

District roundup

PABNA

JCD sweeps college union polls

May 12: Jattatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) swept the student union election of Pabna Polytechnic Institute on Monday bagging all the 22 seats, reports UNB.

Mamunur Rashid and Muktar Hossain were elected VP and GS of the students union respectively, institute sources said.

Awami League backed Chhatra League, Chhatra Moltree and Islami Chhatra Shibir also contested the election.

NETRAKONA

Four dacoits held

May 12: Police arrested four alleged notorious dacoits with one pistol, one pipegun and 18 rounds of bullets from Madanpur area on Friday, reports UNB.

The accused dacoits were identified as Islam Fakir, Shahadul Islam, Strajul Islam and Lakuj Manik.

Acting on secret information, police rushed to Madanpur area and nabbed them with arms and ammunition. A case has been filed with the local thana.

Another message adds: At least 28 posts of employees have been lying vacant in Kendua thana Land Revenue Office for a long time hampering revenue collection adversely.

The posts of one Revenue Officer (Canonog), one surveyor, 10 tahsildars, two chairmen, six messengers and other 10 were remained vacant affecting the day to day official works.

The revenue collection rate is insignificant in Kendua, the biggest thana in the district consisting of 13 unions due to the shortage of staff.

KHULNA

Canal Digging Committee unit meet held

May 12: A meeting of the Khulna district Canal Digging Committee was held Thursday at the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner with Whip of Treasury Bench in Jatiya Sangsad Ashraf Hossain in the chair.

The meeting was attended among others by Salahuddin Yusuf MP, Deputy Commissioner Kazi Reazuddin and concerned officials.

The meeting reviewed the progress and problems of canal digging programmes in the district under voluntary labour and food for work programme.

The meeting also discussed about the programmes undertaken by the Water Development Board and feasibility of the construction of the proposed sluice gate in Padma-Bhila Khal.

SIRAJGANJ

2 killed by father-in-laws

May 12: Two youths in Kamarkhand thana of the district were killed allegedly by their father-in-laws over family feuds Friday night, police and hospital sources said Saturday, reports UNB.

Shahadat (28), son of Tofazzal Hossain in village Garabari, was allegedly stabbed to death by his father-in-law Abdul Sattar and his accomplices when he was returning home at night.

Sattar's relation with his son-in-law deteriorated after he had compelled his daughter Salma (22) to divorce herself from Shahadat a few days ago, villagers said.

The father of the deceased filed a case with the Kamarkhand police.

JAMALPUR

Patriotic forces urged to be united

May 12: Deputy Minister for Health and Family Welfare Serajul Hoque called upon the patriotic forces to be united under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia for the quick development of the country, reports BSS.

He was addressing a conference of Sonali Bank Employees Union at Principal Office premises here on Tuesday. Presided over by Nizamuddin, President, Jamalpur-Sherpur Regional Unit of the union, the conference was addressed among others by Union Central President Bakir Hossain and Paurasava Chairman Fakur Rahman.

Hoque urged the employees to work hard for economic emancipation of the people.

RANGPUR

Housewife beaten to death

May 12: A young housewife of village Manglapara in Sadullahpur thana of the district was allegedly beaten to death by her husband Monday, reports UNB.

According to villagers Sadequul Islam married Rawshan Ara (23) three years back and since then he has been pressing her to take resort to prostitution but the victim refused.

On the fateful day, Sadequul picked up a quarrel with Rawshan and beat her to death. The body was sent to morgue for autopsy and a case has been filed with the police.

LALMONIRHAT

Nor'wester renders 2,000 people homeless

May 12: At least eight people were injured and 500 kutcha houses damaged rendering about 2,000 people homeless when a norwester lashed the Sadar thana on Sunday evening, reports UNB.

Of the injured, Shahin (24), who suffered wounds in the chest due to house collapse, was admitted to Sadar Hospital. Others were released after first aid.

The worst-hit area is Murtabi village at Mahendra union.

Witnesses said the norwester accompanied by heavy rainfall with a windspeed of 50 to 60 km that hit the area at about 7 pm, lasted for half-an hour and uprooted many trees. Standing crops on a vast tract of land were also damaged.

Local Agriculture Extension Department recorded 44 mm rainfall during the storm.

Earlier on Thursday, another severe norwester hit the area, injuring 25 people and damaging about 3,000 kutcha houses.

