

## ARSON ATTACK ON RED-LIGHT AREA OF FARIDPUR

## No protection for sex workers

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Mayna (name changed) has been living in the red-light area of Faridpur for the last 30 years. She once fled with her suitor to start a family but had to come back again with her nine-month-old daughter.

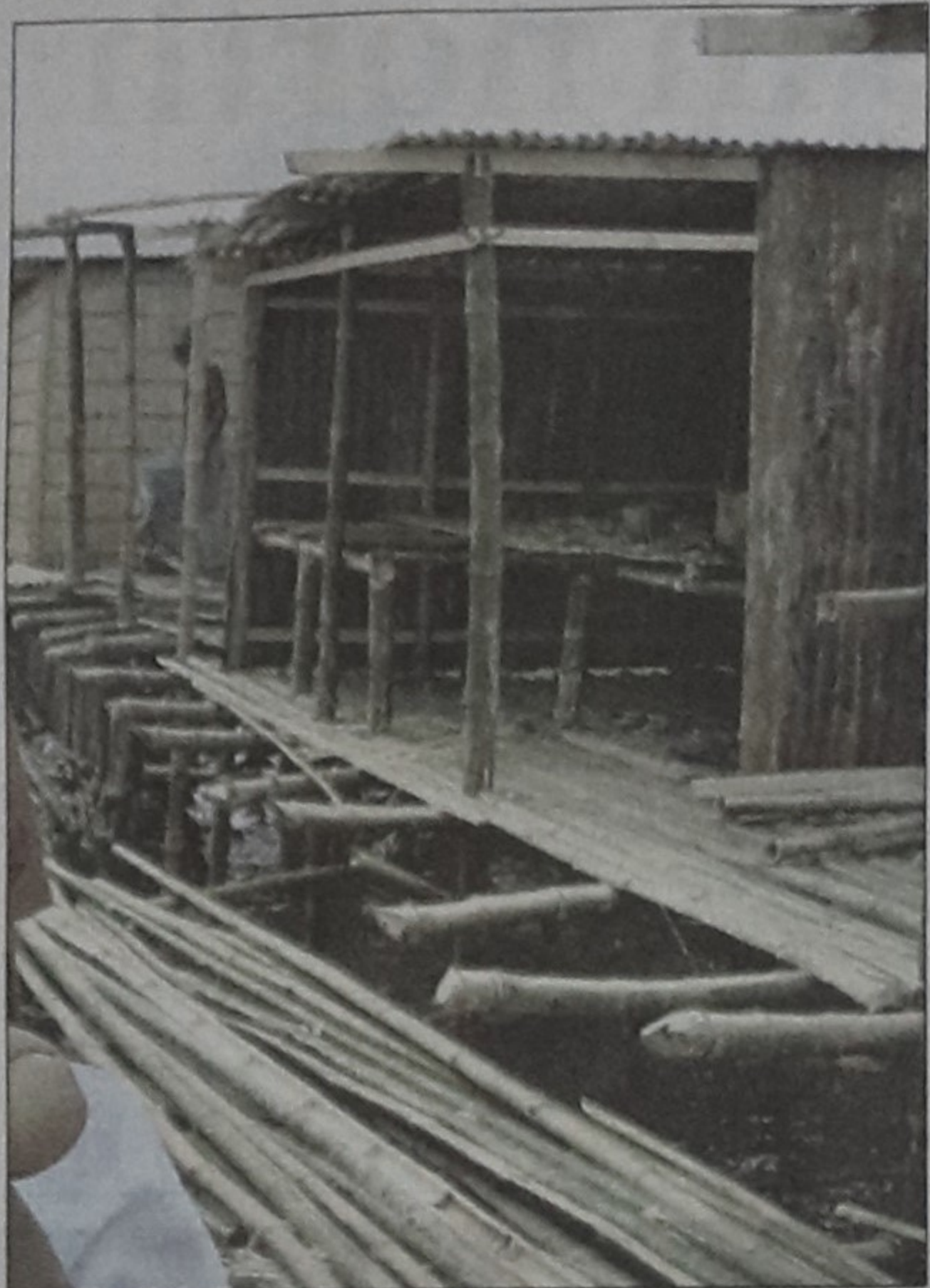
The woman, now 50, has become the leader of this sex workers' community at this brothel located at C&B Ghat and her daughter, Bina (name changed), is now a sex worker. Bina has a three-month-old daughter who one day will replace her mother -- it is a vicious circle and many girls born to sex workers have no alternative but to follow the footsteps of their mothers.

