon, one maid servant and four other employees. The Red Crescent Society bears the salaries of four staff including the eye specialist while the maintenance cost of the six other staff are to

From Our Correspondent

bear from the sale proceed of the outdoor tickets. It may be noted here that the every out-door patients are to purchase a ticket of taka five for their treatment.

It is learnt that the hospital needs eight more staff for smooth running of the hospital. The secretary of the Chuadanga district unit of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Fazlur Rahman in an interview with this correspondent told that if the head office of the Red Crescent society takes the entire responsibility of the salaries and other maintenance cost of the hospital then the development work and the standard of treatment facilities could be further improved.

18.15 kg ganja recovered, two held

CHITTAGONG, Jan 23: Narcotics Department in separate drives on Sunday last recovered 18.15 kg of ganja (hemp) from four places in the district, reports UNB.

According to the officials, a squad of the department in separate drives recovered 17 kgs of ganja from Sankania and Chandanish thanas, and arrested Mohammad Hossain in this connection.

One kg of the contraband was recovered from a shop of Abdul Jalil at Ghumandandi Bazar in Boalkhali thana. Abdul Jalil was arrested.

In another drive, the Narcotics officials recovered 150 grams of ganja from Lohagara thana headquarters, but there was no arrest.

75 educational institutions constructed in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent
SATKHIRA, Jan 23: The facilities department has completed the construction, reconstruction and expansion work of 75 educational institutions in seven thanas of Satkhira district this fiscal year at a cost of Taka 7.79 crore.

Official sources said, construction and repair of 53 non-government high schools and 12 government primary schools, construction of four government, four non-government and two hostels of two government colleges were a part of the project.

After the completion of the project about 22,000 students will be benefitted.

Works on another Taka 3.06 crore development project for 36 non-government high schools and madrassah and a non-government college is in full swing under the supervision of the Facilities Department.

AGM of Pabna Bar Assoc held



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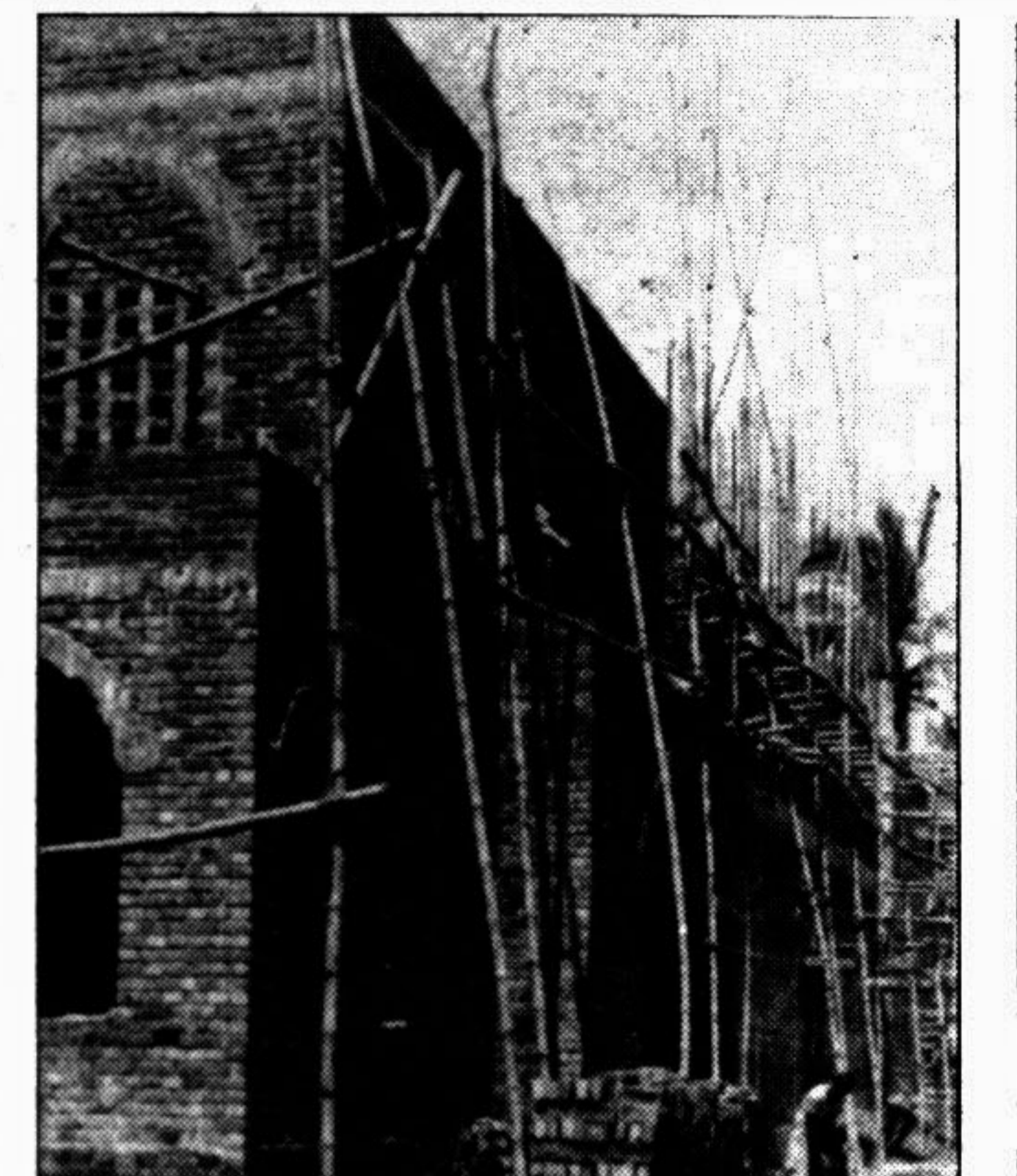
From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Jan 23: The annual general elections of the office bearers and members of Executive Committee of Pabna District Advocates Bar Association was held on January 16 in the Bar library auditorium amidst great enthusiasm.

