

Accelerate health sector projects, programmes

Chief adviser urges UNFPA

UNB, New York

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed on Tuesday underscored accelerating different health projects and programmes with further focus on maternal health and said the projects should be completed in shortest time.

The head of the caretaker government made the remark when UNFPA Executive Director Dr Thoraya Obaid called on him at his Barclay New York Hotel suite on the sidelines of the 63rd session of the UN General Assembly.

Fakhruddin expressed his happiness that the UNFPA in line with the government's priority

continues to focus on safe motherhood, social and reproductive health information, family planning and services for adolescents and youth.

He also appreciated the UNFPA campaign "End Fistula" that has helped Bangladesh in the treatment of the disease in government hospitals.

UNFPA Executive Director Dr Thoraya Obaid said the UNFPA is thinking of setting up a centre of excellence in Bangladesh to help the country attain MDGs in this area.

The chief adviser said emphasis should be given on primary and community health services,

birth control and training of midwives.

He said birth attendance services should be brought closer to people.

Recalling the Bangladesh's excellent and cooperative relations with UNFPA for a long time, Fakhruddin said the UN organisation has supported the country in its national capacity building to implement the MDGs.

CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim, who was present at the meeting, briefed the newsmen.

Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ismat Jahan was also present at the meeting.

'Uphold global tobacco treaty'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tobacco companies are the biggest threat to tobacco control efforts in the country, as they are violating the Tobacco Control Act 2005 and the global tobacco treaty, speakers at a press conference said yesterday.

They also called on the government to take steps to uphold the global tobacco treaty.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) organised the press conference at its auditorium in the city in association with Corporate Accountability International and Network for Accountability of Tobacco Transnational (NATT) to mark the 9th International Week of Resistance to Tobacco Transnationals.

Presided over by DAM President Kazi Rafiqul Alam, the press conference was attended by Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital Managing Director M Fazlur Rahman, Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) General Secretary Kazi Faruq and Welfare Association of Cancer Care General Secretary Kuleli Mustafa.

The speakers criticised the big tobacco companies for aggressively promoting their products by flouting public health policies. But no legal action has been taken against them, they added.

They said the tobacco companies are distributing gift items, posters, stickers, leaflets and promotional products and sponsoring various events, which are threatening the anti-tobacco campaign.

The 2008 Global Tobacco Treaty Action Guide: Protecting Against Tobacco Industry Interference was also released at the press conference as part of the international release of the action guide.

Programmes to celebrate Hasina's birthday in US

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US units of Awami League (AL) and Bangabandhu Foundation have chalked out different programmes to observe the 63rd birth anniversary of former prime minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina on September 28.

However, Hasina would be in London on that day. She would celebrate the Eid-ul-Fitr in London at her younger sister Sheikh Rehana's residence, reports US-based news agency ANA.

If she does not go to London then she would celebrate her birthday at her son Sajib Wazed Joy's residence in Washington by reciting Quran and praying for her recovery from illness and her father, mother, brothers and sister.

US unit AL will celebrate the birth anniversary of Sheikh Hasina at Banful Restaurant in Astoria.

US unit of Awami Jubo League, youth front of AL, will also celebrate the birth anniversary of Hasina.

Ctg RMG workers blockade street

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Workers of a readymade garment factory blocked a street in the port city yesterday demanding payment of arrears, overtime and bonus.

Sources said around 300 workers, mostly females, of the Fashion Export International in Sadarghat area got out of the factory and put up a barricade on the street in front of the factory at around 1:45pm.

Workers alleged that the owners of the factory did not pay their salaries and overtimes of August, forcing them to stage the agitation. They demanded immediate payment of the arrears, including bonus, ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Commuters experienced acute sufferings when a huge number of vehicles got stranded on both sides of the narrow but busy road due to the blockade.



Hundreds of home-bound people crowd the counters for bus tickets everyday to celebrate Eid with their near and dear ones. The picture was taken from the Gabtoli Bus Stand yesterday.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON RISE

Formulate protection policy

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a dialogue yesterday said the frequency of sexual harassment is rampant in every sector across the country and to resist such incidents by creating massive awareness and showing zero tolerance against it along with enacting a strict law are imperative.

They called on the government to formulate a sexual harassment protection policy at professional and institutional levels.