Local people alleged no relief materials were despatched to the affected people.

NARAYANGANJ

Teachers urged to work for society

May 12: State Minister for Education Principal Md Eunus Khan Wednesday called upon the teachers and all other related with education to help free the society from the scourge of illiteracy, reports BSS.

The State Minister was addressing as the chief guest at a discussion on 'role of primary teachers in implementing compulsory primary education' at the local pourashava hall here.

Eunus said primary education is the foundation of a nation for socio-economic upliftment and that is why the teachers should dedicate themselves in implementing the programme successfully with missionary zeal and firm commitment.

He said, the present democratic government has taken up the universal and compulsory primary education programme to bring the depressed and distressed children within the fold of academic programme and thus to ensure the overall development of the country through raising the literacy rate.

CHUADANGA

Storm renders 2500 persons homeless

May 12: Three people were injured, 1,800 kutcha houses damaged and 2,500 persons rendered homeless in a severe storm that lashed the Jibannagar thana of the district Thursday night.

The storm also damaged standing crops on 2,000 acres of land and uprooted about 15,000 trees in Goalpara, Kashari, Santospur, Dattanagar and Minajpur village in the thana.

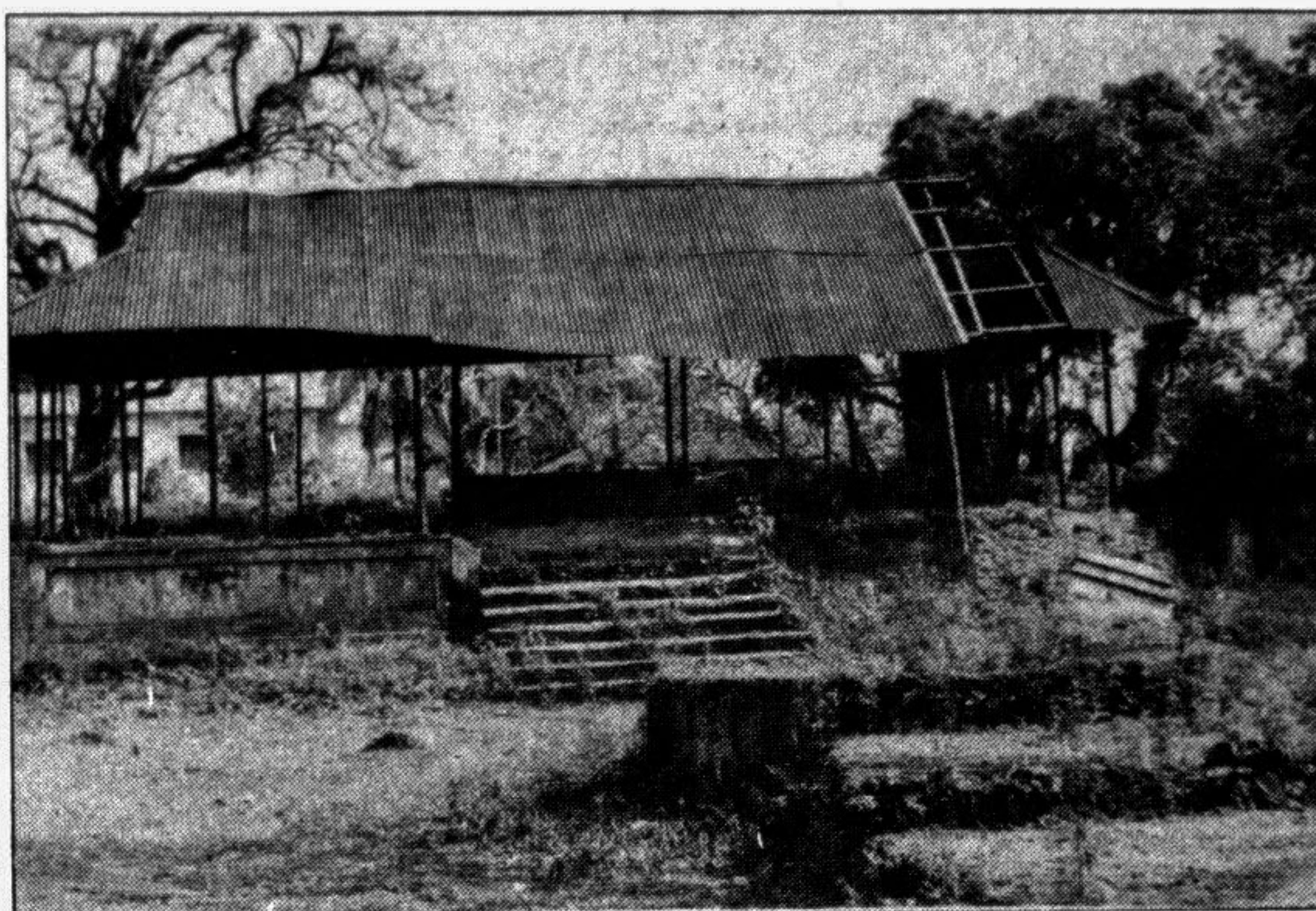
The shelterless people have urged the authorities to provide them with relief materials and sanction money to help them rebuild their houses without further delay.