There are some 178 sex workers at C&B Ghat brothel at Dangi village and many of them landed here after falling victim to traffickers or being cheated by their loved ones. And they continue to suffer from deprivation and violation of rights.

Although they want to be rehabilitated in society, nobody comes to their aid. Instead, a vested quarter backed by local influential people set fire to their rooms on the night of June 23 in a bid to evict them.

Some 167 rooms burned down and they lost everything to the fire.

"The attackers even poured petrol into the tubewell in the area so that we cannot have access to drinking water. We have lost everything. Now there is no shelter, no income



Sex workers started rebuilding their houses in C&B Ghat area after a vested quarter set fire to them on the night of June 23.

and not enough food for us," said Achhia (name changed), a middle-aged woman.

She had opened a small grocery with a loan of Tk 20,000 from a local cooperative society, but the shop was gutted in the fire.

The sex workers filed a case

with Kotwali Police Station in Faridpur on June 26 against Malek Sarder, Mamun, Harun, Hayder, Rashid and some eleven others, but nobody has yet been arrested.

"We are alone in this world. Nobody loves us. Even our relatives also do not accept us.

The small amount of money I had saved for my future was burnt to ashes," said a sex worker.

Talking to The Daily Star, local people said they don't want that the brothel remains in place, but it was not fair to set it on fire.

Deputy Commissioner of Faridpur Helal Uddin said each victim has been provided with Tk 500 and 20 kg of rice, but they need more help to overcome their crisis.

Failing to get enough assistance from the authorities, the sex workers started rebuilding their houses by taking loans with high interest rates from various organisations.

Meanwhile, several rights organisations have extended support to these women by providing relief materials and legal aid.

Following a recent visit to the area, representatives of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, Ain O Shalish Kendra, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights, Piac Bangladesh, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Durjoy Nari Sangha and Sex Workers' Network expressed deep concern over the arson attack.

They called for proper investigation into the attack, exemplary punishment to the culprits and steps to resolve their accommodation problem.

## MYMENSINGH POLYTECH

## BCL men take tolls from admission seekers

CORRESPONDENT, MYMENSINGH

Admission to current session of Mymensingh Polytechnic Institute has become dearer for many poor but meritorious students as activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of the ruling Awami League, have taken it as an opportunity for making easy money.

A total of 720 students will be admitted to two shifts.

Result sheets of eligible candidates, hung on the notice boards, were seen scrapped creating problem for them, but the college authorities are mum on the issue.

Admission to first shift, which was scheduled to be completed by July 20, is yet to be completed. Some 50 seats out of total 360 are still vacant.

Admission to the second shift has also been stopped since July 25 for reasons best known to the authorities concerned.

According to sources, July 13 and July 18 were the scheduled dates for receiving admission forms from the candidates of the two shifts respectively but they were waylaid by BCL men in front of the college. They allowed only those applicants to enter the campus who paid money.

While visiting the campus yesterday some admission seekers told The Daily Star that the BCL leaders are demanding Tk 15,000 to 20,000 for each admission.

When contacted, Shanta, a BCL leader, however denied the allegation.

Principal Mohammad Ali could not be reached after repeated attempts for his comment on the matter.

## Lecture on glaciers, sand dunes held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a lecture yesterday said that fossil fuel would be a high profile issue in the future, as fossil would remain the main source of energy in the next 50 years.

"Over 80 percent of energy comes from fossil fuel. It will dominate the source of energy in the next 30 to 40 years. We need to drill more wells for fossil fuel," said Prof Dr Shahnaz Huq-Hussain, dean, earth and environmental science faculty, Dhaka University.

Student chapters of Dhaka University and Jahangirnagar University of American Association of Petroleum Geologists organised the lecture titled 'Nature's juggling act: Glaciers, sand dunes and limestone'. A post glacial sea-level rise captures in rock, a record of the early Permian stratigraphy of Saudi Arabia. Chevron Bangladesh sponsored the event.