Though such harassment is happening all the time at workplaces, outside and inside home and in the streets, it is yet to be recognised as a criminal offence and its definition is also not clear, they added.

Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) organised the dialogue on 'Woman- and child-friendly protection system: Sexual harassment' at a city restaurant.

Salma Khan, former chairperson and member of Cedaw, said sexual harassment exists in every country in the world, the situation is quite different in Bangladesh.

A sexual harassment-friendly

and newspapers in the rural areas will have to highlight the issue as a criminal offence.

Ferdows Ara Begum, committee member of Cedaw, said the incident of sexual harassment is increasing though the awareness regarding the harassment is also increasing.

She said there is no law protecting the domestic helps, especially young adolescents, who are being repressed inside the houses, adding women are being harassed by some communication media, including internet and cellphones, but no strict protest has so far been raised against them.

"Only the enactment of law is not enough to check sexual harassment. We have to show zero tolerance against any kind of harassment and also have to create a culture of prevention," she further said.

Chairman of Clinical and Psychology department at Dhaka University (DU) Kamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury said though sexual harassment exists everywhere in the world, the situation is quite different in Bangladesh.

Additional Attorney General

culture has been developed in the country, as the people's perception regarding harassment is that a boy will do such harassment and a girl will have to tolerate it, he added.

He also said many girls don't dare to complain with the fear to be more victimised, adding, "We have to change our mindset and also stimulate moral values."

Prof Dilara Chowdhury of Government and Politics department at Jahangirnagar University said we do not know what behaviour constitutes sexual harassment.

The harassment will be reduced to an extent if every institution initiates a specific policy, procedure and awareness regarding the harassment, she said.

BNWLA President Fawzia Karim Firoze said the volume of harassment can be reduced if a strict law is enacted, many people will not dare to do such things in future in fear of punishment.

BNWLA Executive Director Salma Ali said the issue is very sensitive and a specific policy to resist sexual harassment is needed to curb such menace.

Additional Attorney General

Mansur Habib, Joint Secretary to Law Ministry Nasreen Begum, UGC Deputy Secretary Dr Mokhelesur Rahman and DU Prof Rafique-um-Munir Chowdhury also spoke.

Tk 26 lakh for eye patients

METRO DESK

In an effort to enhance eye treatment to ultra poor in the society Bank Asia Limited donated Tk 20 lakh and Muslim Commercial Bank of Pakistan donated Tk 6 lakh for construction of two wards at Islamia Eye Hospital, says a press release.

Bank Asia Chairman Anisur Rahman Sinha and President and Managing Director Syed Anisul Huq handed over both the cheques to Zahida Ispahani, adviser of Islamia Eye Hospital, at ceremony at the hospital in the city on Tuesday.

Earlier, Muslim Commercial Bank donated Tk 14 lakh for construction of a ward in the hospital.



Children take part in a programme titled 'Get on track to save children's lives' in front of IDB Bhaban in the city yesterday with a call to ensure healthcare facilities for poor and underprivileged children. Save the Children UK, Eminence and The Editor jointly organised the event. (Story on Page 2)

Pay salary, arrears, bonus

RMG workers demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protesting police atrocities on readymade garment workers (RMG) at Uttara and Uttarkhan in the city on Tuesday, workers' leaders at a press conference yesterday demanded their arrears, including Eid bonus before Ramadan 27.

They also demanded steps by the government to sell the property of the factory owners, who laid off their factories without paying workers' dues, on auction to pay the arrears.

At the press conference organised by National Alliance for Protection of Garment Workers and Industries at Dhaka Reporters' Unity, speakers said that in some garment factories workers are unpaid for months and even in Ramadan they remain unpaid.

The alliance leaders placed their seven-point demand and declared to form a human chain on September 27 at Tophkhana Road in the city if their demands are not met by the time.

Their demands include payment of 50 percent dearness allowance until the minimum wage of RMG workers is fixed by the wage board, lifting all sorts of restrictions on trade union activities, arrest and punishment to the garment owners who violated the labour laws and payment of arrear bills of workers of Honour Way Textile and Apparel (Pvt) Limited that was laid off illegally.

Helena, sister of Hosne Ara who was critically injured during the police atrocities on Tuesday, during a sit-in in front of Honour Way Textile and Apparel (Pvt) Limited at Uttarkhan said, "Suddenly on July 15 the authorities declared the factory closed saying that the owner had died."