SATKHIRA

Indian lentil seized

May 12: The Bangladesh Rifles personnel seized 200 maunds of Indian lentil (mushur dal) worth more than Taka two lakh from Batmile Haat under Sharsha thana of Jessore district on Monday, reports BSS.

The seized smuggled goods were deposited to Satkhira customs godown as unclaimed items, an official source said.



SYLHET (Jaintapur): Five hundred year old ruins of the Court House of the King of Jaintapur centering which there is a hearsay that trials were carried out by means of slaughtering the guilty.

—Star photo by AKM Mohsin.

Acute poverty in Kushtia

Drop out of primary school going students continues

KUSHTIA, May 12: The number of primary school going-children in remote areas of the district is decreasing day by day due to poverty, resulting in continued drop-out, reports UNB.

A large number of children of remote areas, aged between 8 to 12 year, prefer to engage themselves in different petty jobs to earn their livelihood.

It is learnt poverty stricken farmers engage their kids in income generating works like cattle grazing, rickshaw pulling and hotel services. The children, finding no other alternative, are compelled to take up odd jobs at minimum wages for their very existence.

Almost every marginal or landless farmer in the district has, on an average, more than four children and are suffering from financial insolvency. As a result, they can hardly afford to bear educational expenses of their children and they encourage their kids to take up any job, suited to their needs.

Besides, a large number of farm labourers migrate along with their kids to distant dis-

trict town in search of work. This also causes acute shortage of students in the primary schools in remote areas and the problem is being intensified day by day.

Another report adds: Reckless driving, overloading of buses, realisation of exorbitant fare and deplorable condition of roads have made the journey hazardous for the daily passengers on various routes in the district for quite a long time.

Finding no other alternative, the daily passengers on Kushtia-Jhenidah, Kushtia-Poradah, Kushtia-Meherpur and Kushtia-Pragpur routes travel in buses risking their lives, sources said.

The drivers drive their vehicles at high speed causing frequent accidents. Most of them are illiterate and do not know the traffic rules at all, local people said.

Besides, most of them do not have valid driving licences. To avoid the legal action in case of accidents, most of the time they use false names and addresses, they added.

Kashia, a cash crop needs care

NARAIL, May 12: A tall species of grass, locally known as Kashia, has become a cash crop of three thanas of the district, reports UNB.

However, no government scheme has yet been taken up to cultivate the cash crop or inspire the peasants for the expansion of its cultivation.

The leaf and stem of the plant are being used as raw materials in mattress and duster industries and paper mills. It has now become an alternative to hemp plants for roof of hut, internal partition of kutcha houses and for main fencing of the house.

Kashia grows abundantly on the bank of river and marshy places in the winter season.

In the past, farmers used to collect Kashia from the bank of the river Madhumati, Nabaganja and Chitra free of cost. But in recent days, river banks are being grabbed by local influential persons at the advent of winter season to earn hard cash without any investment.

Retail price of a medium size bundle of Kashia is being sold at taka 20-30 while the wholesale price is Taka 10-20.

Another report says: At least eight bridges on the Kalna-Jessore highway are in pitiable condition posing threat to vehicular movement.

Many of the bridges were damaged in the 1970s and some in the 1986 and 1988

flooding. But no step has been taken to reconstruct the damaged bridges as yet.

Of the damaged bridges, Niganj, Hamkura, Karimpur, Chanchra, Sitarampur Iron Bridge, Durajuri and Bashvita which were constructed during British and Pakistani period are badly damaged.

