

Upazila roundup

JAMALPUR

2 blackmarketeers held for assaulting newsmen

From Our Correspondent
May 20: Police arrested two notorious blackmarketeers here on May 17 for assaulting a local newsmen.

It is learnt that Nurul Alam Siddique, Jamalpur District correspondent of the Daily Inqilab was seriously assaulted by some blackmarketeers at Melandah bazar on March 26.

A case was registered with Melandah thana in this connection and police investigation is going on.

Recently, acting on secret information, a group of police led by Sub-Inspector Mainuddin raid a house at village Dewlabari and arrested two persons on charge of assaulting newsmen.

The arrested persons are Mohammad Ali Jeenah and Mahul.

GAZIPUR

Ansar, VDP rally held

From Our Correspondent
May 20: A rally of Gazipur district Ansar and VDP was held at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute premises recently.

Major General Syed Badruzzaman attended at the rally as chief guest and took the salute.

The function was presided over by Alhaj Jasimuddin Chowdhury, Deputy Commissioner. At was addressed, among others, by Police Super Syed Golam Mostafa, Lt. Col. Harunur Rashid, Director (Training) and Abul Kashem.

Another report adds: Indian sarees worth about Taka 6 lakh were recovered from village Mujkhan under sadar upazila of the district recently.

A case in this connection has been registered with the police.

SYLHET

Property worth Tk 50 lakh gutted

From Our Correspondent
May 20: Property worth Taka 50 lakh were gutted in a devastating fire at Ekaraibazar of Balaganj Upazila of the district recently.

According to the reports, as many as 14 business establishments including a rice-mill were burnt in the fire. The fire originated from a short-circuit in the bazar area.

The local people brought the fire under control. Another report adds: Smuggled Indian goods worth about more than Taka one lakh were seized by the police from Sylhet town recently.

In another raid, 11 bags of sugar and 4 bags of dal were seized from a microbus (Dhaka - Metro Cha - 8288) from Kalighat area of Sylhet town. Police arrested three persons in this regard.

Two separate cases had been registered with the Kotwali police.

JAMALPUR

Best primary teacher in district

May 20: Fazul Haq Khan, Headmaster of Moulvirchar Government Primary School under Dewanganj Upazila has been selected as the best primary teacher in the district, reports BSS.

Mr Khan joined Nagan-dabari Primary School in 1965 as an assistant teacher and was promoted to Headmaster in 1977. Under his guidance many students of Moulvirchar Primary School have been regularly receiving scholarships turning the school into a famous seat of learning in the area.

PABNA

Erosion renders 500 families homeless

May 20: Unabated erosion by the river Jamuna left some 500 families in nine villages of Bera upazila homeless over the last two weeks, officials said, reports UNB.

Standing crops on about 200 acres of land and one post office have also been engulfed by the surging river.

Bera Upazila Nirbahi Officer said 80 families in Nagarbari, 85 families in Ganpatodia, 50 families in Madhupur, 40 families in Pechakhola, 45 families in Purnabareng, 65 families in Nakalia, 25 families in Ragunathpur, 90 families in Ekshah and 50 families in Verakhola have become shelterless during the period.

PATUAKHALI

Aus farming plan on 4.72 lakh hectares

May 20: A massive scheme has been undertaken to bring 4.72 lakh hectares of land under aus cultivation in 11 southern districts in greater Barisal Agricultural Zone, reports UNB.

According to official sources, 84,000 hectares of land will be brought under High Yielding Variety and 3.88 lakh hectares under local variety.

The districts are Patuakhali, Barguna, Bhola, Ptropur, Barisal, Rajbari, Gopalganj, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Jhalakati and Faridpur.

At least 244 demonstration plots will be set up in these districts to acquaint the farmers with the modern methods of cultivation.

Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation will supply necessary seeds, fertilizers and insecticides among the farmers at fair prices for the successful implementation of the scheme.

