

## Effect of Farakka barrage

## Nation loses Tk 5,000 cr every year

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAH, May 6: Adverse effects of unilateral withdrawal of the Ganges water by India at Farakka and upstream has led to severe environmental crisis in 23 districts of the south-west and north west region of the country and struck a severe blow to the economic growth of the country - making an annual loss of about Taka 5000 crores.

The environmental crisis has been revealed in the form of micro level desertification in the north west region, in-

1975 following a temporary accord between Bangladesh and India to run the feeder canal of the barrage from 21st April to 31st May. India continued to withdraw to the full capacity even after the agreement.

The barrage is 7,363 ft long having 109 gates with a total discharge capacity of 2.7 million cusecs of water.

Since 1975, the water flow in the Ganges continued to decrease and in April 1993 the lowest water flow was

The local Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), officials say the ground water level measured at 20 to 25 feet has further gone deeper. As a result, more than one lakh shallow and hand-tubewells and Tara (Star) pumps have become inoperative throughout the northern districts. Scarcity of drinking and irrigation water has become very acute in those areas. Drinking water is said to be sold in Niamatpur and Sapahar thanas in the Barind tract.

inches in 1988. The decreasing trend continued and was recorded at 14.96 inches in 1992 and 14.20 inches in 1993 during the same period of the rainy season. Drought situation in also prevailing this year. Some scattered rainfall were experienced in April this year but that was too insufficient in comparison with the demand. As a result, about 15 lakh acres of land brought under boro cultivation in northern districts are now at stake. Thousands of acres of land

## More than one lakh shallow and hand-tubewells and irrigation pumps have become inoperative in the northern districts. Drinking water is said to be sold in some parts of the area.

According to the local Meteorological office, difference between the maximum and the minimum temperature widens each year during the dry season. The rainfall, on the other hand, decreases every year. The temperature ranged from 15° to 40° Celsius in March-April this year in Rajshahi. In April '93, the maximum and minimum temperatures were recorded at 44°C and 19°C respectively. Those were 42°C and 20°C in 1992 and 38°C and 21°C in 1986 during the same period.

Dr Abdul Khaleque of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) says, random fluctuation of the temperature and sands and dusts carried by wind and storms are causing lung diseases.

Records of the Meteorological office show that rainfall is decreasing alarmingly creating continued drought each year during March-April-May. The rainfall was 28.75 inches in 1987 from June to September. The figures came down to 25.26

ready for aus cultivation are also lying unploughed or unsowed for lack of sufficient moisture in the soil. This will adversely affect the coming aus and jute production from the northern region.

An exclusive study conducted in 1991 shows that the direct losses caused by Farakka barrage in agriculture sector due to soil moisture depletion, delayed planting and increased salinity exceeds taka 500 crore annually, while the indirect losses in financial term stood at about taka 2300 crore a year.

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) estimated the direct losses in its own projects due to withdrawal of the Ganges water stood at about Taka 2645 crores in 13 years from 1975-76 to 1987-88 fiscal year. The rate of loss upto 1993-94 would be higher and the total national losses in financial terms could stand at Taka 5000 crore per year, the sources further added.

## About 15 lakh acres of land brought under boro cultivation in northern districts are now at stake.

Increased salinity both, in soil and water in the southwest region, massive siltation and shoaling resulting in drainage congestion and causing increased intensity of flooding, reduced the potential of the Sundarbans mangrove ecosystem, quick depletion in soil moisture, lowering of ground water level, changes in navigational routes in inland waterways, sources say.

An analysis by the Water Development Board to compare discharges in previous years at Harding Bridge using data from 1956 to 1987 shows that the average of the highest discharge (August-September flow) before and after 1975 are 46998 cusecs and 55570 cusecs respectively. On the other hand, the average of the lowest discharge (March-April flow) before and after 1975 are found to be 2006 cusecs and 809 cusecs respectively. This shows that average peak flow discharge has increased by about 12 per cent compared to average peak flow before 1975. On the same basis, the average low flow has decreased by 60 per cent.

The Farakkah barrage began to operate from 21st April.

