

Tanneries posing threat to public health

Relocation of factories being delayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Relocation of tanneries at Hazaribagh in the city is being delayed again and again, posing a serious threat to public health and the environment, experts at a seminar said yesterday.

Students Association of Buet's Urban and Regional Planning (URP) Department organised the seminar on the second day of the three-day Planning Week on 'Planning for Inclusive Urban Development' at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

"The tanneries release 100 tons of untreated solid wastes everyday and it is entering the human food cycle in the form of poultry feed," said Dr Tariq Bin Yousuf, project director of Dhaka City Corporation's Clean Dhaka Project.

Relocation of tanneries from Hazaribagh to Savar has remained stalled due to bargain and disagreement between the government and the factory owners, he said.

Half a million people in the tannery neighbourhood are living in hazardous conditions, said Avit Kumar Bhowmik, a URP student, citing his study on Hazaribagh tannery and its relocation issue.

Toxic effluents released from the tannery factories here are carcinogenic and 90 percent of workers die before the age of 50, he said in his presentation.

A total of 300 harmful chemicals are dumped in the river Buriganga and surrounding areas, according to the findings presented at the seminar.

While untreated liquid wastes pollute Buriganga, solid wastes harm the surrounding environment. Toxic wastes slip into surrounding croplands and underground water level.

The first tannery at Hazaribagh was set up in 1947 followed by a boom of the industry by the end of 1960s. Of the total 270 tannery factories in the country, 240 are located at Hazaribagh, according to the findings.

Relocation was first set in October

2003 but was delayed until 2006. It has been again delayed until December 2010, said the student.

Another student Kazi Nusrat Jahan gave a presentation on 'Cyclone hazard assessment in coastal areas of Bangladesh'.

One tenth of the world's cyclones occur in Bangladesh, she said.

A total of 120 cyclones took place during the period from 1877 to 2007 and a total of 5,43,067 people died in cyclones in the coastal areas in the period from 1904 to 2003, according to her study.

Giasuddin Ahmed Choudhury, executive director of the Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Services, and Dr Mahmudul Islam, senior project expert of Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme, the Disaster Management Bureau, also spoke.

Billal Hossain, director of the Department of Environment, chaired the session.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

'Remove discriminations'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a conference yesterday called for steps to eliminate discriminations against the people with disabilities in all sectors of society.

They also suggested involving the private sector in the efforts to ensure welfare of physically challenged people.

The European Commission organised the conference on 'Towards a better understanding of disability: The rights and needs of

children with disabilities' at a city hotel.

"It is incumbent upon all governments to take into account the rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects of daily life, not least in the delivery of essential social services, including health," said Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque.

Citing a report of World Health Organisation that 10 percent of the total population are persons with disabilities, he said, "We must keep it in mind that they form a significant slice of society."

The conference focused on the difficulties facing the children with disabilities in the legal, social and family context.

"It is not enough to simply adjust national legislation. Disability policy needs to be mainstreamed in all sectors of society. Discrimination against people with disabilities must be combated in all areas," said Ola Hallgren,

charge d'Affaires, embassy of Sweden.

There is a need for inclusion of disabled people in every sphere of life and especially in the process of formulating and implementing plans and policies affecting themselves, he said.

Dr Naila Khan, a professor of child neurology and development, delivered the keynote speech on poverty, childhood and development.

Dr Jena Hamadani of ICDDR,B chaired a session on 'Childhood disability and development', while Mansur Ahmed Chowdhury of Jatiya Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation chaired another session on 'Operationalising the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities to improve lives of disabled children.'

Olof Rijsberg, a 'psychologist' from Sweden, chaired another session on 'Sexuality and exploitation of children with disabilities'.

DCC ELECTION

EC directives to prospective candidates

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission yesterday asked the prospective candidates in the Dhaka City Corporation elections to remove their posters, leaflets and banners by seven days, reminding them that campaign before the announcement of poll schedule is a violation of electoral code of conduct.

The EC also requested the authorities concerned, including the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner to take legal action against the people found violating the election code of conduct.

"The people, who in violation of electoral code of conduct have already pasted posters, leaflets and handbills, erected gates or arches and set up camps, are requested to remove these within seven days at their own responsibility," said a press release signed by EC Senior Assistant Secretary M Abdul Baten.

The EC release also requested the people intending to contest the DCC election not to launch any campaign prior to 21 days of the polling date.

It said the EC would complete the DCC elections on schedule, but the election schedule is yet to be announced.