During the last 14 years the authorities closed the factory at least three times, every time saying that the owner had died, she added.

The workers of the laid-off factory said that the authorities fabricated the story only to misappropriate Tk 13 crore of the Provident Fund of the workers.

They also said that discontentment and frustration among RMG workers have been prevailing for long in the sector and there might be an outburst any time paralysing the sector, which is the largest foreign remittance earner in the country.

Convener of the alliance Abul Hossain and its central committee members Shaheeb Ullah, Golam Kadir, Rafiqul Islam Sujon, Mohammad Hossain Mollah, Zannatul Ferdous and Joyanal Abedin attended the press conference.

Meanwhile, women members of National Garment Workers' Federation staged a sit-in at its central office on Tophkhana Road.

Federation President Shahida Sarkar, General Secretary Amirul Huq, Vice President Faruk Khan and

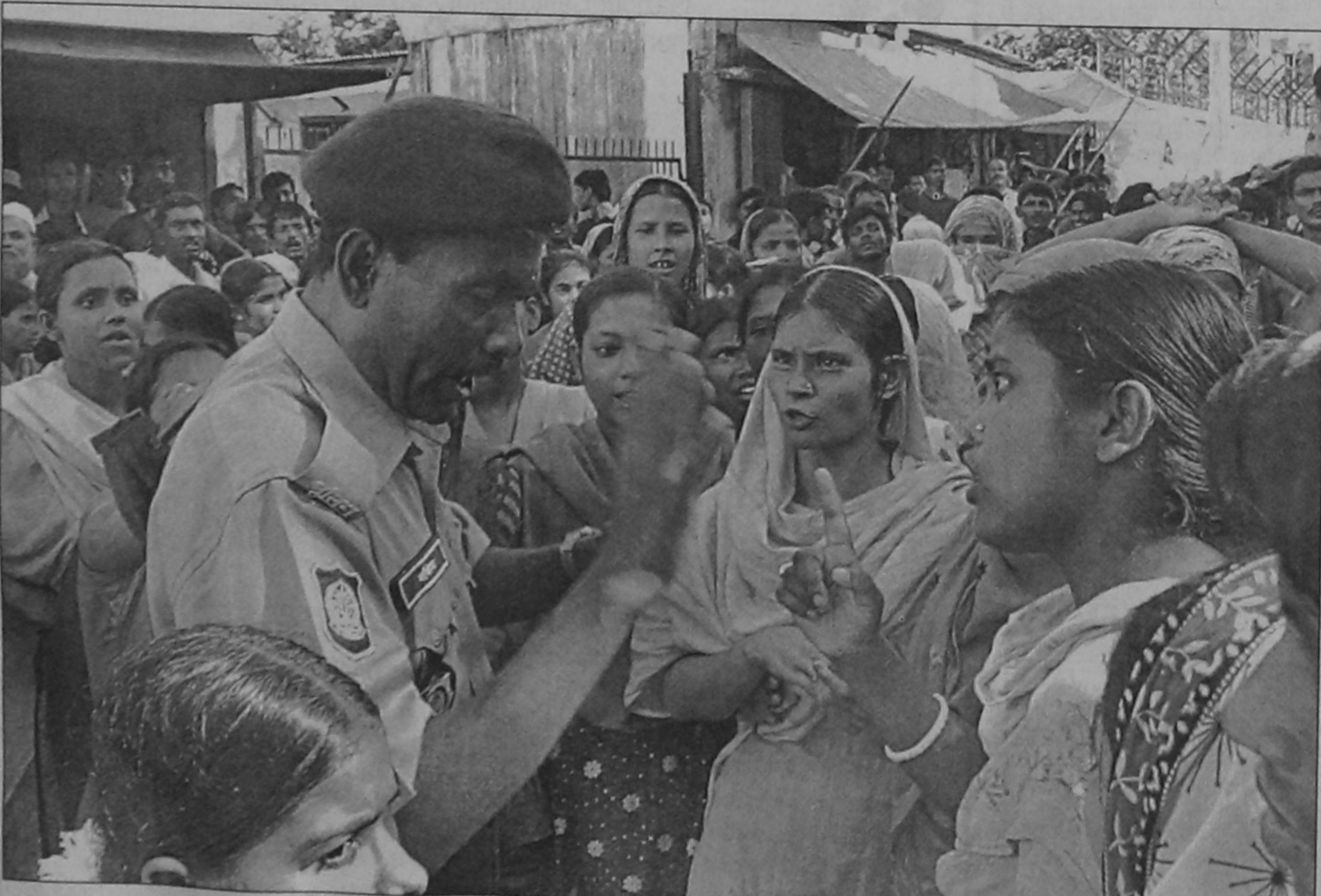
Joint Secretary Kamrun Nahar were present.