In recent years, about a dozen people were killed in various road accidents due to the dilapidated condition of

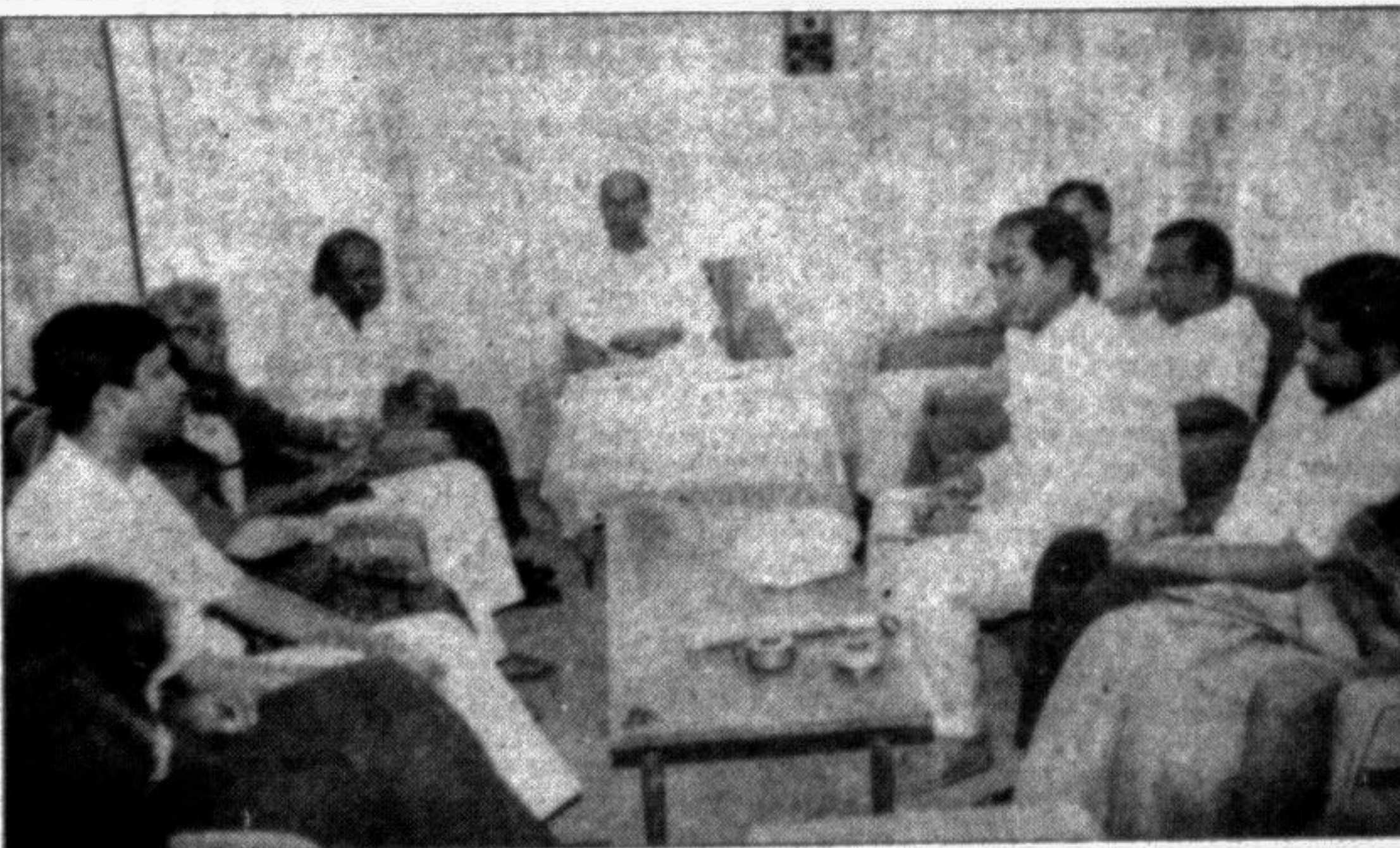
BNP, AL supporters clash in Pabna: 15 hurt

PABNA, May 12: The ruling BNP and the opposition Awami League supporters clashed in a power struggle at Ghoshpara in the town May 2 leaving at least 15 injured, reports UNB.

Four of the injured — Abu Zafar (23), Masum (25), Haran Ali (25) and Abul Kashem (22) — identified as AL supporters by their leaders, were admitted to the Sadar Hospital.