It is estimated that about 5.39 lakh metric tons of aus paddy will be produced in these districts during this season.

Another report adds: Work on eight uplift projects under Annual Development Programme is progressing fast in the district.

FARIDPUR

Dacoit-police gunbattle

May 20: Dacoits fought a gunbattle with police in Madhukhal Upazila Monday night, leaving a cop injured by bullet, reports UNB.

Four members of the armed gang were captured along with two pipeguns and some lethal weapons during the encounter in the Gariadah Primary School premises, police said.

Constable Alauddin got bullet in his head during the fight. He was rushed to the Faridpur Police Hospital.

The clash started when police, on information that a gang was on attempt to commit dacoity, rushed to the spot and challenged the miscreants.

They (accused) then opened fire on police, injuring Alauddin.

Police returned fire and caught Quddus Ali Sikder, Raja Sikder, Ear Hossain and Jamal Sheikh—all of village Arpara in the upazila.

Cases have been filed against them.

JHENIDAH

Demand for execution of People's Court verdict

May 20: The district unit Committee for Elimination of Killers and Collaborators of 1971 at a public rally Monday demanded execution of the People's Court verdict on Jamaat Chief Golam Azam, reports UNB.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by Abdus Salam, Ziauddin Ahmed, Mattur Rahman, Khandaker Hafiz Ferook and Tahera Begum Jolly.

The speakers held Golam Azam guilty for anti-Bangladesh campaign in London and Saudi Arabia in the name of East Pakistan resurrection movement till 1977.

They reiterated the demand to set up special tribunal to try the killers and collaborators on 1971.

RANGPUR

Drought damages sugarcane on 6,000 acres

May 20: Sugarcane plants on 6,000 acres of land in Shyampur Sugar Mills Zone have been damaged by the prevailing drought, reports UNB.

Official sources said the mill brought 12,000 acres of land under sugarcane cultivation in two phases within mill zone areas comprising Rangpur and parts of Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Dinajpur districts during the current season.

The sugarcane on 6,000 acres of land brought under first phase cultivation in last October are now growing somewhat but on the rest 6,000 acres sown during February and March were damaged due to persisting drought.

An official of the mill said the repayment of the loan of Tk 2.56 crore advanced to the growers during this plantation season is uncertain as half the crops were damaged by the drought.

The mill is also facing acute problems due to non-realisation of outstanding loan of Taka four crore and huge unsold sugar lying with the mills godown, he added.

Brahmaputra Flood Control Project

Fund needed to complete work on 23-year-old project

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, May 20: The Brahmaputra River Flood Control and Irrigation Project could not be implemented in 23 years due to shortage of fund and necessary initiatives.

The Taka 93 crore project aimed at controlling floods and exploring irrigation facilities in Jamalpur and Sherpur Districts.

The Water Development Board (WDB) took up the task of implementing the project with the assistance of World Bank.

It is learnt that the international water experts led by B M Abbas conducted a survey to select the project site in 1978 but it remained incomplete as the unauthorised occupants on the land could not yet be evicted.

A reliable source disclosed that a proposal was submitted to the concerned ministry for setting up of a divisional office of Water Development Board at Jamalpur to ease implementation of the work. An official file was also opened at the Water Development Board Head Office at the directive of late President Ziaur Rahman.

Another proposal was sent by the Deputy Commissioner, Jamalpur to the head office of WDB on December 23, 1983 regarding the project but to no effect.

Late President Ziaur Rahman formally inaugurated the work on the Brahmaputra Barrage, an integral part of the project near Dewanganj Upazila town during 1980-81.