Over half of the garment factories across the country have not yet paid Eid bonus and other arrears, they said demanding interference of the government, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BKMEA) to ensure payment of Eid bonus and other arrears before Ramadan 27, says a press release.

Sramabikash Kendra, another platform of RMG workers, formed a human chain in front of the High Court yesterday demanding implementation of tripartite agreement among the government, RMG workers and garment owners signed in 2006.

About 70 percent garments of a total of 4500 garments across the country pay workers Tk 1200 only per month as salary instead of Tk 1662.50, which was fixed by the deal, they said, adding that if the workers demand salary as per the deal, owners of the factories threaten to lay off the factories.

Leaders and workers of Bachtshikho Nari, Garment Sramik Karmachari Federation and RMG workers from different garment factories in Gazipur attended the human chain, said another press release.



Workers of Fashion Export International are locked in an altercation with the police during a road blockade programme for payment of arrears of salary and Eid bonus.

Around 200 former and present students of Pitch-Blend University of Science and Technology (PUST), Chittagong campus have appealed to the education adviser for an arrangement to continue and recognise its academic activities.

They students in a statement yesterday sought intervention of the adviser to ensure continuation of their courses, arrangement for internship, recognition of their certificates and registration.

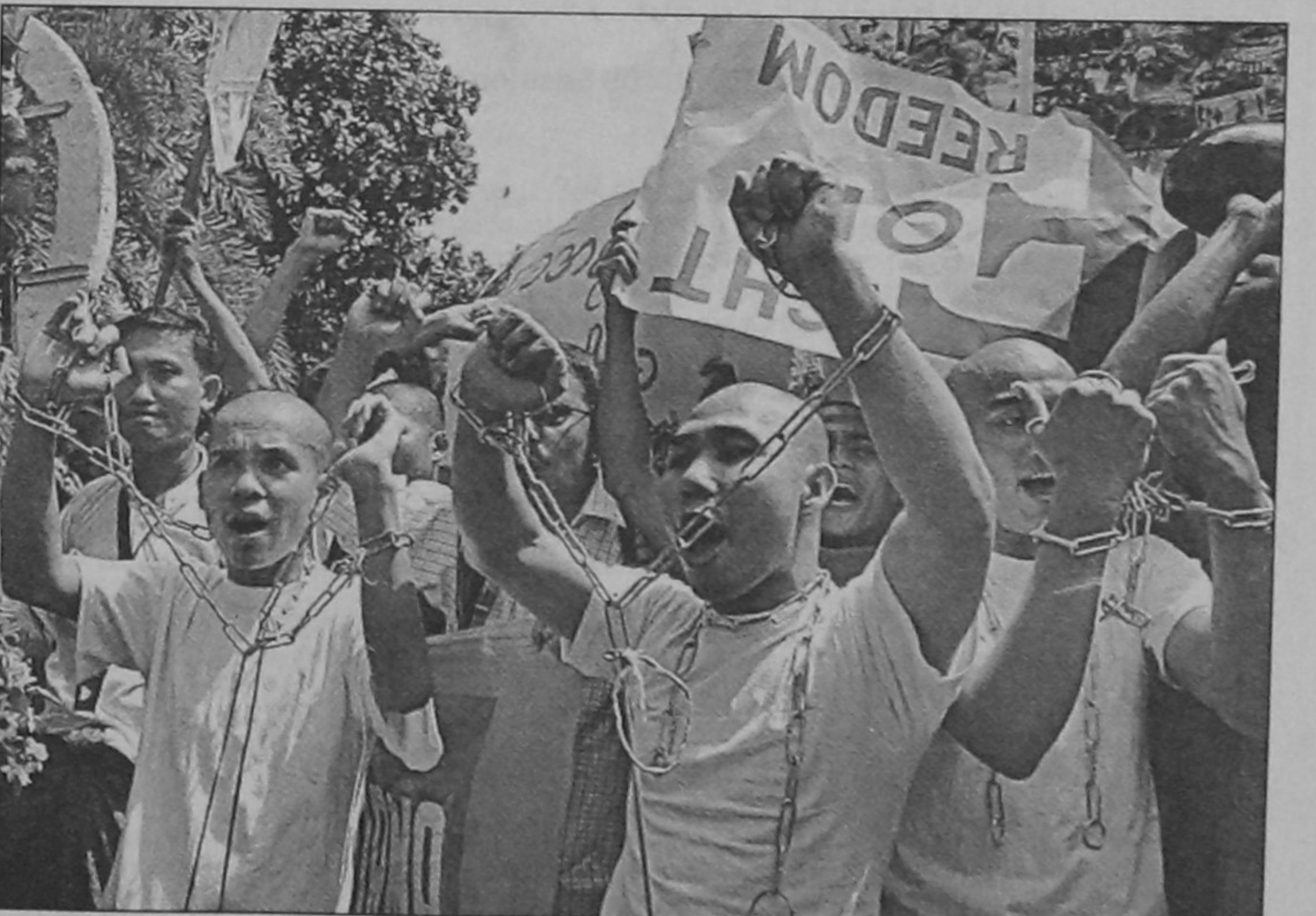
In the statement, they said PUST started its journey as Premier University of Technology with introduction of different courses like engineering, medical, dental science and complementary medicine in seven four-storey buildings at Uttara in Dhaka back in 1995.