"But it is noticed that some aspiring candidates for the posts of mayor and councilors or others on their behalf are pasting posters, leaflets and handbills on buildings, walls, trees, fences, electric and telephone poles or on government and other local structures or on buses, trucks, trains, steamers, launches, rickshaws and other vehicles in the city corporation areas."

Besides, the EC also observed that through such means some aspiring candidates were highlighting their quality.

According to City Corporation (Election) Rules-2008, any candidate or anyone on behalf of the candidate cannot start election campaigning by pasting posters, leaflets and handbills, erect arches or gates, and set up camps before the election schedule is announced.

MPs' control over UZs protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

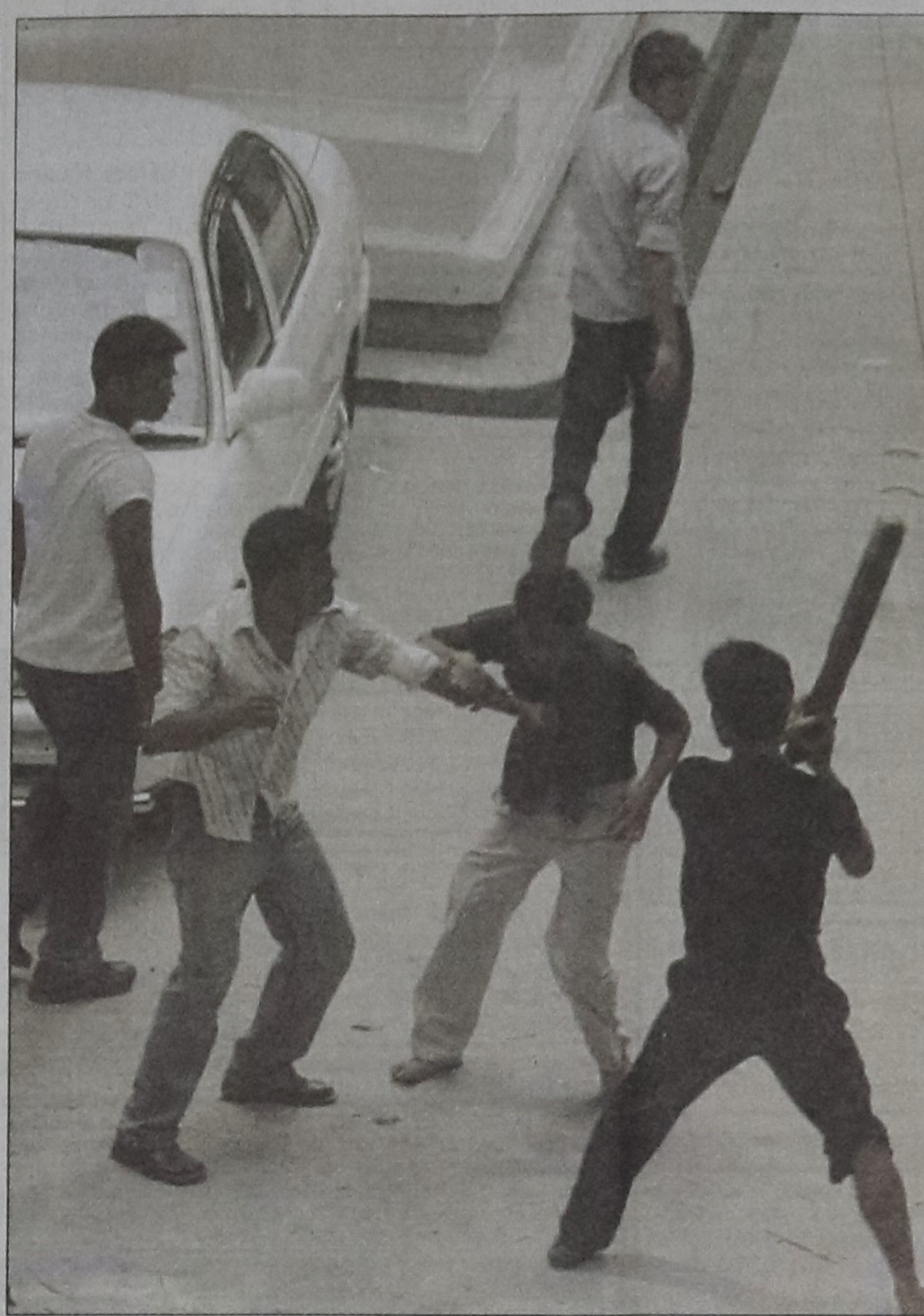
Eminent citizens yesterday condemned the passage of the Upazila Parishad (Reintroduction of the Repealed Act and Amendment) Bill 2009 which gave parliamentarians authority over the local government institutions.