Doctors said the condition of Masum was critical.

The two groups have been fighting for control over the area since former General Secretary of district Awami League Rafiqul Islam Bakul joined the BNP along with his followers on February 18. The conflict has so far claimed two lives — Alauddin and Shafigue Kamal Biswas.



AGRI-VARSITY (Mymensingh): The Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) Prof. M Ashraf Ali Khan presiding over the meeting of the WUS National Executive Committee held here recently.

—Star Photo

Across the country

Naogaon: A peep into the past

by Rathindra Nath Sanyal

THE area we now call Naogaon was a millennium and more ago, the stomping ground of the Kaibarta rebels who, arising from lowly origins, subsequently set up a glorious dynasty.

Naogaon sub-division was established in 1882. In 1898, Mahadevpur and Adamdighi thana came under Naogaon. Earlier these were under Dinajpur and Bogra district respectively. Naogaon is now a district of nine thanas having 85 union parishes. Thanas are Sadar, Raninagar, Atrai, Manda, Niamatpur, Mohadevpur, Potnitola, Dhaimurhat and Badalghachi.

Naogaon has a sizeable Sautal population who live in Niamatpur, Potnitola and Dhaimurhat. Both male and female, are hard workers in the Sautal community. A few Mattal, Xangar, and Bunta community families also live here.

The land on the north-western side is high compared with the South-eastern part. The area of Potnitola, Dhaimurhat, Niamatpur and Mohadevpur is called Barind. Land in Naogaon and Badalghachi is sandy with mud. Manda, Atrai, and Raninagar thanas are swampy. Most of this area is under water. Some low-lying areas are Mandar Bil, Bil Hilla, Bil Utrai, Bil Mohanagar, Roktoder Bil, Digir Bil, Andershura, Kurkuti, Moundakhola, Jabani, Pabani, Sharilla, Kachua, Madila, Chak Kasba, Kopa.

The main rivers of Naogaon are Atrai, Chhoto-Jamuna, and Tulshi-Ganga. Atrai is a branch of Teesta. Starting from Jalpaiguri in India, it flows through West-Dinajpur of India and enters into Bangladesh at the village of Chougat of Naogaon. It flows through Naogaon and Natore and later meets the Bhramputra at Pabna district. The river Chhoto Jamuna is a branch of Atrai. Another river, Tulshi-Ganga, is now dead due to lack

of proper drainage. These rivers should be dug for proper drainage of water, and to decrease the flood problem of this area.

In the 17th century, East India Company established in Naogaon a silk industry and an indigo cultivation project. Natore was then the headquarters of Rajshahi district. Later the district HQ was transferred to Rampur-Boalia of Rajshahi because of the bad weather of Natore. At that time there was no rail line and there was no road link with Rajshahi from Naogaon. Only a kutcha road was there passing through Sailaghachi, Mirat and Bandhalkhara.

Educational Institution: There are now 794 government and 202 non-government primary schools, 4 government and 192 non-government high schools, 6 government and 10 private colleges, 18 senior madrasas, 29 dakhil madrasas, 1 technical school, and 11 kindergartens in the Naogaon district.

First, an English medium school was established at Kashimpur. In 1884, K D High School and in 1887, Dubalhati Haranath High School were established. The founders of these two schools were the then ganja supervisor and sub-deputy collector Krisnadhan Datta and Raja Haranath Ray respectively.