Break up of sanction

After the approval, the government sanctioned fund for the project that include Taka one crore for the construction of embankment along the river Nalitari Upazila, Taka one crore 25 lakh for two regulators and a bridge in Melandah Upazila, Taka one crore 25 lakh for Gobakhali Canal digging in Jamalpur sadar upazila, Taka nine crore 33 lakh for Old Brahmaputra Flood Control and Rehabilitation Project, Taka 10 crore 26 lakh for Jamuna Flood Control and Rehabilitation Project in Dewanganj and Sarishabari upazilas, Taka 13 crore for Flood control embankment along Dwasani river, Taka two crore seven lakh for Madaraganj Upazila town protection project, Taka one crore 50 lakh for Pullakandi Union protection embankment under Dewanganj Upazila, Taka two crore 54 lakh for Dewanganj Town Protection and Rehabilitation Project, Taka one crore 25 lakh for construction of regulator at Kurnajura under Sribordi Upazila, Taka one crore 40 lakh for Rohabekhari Rehabilitation Project, Taka 60 lakh for Nalitabari-Voliakhali canal digging and water supply project, Taka one crore 25

lakh for construction work of flood control embankment along the river Bhugai under Nalitabari Upazila, Taka 12 crore for Rajan Mijil Flood Control Embankment Project under Jhenigati Upazila, Taka one crore 25 lakh for regulator and bridge construction project along the river Mregi under Sherpur Upazila, Taka one crore 26 lakh for construction of a regulator bridge and canal digging under Sarishabari Upazila, Taka two crore 14 lakh was sanctioned for the construction 77-km-long flood control embankment along Chilakanchi river under Nalitabari Upazila, Taka 20 crore for Brahmaputra river dredging project and Taka 70 lakh for Jamalpur town protection project.

Some of the schemes under the project were taken under Food for Works Programme but none of the projects has been implemented due to shortage of fund.

Under the Food for Works Programme schemes, 43,486 maunds of wheat were sanctioned for the construction of Brahmaputra Flood Control Embankment, 20,000 maunds of wheat for the excavation at Banner and Sharsakhi canals under Jamalpur sadar upazila, 30,000 maunds of wheat for dredging Mregi river, 1,70,000 maunds of wheat for the construction of flood control embankment along the river Chilakhal in Sherpur sadar upazila.

Projects under FWP

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Brahmaputra erosion

A dependable source of the Water Development Board, Dhaka said that the embankment constructed under the project had been under the grip of the Brahmaputra erosion. During the last 23 years, about 6000 square feet area along the embankment were devoured by the rivers causing huge losses to the government.

The source said that owing to non-completion of the projects erosion and flood have devoured lands in Jamalpur and Sherpur districts every year.

The Water Development Board sanctioned Taka 20 crore last year and Taka 17 lakh during the current financial year for the reconstruction of the embankment near the Brahmaputra to curb erosion but the measures taken so far have been too meagre to do the needful.

Temporary arrangement ineffective

Meanwhile, the temporary bamboo pilings installed at Dewanganj town protection by Water Development Board have already been washed away by the strong current at the river.

It is officially learnt that many cracks have been developed in the embankment due