They said making the members of parliament (MPs) advisers to the upazila parishads would make them undemocratic.

They urged the president not to give his consent to the bill.

Signatories to the statement include Dr Rangalal Sen, Dr Ajay Roy, Dr Hameeda Hossain, Dr Syed Anwar Hossain, Dr Hayat Mamud, Dr Shawkat Ara Hossain, Rokeya Kabir and Ziauddin Tarek Ali.

The left-leaning 11-Party combine also condemned the bill, saying that the bill would bring full authority of the MPs instead of making it a democratic institution.



Two BCL activists attack one of their rivals during a clash between two factions of the student organisation on the Jagannath University campus yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

KHALEDA'S RESIDENCE

Cancellation of lease protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different socio-political organisations in separate statements yesterday condemned the government decision of cancelling the lease of the cantonment residence of Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Expressing their resentment over the lease cancellation, the leaders of the organisations demanded a review of the decision.

They alleged that the decision was taken from a confrontational mindset of politics.

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association, pro-BNP teachers of Bangladesh Open University, Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum, Bangladesh Medical Association and Doctors' Association of Bangladesh condemned the cancellation of the lease.

BJP in a statement said the government should cancel its decision and create a culture of political consensus rather than creating confrontation.

Ainjibi Forum held a meeting at the SCBA building protesting the government move. Pro-BNP lawyers TH Khan and Khandaker Mahabub Uddin Ahmed and barristers Moudud Ahmed and Jamir Uddin Sircar were present at the meeting. They vowed to fight the government decision legally.

US, UK BNP UNITS PROTEST The BNP units of the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, France, Portugal, Germany and Belgium have strongly protested cancellation of the lease of the cantonment house of the BNP chairperson, reports ANA from New York.

The US chapter will also gherao (blockade) Bangladesh consulate in New York on April 10 and organise a protest rally in New York on April 11.

A protest will be organised in front of Bangladesh High Commission in London on April 14.

Leaders of Tarique Release Movement Committee, the US, JASAS US, Jubo Dal US and Volunteers Community of America have also protested the government action.

Staff Correspondent from Bogra adds: Bogra district Jubo Dal took out a procession and held a rally and at Bogra town yesterday afternoon protesting the lease cancellation.

'Socio-economic changes needed to end poverty of day labourers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite being the majority, the day labourers are the most neglected, abused and deprived among all the people of the society, said the speakers at the 7th national conference of Bangladesh Khetmajur Samity.

At the first day of the two-day conference at Muktangan in the city, they stressed that a fundamental change is required in the socio-economic system of the country to free them from poverty, says a press release.

The conference was inaugurated by Justice Mohammad Golam Rabbani.

Chaired by Samity President Shamsuzzaman Selim, the inaugural session was also addressed by General Secretary of Bangladesh Communist Party Mujahidul Islam Selim and General Secretary of Krishak Samity Morshed Ali.

Turkey keen to build elevated expressway in Dhaka

Ambassador tells PM

UNB, Dhaka

Turkey yesterday expressed interest in constructing elevated expressway in Dhaka and making investment in Bangladesh in larger volumes in various development sectors.

Turkish Ambassador in Bangladesh Sakir Ozlan Iorunlar conveyed his government's willingness when he paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office in the city.

The PM and the ambassador also underscored the need for exchange of military cooperation, and ensuring balanced trade and business between the two friendly countries.

When expatriate issue came up for discussion, the PM requested the Turkish government to ensure maximum facilities for the Bangladeshi people living in Turkey for work and education purposes.

The envoy greeted Hasina on her assumption of the office of Prime Minister.

Sakir Ozlan expressed deep shock at the death of army officers and civilians in the February 25-26 Pikhana carnage and highly praised Hasina for her wisdom and farsightedness in tackling the BDR crisis

quickly and peacefully.

They hoped that the age-old friendly relations between the two countries would be further strengthened in the days to come.

The Turkish envoy laid emphasis on boosting the activities of the Parliamentary Friendship Group of Bangladesh and Turkey and exchange of visits for strengthening democracy in the two countries.

Adviser to the Prime Minister Major General (Retd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, PMO Secretary Mollah Waheeduzzaman, Press Secretary to the PM Abul Kalam Azad, former Ambassador Ziauddin and Special Assistant to the PM Abdus Sobhan Golap were present.