Having affiliated with different educational institutions abroad, it recruited students through newspaper advertisements at that time.

The university appealed for approval from University Grants Commission (UGC) on September 17, 1996. Responding to a letter issued from the education ministry on August 30, 2003, the university later took the present name of PUST.

But failing to fulfil the criteria and requirements, the university prompted the government to circulate a warning notice against it through newspaper advertisements in 2005 and put it in the list of the universities declared illegal by UGC in 2007.

The students alleged that it pushed the career of students, who obtained certificates or gained their admissions into the university before the warning notice was published in 2005, into a great uncertainty.



Myanmar people residing in Dhaka stage a demonstration in front of Myanmar High Commission yesterday demanding release of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Protect culture, heritage of 11 CHT ethnic communities

Speakers tell Khagrachhari discussion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Speakers at a discussion held here yesterday demanded of the government to protect the culture and heritage of 11 ethnic communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Kopo Seva Sangha organized the discussion at Khagrachhari Hill District Council (KHDC) auditorium on the occasion of publication ceremony of 11 books written on culture and heritage of Chakma, Marmas, Tripura, Khumi, Khyang, Lusai, Pankhuya, Tancyanga, Murang, Bom and Chak tribes. Manusur Janno Foundation addressed in publication of the books.

KHDC executive officer Nurul

Alam presided while it was attended by Marmas circle chief Mong Raja Paihalapruce Chowdhury as chief guest.

Speakers demanded establishment of tribal cultural research institutes in three hill districts, education of tribal children in indigenous language and broadcasting programmes on indigenous culture and heritage by air.

They urged civil society, media men and NGOs to work for protection of indigenous customs, tradition and cultural heritage.

Among others, Khagrachhari additional deputy commissioner Mohammad Masud Ahmed, Kopo Seva Sangha advisor Advocate Pratim Roy and journalist Sunil Kanti addressed.

2pc of hijras infected with HIV/AIDS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar said about two percent of the estimated 10-15 thousand hermaphrodite (Hijra) populace in the country are infected with HIV/AIDS.

Bandhu Social Welfare Society organised the seminar titled 'Hijra: HIV/AIDS and human rights, role of civil society and other stakeholders' at Biam auditorium in the city on Tuesday.

The speakers also said that HIV intervention programmes for this community are negligible.

The objectives of the seminar were to help raising their voice and establish their dignity in the society, to identify the role of the civil society and other stakeholders to reduce the discrimination and violation of human rights.

More than 35 delegates from UN agencies, NGOs and donor agencies including representatives of hermaphrodite community attended the seminar.