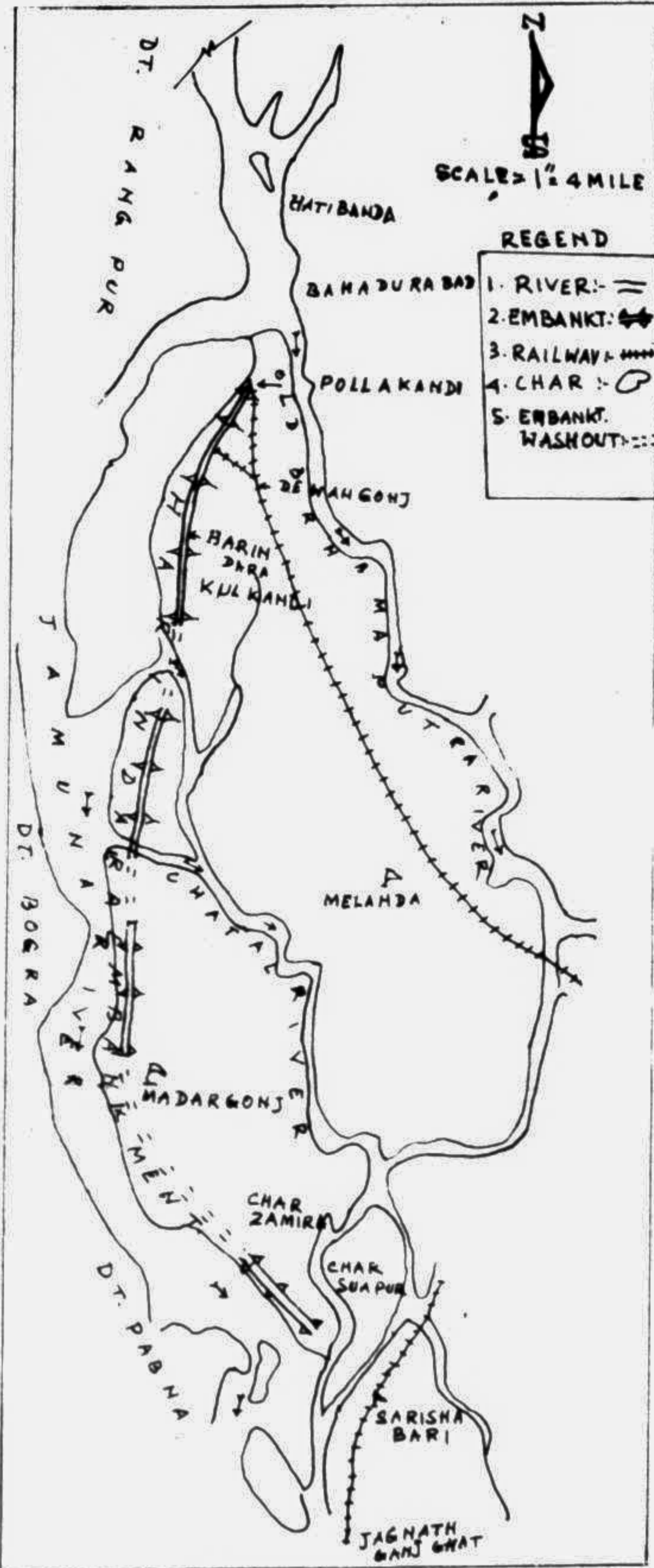
to heavy pressure of water. Water Development Board experts fail to carry on survey work due to the strong current, the source added.

A WDB source says since 1967 the Brahmaputra river has been eroding Dewanganj town and an area of three miles in length and one mile in breadth has been devoured by the river at Dewanganj Bazar and Thana Road. The authority is trying to halt the erosion by using the boulder stones but to

no effect.

It may be mentioned here that Begum Khaleida Zia, Prime Minister visited the Brahmaputra Barrage site in January 1987 and in two public meeting she also assured the local people that the problems of the barrage would be solved.

The local people urged the present government to look into the matter and take steps for the interest of people of the vast areas.



The map of the project area.

Pregnant housewife beaten to death

DINAJPUR, May 20: A pregnant housewife was allegedly beaten to death at the town, police said here Tuesday, reports UNB.

Family sources said, the victim Marzina, second wife of Abdul Jalil of railway slum area was allegedly beaten by two wives of her husband's brother and mother-in-law recently.

She succumbed on way to Rangpur Medical College Hospital the same day. The body was sent to morgue for autopsy.

A case has been filed with the Kotwali police.

Jute production decreases in Netrakona

NETRAKONA, May 20: Jute production in the district may fall short of the target during this season for want of seeds and necessary capital, reports UNB.

Officials said about 35,000 acres of land have been brought under jute cultivation in all the 10 upazilas of the district but scarcity of jute seeds is posing a threat in achieving the target.

It was reported that in the open market jute seeds are being sold between Taka 40 and 50 per seer which is beyond the purchasing capacity of the drought-hit farmers.

Upazila Seed Inspector said the seeds which had been distributed among the farmers by Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation were not germinating.