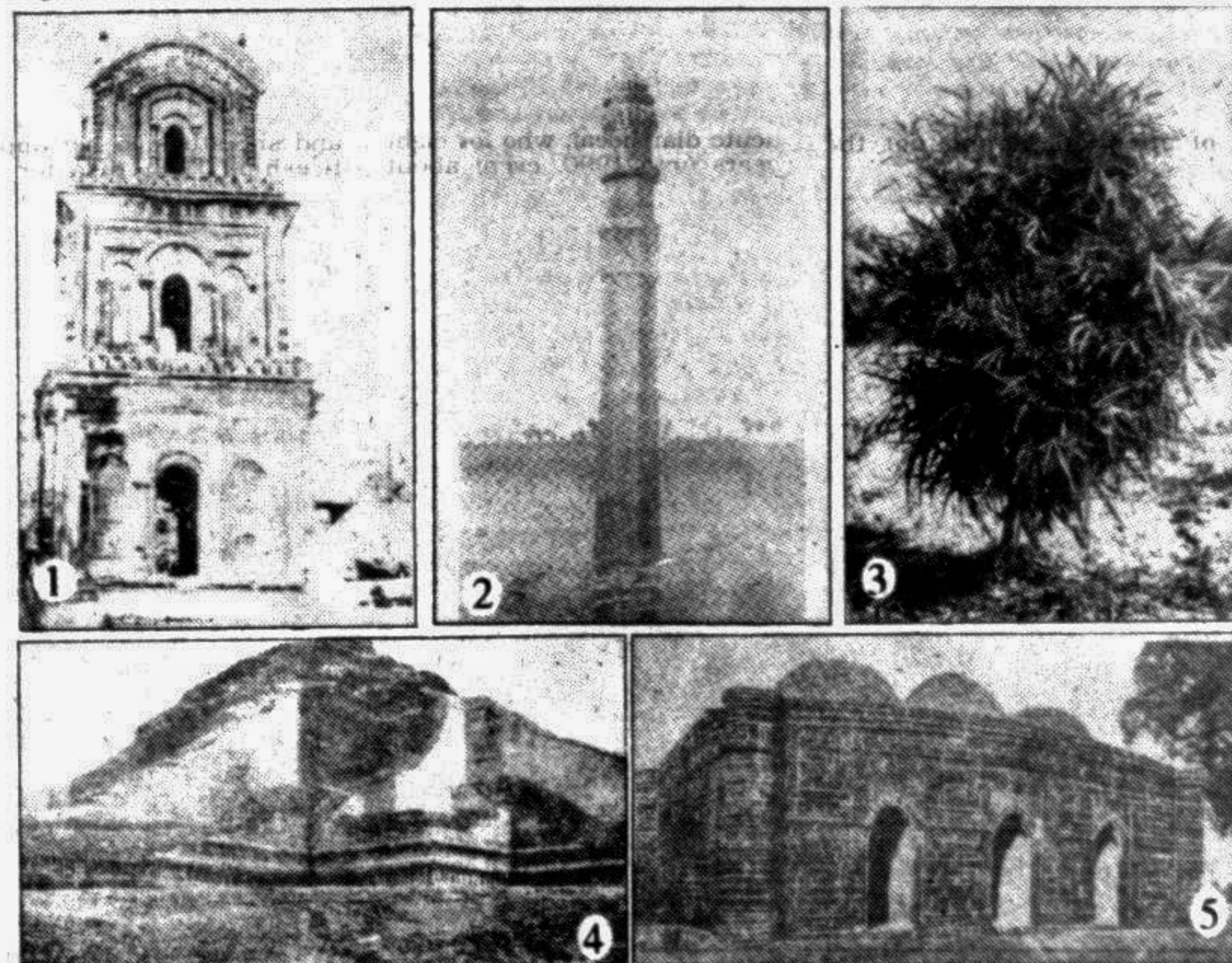
Many famous historic ruins are found in Naogaon. The Sompur Bouddha Vihara at Paharpur, the Yellow Bihar Tope (stupa), Kuschumba Mosque at Manda, Dhibar Dighi (large pond) at Potnitola, the ruins at Mysontosh, Bhimer Panti at Mongolbari, the remains of Chandan-nagar, famous Kalapahar residence at Nindighi in Niamatpur, Boro Darga at Shikarpur near Dubalhati, the large Khanpur of Raninagar, old brick buildings and roads of Agradigun under Dhaimurhat. Most of these old structures

have been destroyed due to lack of proper maintenance. At Paharpur, the digging work was first started in 1879 under the guidance by Sir Alexander Cunningham, but due to protest by the then zamindar of Balihar, Krisnendu Roy, digging had to be stopped. Cunningham found only a 22-feet high square room at Paharpur. Later, in 1923 digging work was again started and was finished in 1934. The project was fully funded by Saratkumar Roy of Digapattia, Natore.

Kusumba is an old village of Manda thana. Kusumba mosque built about 1503 AD and the big pond (dighi) beside the mosque is still a very attractive tourist centre. It is three miles from Manda, Naogaon-Rajshahi highway passes by the side of the mosque. Bhimer jangal is a very high road from Bogra-Sherpur to Mahasthan-Kichak-Shaidaha-Potnitola. It then passes through Dinajpur district to Rangpur district at Domar station. During the reign of the Kaibarta king Bhim this high road was built for separating the state of Kamrup from Bengal.