Dr Christian Heine, senior geologist consultant, Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia, presented the keynote paper at the programme.

## Bail petitions of Rezaqul, Sahab: HC issues rules on govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued separate rules upon the government to explain why former National Security Intelligence (NSI) officials Major Gen (Retd) Rezaqul Haider Chowdhury and Sahab Uddin should not be granted bail in Chittagong arms haul case.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Md Rais Uddin issued the rule following separate bail petitions filed by Rezaqul and Sahab.

The bench asked the government to reply within 10 days to the rules issued on the petitions of Rezaqul and Sahab.

Detained former NSI director general Rezaqul Haider Chowdhury on July 19 filed two separate petitions with the HC, seeking bail in the cases against him in connection the sensational Chittagong arms haul.

Sahab Uddin, another former official of NSI, filed the bail petition with the HC on July 20.

Sahab Uddin was arrested on May 3 and Rezaqul on May 16 in connection with the 10 truckloads of weapons seized in Chittagong in April 2004.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam argued for the government, while Advocate AJ Mohammad Ali appeared for Rezaqul and Advocate Habibul Islam Bhuiyan stood for Sahab.

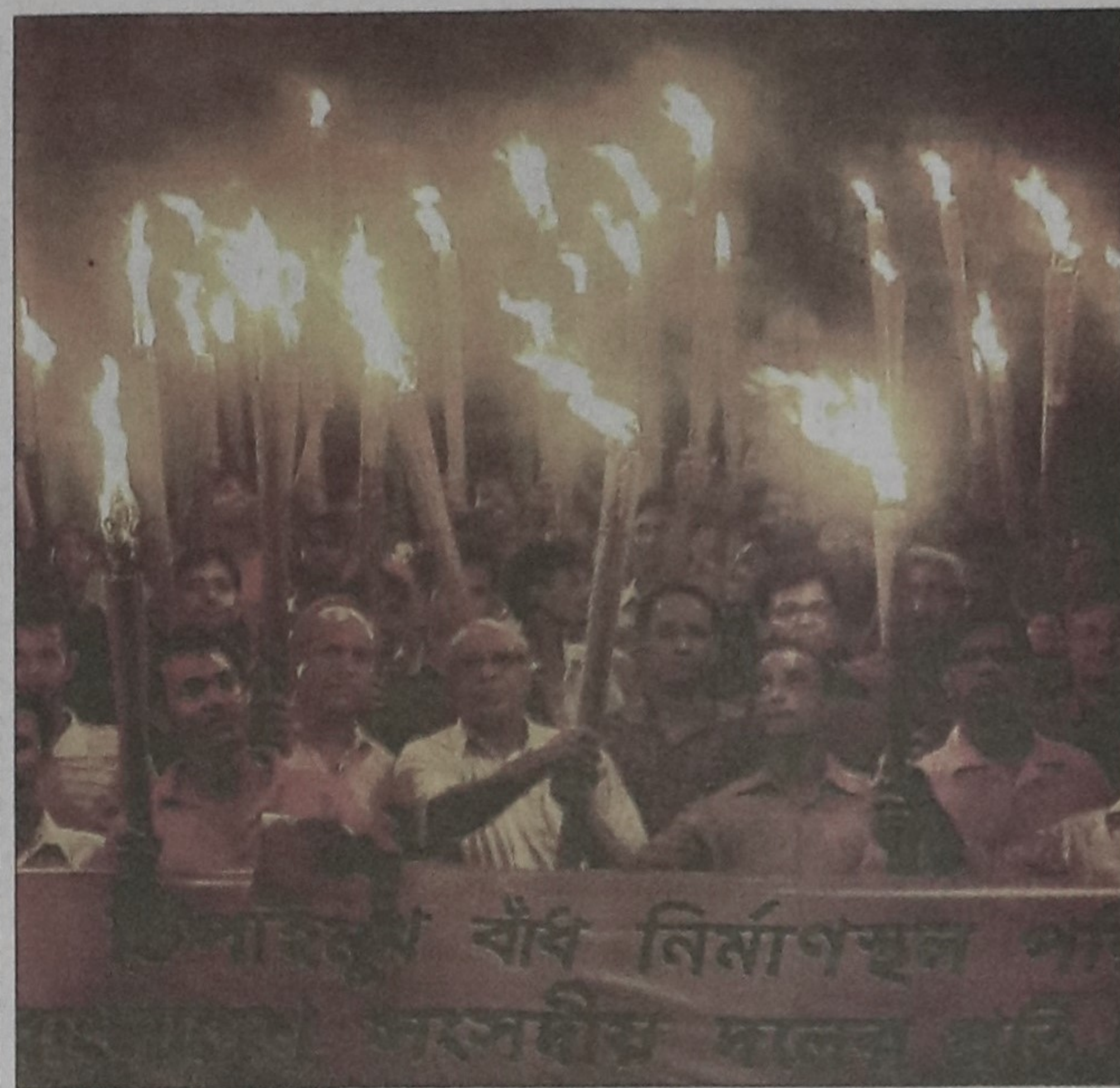
## Farewell reception to 35 DU teachers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Teacher's Association (Duta) on Sunday accorded a reception to 35 university teachers, who went on retirement during July 2008 to July 2009, says a press release.