Water flow damages part of embankment

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, May 20: At least 1200 feet long area of the flood control embankment in Jakiganj, Golapganj and Bhanbar areas under the district have been washed away by the rain water and onrush of water from the hilly areas during the last two days.

The affected areas include Isapur of Sultanpur union under Jakiganj upazila, some parts of Sylhet Sadar upazila, Golapganj and Bhanbar upazilas.

Meanwhile, water level in different rivers like Surma and Kushia has been on rise during the last two days, said an official source. However, the rivers are following below the danger level.

One person was killed and

Course on 'Social Analysis Organisation' held

BARISAL, May 20: A five-day training on 'Social Analysis and Organisation' concluded at the Bikalpa Unnayan Karmashuchi (BUK) office premises here recently.

Organised by the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), the function was attended by A Wahab Howlader, the Executive Director of Krishi Club, as chief guest.

A total of 23 field workers of different NGOs of the districts of Barisal, Faridpur and Manikgonj participated in the training course.



Obituary

Mosammam Paribatu Begum Bela (54) wife of Siddiqur Rahman Bhuiyan of village Haripur under Chhaganaiya Upazila of Feni District died of heart attack recently at Chhaganaiya Hospital, says a press release.

She was buried in front of her village home, (Bhuiyan Vila).

The deceased leaves behind her husband, sons, daughters and a host of relations to mourn her death.

'ACROSS THE COUNTRY'

Dhaka-Shariatpur Journey—a shocking experience

—Lutfur Rahman Belayet

SHARIATPUR, May 20: My sister was the last one to be the passenger of the launch and I boarded it just before her. I got on the launch just at 8 a.m. the time of its departure. But my sister could not yet reach. We had to walk about one kilometre to get on the launch from the trawler that we came by. It was like a fast walking competition as everyone tried to beat others to the launch and get a better room there. There was not enough time and I told my sister to walk faster. Exhausted of tiredness my sister only said, 'you go, I shall not go'. I did not have anything to tell her. We started walking at 3.45 a.m. and had to continue till 5.30 a.m. and it was very difficult to avail the trawler that left exactly at 5.30. The exhaustion of walking so long and so fast such an hour is beyond description. The trawler could not reach the launch that for there is a shoal on the way. So passengers are to walk for another kilometre. I myself was find it difficult to keep moving on. A rest was to me dearer than anything. So what could I say to my younger sister? Sometimes I fell back to her pace but seeing the hands of the watch close to crossing the deadline, I walked faster telling her to follow me as quick as possible. I had to leave her to avail and to request the launchmen to wait a bit for my sister. They did so in the face of strong objection from the ghat authority. I was able to manage some room for her in the ladies cabin but I had to keep myself standing the whole way to Sadarghat, Dhaka—a journey of 8 hours by launch.

This is no made up story—a tissue of imagination. It is the description of my return journey from my village home in Shariatpur to Dhaka. Shariatpur is a district—only 40 miles away to the south of Dhaka city but believe it or not it takes the whole day to come to Dhaka from there. The only mode of our communication with Dhaka is by launch. The once famous Arjal Khan river has dried up and during summer even a country boat cannot negotiate it. Launches from Dhaka can reach only up to the WAPDA Ghat—about 12 kilometre east of Shariatpur town. The bus stand at Bashtola is about one kilometre away from WAPDA launch ghat and you undergo the agony of paying Taka 15 to hire a rickshaw for this short stretch. You have no scope of bargaining. The rickshawpullers are united. If you decide to walk you will miss the bus for Shariatpur. So you have no choice but to waste Taka 15.

There were only two wreckages called buses for some hand to find resemblance and about three hundred people tried to rush them. Both the buses were sardin-packed and screwing into one of them with my sister in tow was a little hard on us both. The roads were study in undulation and the bus swayed so heavily that it seemed to be a launch tossing about in the rough sea patch to Kauiya Kumorika.