£250m DFID support for poor

UNB, Dhaka

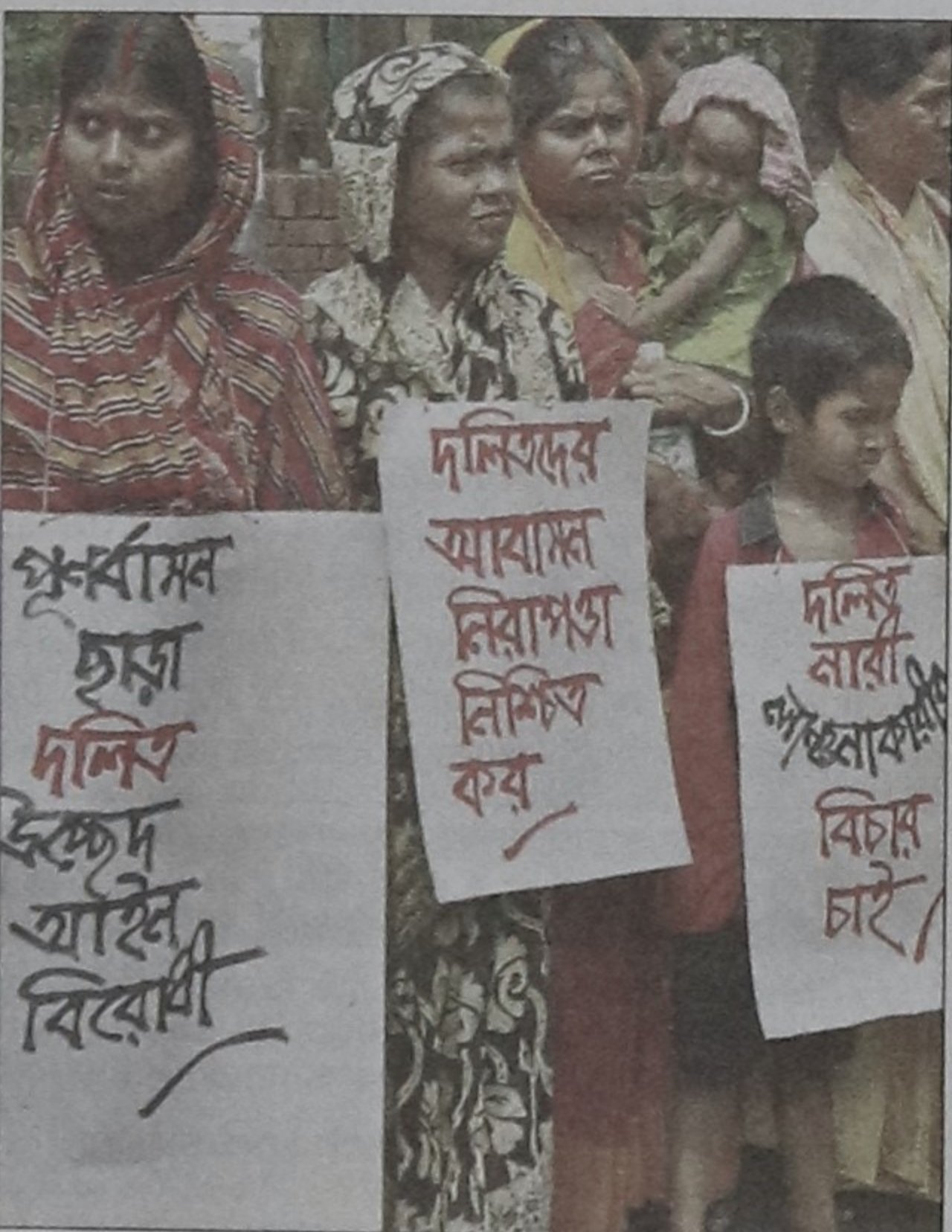
British Department for International Development (DFID) country chief Chris Austin announced yesterday that they would provide 250 million pounds sterling to help out the poor and vulnerable sections of people in Bangladesh, as he said many millions still go hungry.

"We want to help the government and expect to spend Pound 250 million over the next five years," he said, adding that their focus is on the poorest and most vulnerable

groups living in the hoars, coastal areas and the north-western char islands.

Chris Austin was addressing as special guest a daylong conference jointly organised by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and the British Department for International Development (DFID) at Sheraton Hotel with BIDS Director General Dr MK Mujeri in the chair.

He said the government should take timely action in achieving food security as it's a big challenge of the country.



Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement and Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights form a human chain in the city yesterday protesting eviction of Dalits and the deprived from Sutrapur area.

PHOTO: STAR

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