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique attended the programme as the chief guest.

He hoped that the teachers would continue their services to the nation in future in their respective fields.



Committee to Resist Construction of Tipalmukh Dam takes out a torch procession from the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday with a call to halt the Indian move to build the Tipalmukh dam.

## Three-storey house subsidised in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A three-storey building subsidised by a few inches in the city's Ambagan area early yesterday, creating panic among the local people.

Locals said they heard a big sound at about 3:00am and later found around 1,200 square feet area affected by the subsidence in the morning.

They said cracks developed also in the nearby buildings after the subsidence.

The subsidence might have been occurred due to excessive use of underground water in the area or sudden rainfall after prolonged draught, said Abdus Sobhan, a councillor of Rajshahi City Corporation, quoting the experts of Public Works Department.

"I felt a sudden jerk after a big sound. I thought it was a quake," said Anwarul Iqbal, a resident of the three-storey building owned by Abul Hossain.

He said a drain and land close to the building subsidised by one and a half feet.

Dwellers of a one-storey building came out of their residence in panic when they heard the sound in the night.

In another incident in Naogaon, curious people thronged Nindoin village where cold air has been whizzing out from underground at two points for the last four days.

While visiting the village yesterday morning, this correspondent found local people digging two holes at a distance of 200 yards in Malir beel. Cold air comes out of the holes.

## Call to probe BNP-Jamaat's torture on minorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The leaders of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha Christian Oikyo Parishad yesterday demanded neutral investigation into repression and torture on minor communities during the last BNP-Jamaat alliance government and exemplary punishment to the perpetrators of torture.

They placed the demands from a meeting of city unit of the organisation, says a press release.

They also demanded implementation of Vested Property Act-2001 and formation of an endowment board to preserve the right of the minority community.

## 'Popularise acupressure'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique on Friday stressed the need to popularise acupressure, a form of natural medical treatment, with an aim to ensure health service to the poor and marginal community.

Prof Arefin said this at a reunion of Bangaj Swachikitsa Paribar, a voluntary healthcare initiative, at the National Press Club in the city, says a press release.

Acupressure is a form of medical treatment, originally

from Japan, in which pressure is applied to particular parts of the body using the fingers.

Speaking as the chief guest, lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon said, "As acupressure costs nothing, it plays an important role in providing treatment for all under the present socio-economic structure of the country."

Jahanara Islam, former vice-president of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU), termed acupressure a supernatural as well as miraculous treatment system.

Bangaj Swachikitsa

Executive Director Sagar Sagor, pioneer of introducing acupressure in the country, said acupressure is a major advance in medical science.

Any disease can be easily diagnosed without using an appliance in its early stage, be cured without taking medicine, he added.

Dr Sultana Ahmed, president of the organisation, chaired the reunion which was also addressed by journalist KM Asaduzzaman, managing director of Social Investment Bank Ltd, and Shah Alamgir.



Guests stand as the national anthem is being played at a reunion of Bangaj Swachikitsa Paribar, a voluntary healthcare initiative, at the National Press Club in the city on Friday.

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