We reached Shariatpur town by that rickshaw bus and went home four miles away from the town partly by rickshaw and partly by walking. The clock struck six when we saw our mother's long awaiting appearance. We had started from Dhaka at 5 a.m.

The necessity of good communication system is nothing new to be elaborated. Shariatpur District Development Association, Shariatpur District Students Welfare Association has time and again tried to draw the attention of the government to this acute problem and requested the construction of the Shariatpur-Keorakandi road. A democratic government can hardly turn a deaf ear to all this.

That was the suffering we had experienced while going home. So we decided to go to the WAPDA launch ghat through another way—by trawler. It made us undergo the sufferings I have already described at the beginning.

The Shariatpur people have to experience the above and more if they embark on the adventure of visiting the capital of the country just two score miles away.

The old greater Dhaka district and Shariatpur have common borders. This notwithstanding, we are to spend the whole day on our journey, the time it takes to travel to far off Dinaipur from Dhaka, a distance of some 254 miles. And thousands commute to Dhaka for attending office daily from as far as Mymensingh—a distance of 75 miles.

If the government wants to do anything in the Shariatpur region there should first be ways to reach it in the human shape and soon. It is not necessary to construct a pucca road all the way. Government can easily do the great task by constructing only 31 kilometre long road from Shariatpur town to Keorakandi station of Dhaka-Mawa Road. The roads and Highway authorities estimated Taka 533.79 lakh as expenditure and they took this project long ago. Following the press conference of Shariatpur District Development Association on September 26, 1989 the Communication Ministry issued a letter (RTD-2/Road-2/85 (Part-4)-38) to the Chief Engineer of the Roads and Highways Department requesting him to finalise the said project and thereby send a report to the Ministry. The Chief Engineer in a letter (709-D/7/90/898) informed the Secretary of the Communications Ministry of the requirement of above mentioned amount to complete the project. But they cannot implement the project for want of funds. They have requested NICAR times and again but funds are not still being available.

There is no influential leader in Shariatpur who can exert the right political pressure for implementing this small project to save about 15 lakh people from in human suffering. The affluent persons of Shariatpur cannot establish any industry there for want of a good communication system.

Government officials posted in Shariatpur do not want to stay there for want of good communication and other facilities. And on top of this all there is currently a plan to include the Shariatpur region in the proposed Barisal division. That will be the end of Shariatpur—becoming a back-yard of Barisal with Dhaka less than two hours away. Different bodies of Shariatpur including three local parliament members have already lodged strong protest against this proposed plan.

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Kiln labourers not getting fair wages

From Our Correspondent

KURIGRAM, May 20: Nearly 10,000 labourers engaged in different kilns of five districts in Rangpur Zone are being deprived of fair wages.

The districts include Kurigram, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat where the kiln owners are paying the labourers at their own sweet will regardless of the volume of work. On the otherhand, a considerable number of kiln owners are depriving the Customs Department showing a duplicate figure of production.

It is gathered that burning of bricks has become a lucrative business during the last few years and the number of kilns in the area is on the increase.

But the rate of wages of the labourers has not yet increased. Of late, labourers are getting Taka 70 to Taka 80 for making and backing of 1,000 pieces of bricks as against Taka 65 to Taka 80, two years ago.

While the price of essential commodities have shot up abnormally, the wages of kiln labourers have not been fixed in keeping with the price trend. Some labourers informed this correspondent that each of them work for 15 to 16 hours a day.

This poor amount is paid in instalments. Hence, they had to return home almost empty handed when they leave the kilns at the end of the season.

At present, per 1000 class one brick is being sold at Taka 1400 to Taka 1600 as against the estimated cost of Taka 900 to Taka 1000 per 1000 pieces of brick.

When contacted, some owners of the kilns told this correspondent that as there was no fixed rate of wages for the kiln labourers, they were making payment as per the arrangements.

It is learnt that there are as many as 150 chiming kilns. Moreover, there exists innumerable small kilns in the rural areas.