Senior member of Pabna Bar Alhaj Golam Hasnain, Advocate conducted the elections in his capacity as the chief Election Commissioner.

The newly-elected members and office bearers of the Pabna District Advocates Bar Association are President—Advocate Abdul Hamid; Vice-Presidents — Advocate Shamsul Haque Tuku and Advocate Ghulam Mahiuddin; General Secretary—Advocate Abdul Matin; Treasurer—Advocate Shujaudoula; Joint Secretary (Development) Advocate K. M Shahidul Alam; Joint Secretary (Library) — Advocate Ghulam Kibria; Joint Secretary (Culture)—Advocate Md. Alamgir Hossain; Auditor Advocate—Md. Abdus Samad Khan Ratan.

In three separate panels, the lawyers contested the elections and no panel could win absolute majority. Six were elected from the Hamid-Kamal panel, five from Razzaq-Matin panel while two others were elected from the Kaderi-Mohammad Ali panel.



BRAHMANBARIA: Pourashava auditorium building is being constructed at a cost of Tk 1,24.5 lakh. The construction work is expected to be completed by the current fiscal year. — Star photo

MV Gazi still remains stranded

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Jan 23: The luxurious passenger steamer service of BIWTC MV Gazi still remain stranded on shoal. It was suddenly grounded on Bausia char in the Lata river under Hiza thana of Barisal early hours Sunday on way to Dhaka from Barisal with nearly five hundred passengers on board.

To float the boat again the concerned authority sent a coastal tug boat from Narayanganj Sunday that reached the spot yesterday afternoon and is trying to rescue it according to latest report received here.

But it is reported that some cracks have already developed at the bottom of the vessel.

MV Masud, another BIWTC passenger Steamer on way to Dhaka from Barisal will take rest of the passengers on Gazi to Dhaka, a local BIWTA source said.

Satkhira dist Bar Assoc formed

SATKHIRA, Jan 23: Executive Committee of the District Bar Association for the year 1996 has been formed in an election held at Bar Library here last Friday, reports UNB.

Advocate Abdur Rahim and Advocate Abul Hossain were elected president and secretary respectively. Other 18 members of the committee were also elected.

Another report from Magura says: The annual election of Magura District Bar Association was held at the association's office premises on January 15 last.

AKM Shaquid Islam and Syed Shariful Islam were elected as president and secretary respectively. Other office bearers are Shibu Prashad Bhattacharyya vice-president, Adhir Kumar and Harun-ur-Rashid - joint secretaries.

All the members of the committee, except the secretary and joint secretaries, were elected uncontested.

Fund crisis forced 300 handloom factories to shut-down

NARAIL, Jan 23: About 300 handloom factories in the district have been closed down due to lack of fund and high prices of yarn, dye and other raw materials, reports UNB.

According to a survey conducted by a non-government organisation, there are about 1100 handlooms in Lohagara, Kalia and Sadar thanas of the district while maximum number of factories are located in Sadar thana.

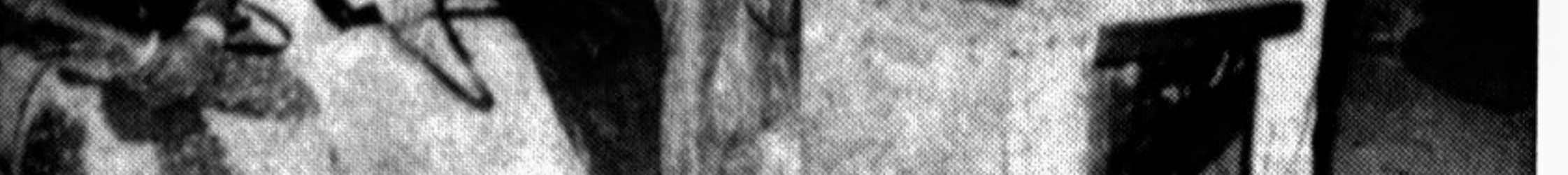
Due to price hike of raw materials, yarn, dye and for want of fund as well as gradual fall in the demand of products 30 per cent factories have already been closed and as a result a good number of workers have become jobless and are struggling for their survival.

Some weavers informed that due to high prices of yarn, weaving materials, non-availability of funds and lack of marketing facilities they are unable to run their factories smoothly and will be compelled to leave their age old profession soon.

They alleged that due to lack of proper yarn distribution process, they have to purchase the raw materials from the traders at a high price.

The weavers told UNB that smuggled Indian printed sarees and lungis have flooded the local markets but law enforcing agencies are silent. Availability of foreign clothes at cheap rate has considerably reduced the demand of their products.

Local weavers urged the concerned authorities to take necessary steps including sanctioning of bank loan for genuine weavers, supply of yarn and raw materials at fair prices to run the business smoothly.



PABNA: Jahanara Begum, a leader of Ghugudaha Beel to landless peasants movement of Santhia thana addressing citizens' condolence meeting organised by Pabna District Gono Forum to mourn the death of eminent journalist Monajat Uddin recently. Star photo