There is a big pond in the village Dibar in Potnitola thana, about 8 miles west of Najpur. In the pond there is a 8-corner granite stone statue with a height of 41 feet and a circumference 10 feet. This is called the victory memorial statue — Jayastambha — of Moharaj Dibbak, the Kaibarta rebel who became an emperor.

Naogaon was once known for its ganja crop. Ganja, Latin Canabis Indica, is called ganjika in Sanskrit. This hypnosis-inducing plant is native to the subcontinent and was largely patronised by the world-renouncing ascetics. For a long time ganja was the main source of development of Naogaon. The exact history of ganja cultivation in Naogaon is non-existent. Cultivation of it started here in the early years of the East India Company.



NAOGAON: 1. Tazia Stambha at Baka village of Atrai thana. 2. Divak Smiti Stambha. 3. Ganja tree. 4. Paharpur Buddha Bihar Stup. 5. Kusumba Mosque (estd. 1503).

Acid thrower commits suicide

JAMALPUR, May 12: An acid thrower allegedly committed suicide by taking acid at Rudrabotra village in Sarishabari thana, police said here Monday, reports UNB.

According to police, Mozammel Hoq (25) took acid for fear of death penalty for throwing acid on his adopted mother.

Mozammel threw acid on her mother Razia Sultana (30) on May 2 when she opposed to give him some land property by her husband Abdul Motalib through registered deeds.

Abdul Motalib, a Railway employee, brought Mozammel Hoq Bhuiyan from Mazalia village as adopted son a few years ago. Motalib had no son.

Razia Sultana was rushed to the Jamalpur General Hospital in a critical condition. After the incident, Mozammel got nervous when the villagers said he shall have to face death penalty for throwing acid on his mother and committed suicide on the same night.

Convicted man arrested

RANGPUR, May 12: Police arrested a convicted man from Boashe village in Kotowal thana who was awarded seven years imprisonment, reports UNB.

The arrested Abdus Sattar (30) was awarded imprisonment in an arms case in 1991 by the sessions judge court. Since then he had been absconding.

No report of diarrhoea from Sherpur this year

SHERPUR (Bogra), May 12: There was no outbreak of diarrhoeal diseases in Sherpur thana of Bogra district this year due to the increased awareness of people about health and sanitation, reports BSS.

Official sources told BSS that about 20 per cent of the 28,700 households in Sherpur use sanitary latrines, procured from Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department alone.

According to unofficial statistics total coverage of sanitary latrines in the thana was 30 per cent of the households. Besides government department, commercial firms and NGOs also manufacture sanitary latrines in the area.

Averaged national coverage of sanitary latrines is about 25 per cent. It is difficult to find an open hanging latrine along roadsides in the area. The children also do not defecate at random on open spaces.

Earlier, we used to defecate in the bushes or in open latrines. But now we use sanitary latrines as these are safe and do not spread bad smell, farmer Mozahar Ali Mandal and housewife Shefali of village Joanpur said. Out of 300 households in this village about 250 have sanitary latrines.

Carpenter Abdul Qudus and housewife Kalpana of village Mahipur Bhatpara said they use sanitary latrines as it was hygienic. It was also easy to maintain pardah as these

latrines could be set up adjacent to the houses, they said.

Habibur Rahman, a resident of village Krishnapur said about 50 per cent households in the village had sanitary latrines while it was below 20 per cent in nearby village, Andi Kuira.

Subdivisional Engineer of Bogra M Abul Hossain Akand said the success achieved in raising the awareness of the people in the area about health and hygiene and in motivating them to use safe water and sanitary latrines was due to combined efforts by different government departments and NGOs.

The Public Health Engineering Department (PHE) made it binding on having 10 sets of sanitary latrines for getting one tubewell, sub-assistant engineer of PHE, Sherpur, M Abdul Baqi said.

Chairman of Sherpur thana area of Bangladesh Rural Development (BRDB) Golam Mohammad said they also made it binding on their members and about 2500 of rice-bearers of their 224 rural cooperative societies now have sanitary latrines.

Official sources said from 1988 upto April 1993 the PHE in Sherpur manufactured 6368 sets of slabs and 17,515 sets of rings for sanitary latrines out of which 5640 sets slabs and 16,686 sets rings were sold out four private firms and three NGOs in the thana are also manufacturing these slabs and rings, the sources said.