Jamuna levy  
No trace of  
crores of  
taka: Saifur

NETROKONA, May 6: There is no trace of crores of taka collected from the people as Jamuna sur-charge during the Ershad regime, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman said here on Friday, reports UNB.

"Jatiya Party government has done one thing - imposed on the people Jamuna levy and sur-charge and collected crores of taka. But when it came to power, the present government found no trace of the money", Saifur Rahman told a public meeting organised in connection with laying the foundation of a bridge over Dhonaikhal river.

The Ershad government had imposed Jamuna levy and sur-charge in early 1988 and mobilised some 400 crore taka until its ouster by mass upsurge in December 1990.

The Finance Minister ridiculed the claim of Jatiya Party that the foundation of the Jamuna bridge was laid by former President Ershad in February 1, 1988.

"They (Ershad government) could not add even a single brick during the three years after laying the so-called foundation of the Jamuna bridge. The failure proved the hollowness of their claim, the Finance Minister said.

4 more check  
posts opened  
for cattleheads

RAJSHAH, May 6: Four more custom check posts have been opened at the northern districts for legal marketing of incoming cattlehead, in the country, reports BSS.

With these new four check posts, the number of check posts for cattleheads now stands to eleven, an official handout said here Saturday.

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury formally inaugurated the check posts. The check posts are, Chargaht in Rajshahi, Koria Bazar in Joypurhat, Khanpur in Dinajpur and Amarkhana chick post in Panchagarh district. An average of three crore taka per month is expected to be earned as custom duties from these check posts.

A total of over eight crore taka have so far been earned by operating seven check posts during the last three months by landing about ninety one thousand cattlehead, the handout said.

The home minister addressed several spontaneous public gatherings in connection with the inauguration of new check posts and said, the establishment of new check posts are the reflection of expectation of local people. "These check posts will play an important role in national economy by preventing smuggling and by earning revenue," he added.

Hundreds of infants suffer  
from blindness

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, May 6: Hundreds of infants here are suffering from blindness, which doctors say is caused by vitamin A deficiency.

A recent survey showed that about 200 infants have already lost their eye sight over the last few months, which could be prevented by regular breast feeding.

The report also said that infant mortality rate were rising in the district as more mothers were ignoring to breast feed their infants.

About 35 per cent of the total children have been suffering from night blindness, malnutrition, skin and other gastro-intestinal diseases, the survey further said.

The report added that mothers, both in the rural and town areas are preferring bottles to feed their babies out of concern for beauty.

Frequent power  
disruption

The town dwellers and business community here have been protesting the mismanagement of power distribution by the local electricity supply officials.

Erratic power supply and voltage fluctuation have been creating difficulties and sufferings to both the domestic and commercial consumers.

Power distribution is disrupted almost every day for over two to four hours, said some affected community members.

Traders, owners of small

business and industries, patients and students are incurring irreparable losses due to frequent power breakdown.

Anti-social activities have increased to a great extent as many parts of the town remain under darkness at night.

Local people have urged the authorities to look into the matter and take immediate measures.

Good news for ground  
nut cultivators

Prospect of groundnut cultivation in certain areas of greater Kushtia district has been proved to be very bright as well as lucrative.

Farmers of Alamdanga thana of Chuadanga district and certain parts of Kushtia district where soil is sandy have achieved very encouraging yield of this cash crop in their field with the help and cooperation from the Agricultural Extension Department. The

402 tins of  
adulterated  
oil seized

MAGURA, May 6: Police arrested a man and seized 402 tins of adulterated mustard oil worth about Taka five lakh from a truck last week, says UNB.

Acting on a tip, police, led by O-C Serajul Islam, raided the truck at Magura bus stand, recovered the edible oil and arrested truck driver Swapan Kumar. 32.

yield was 60 maunds (raw) per acre, cost of which comes to Taka 10 thousand against production cost of Taka one thousand only.

Sandy soil with very small production efficiency is suitable for cultivation of groundnut and it can be cultivated in both kharif and rabi seasons and the time required for cultivation and production is only 130 days or four months.

Encouraged by high yield, the farmers of these areas have decided to go for this particular cash crop and a scheme has been undertaken to cultivate groundnut in two thousand acres of land in the coming kharif season, it is learnt.

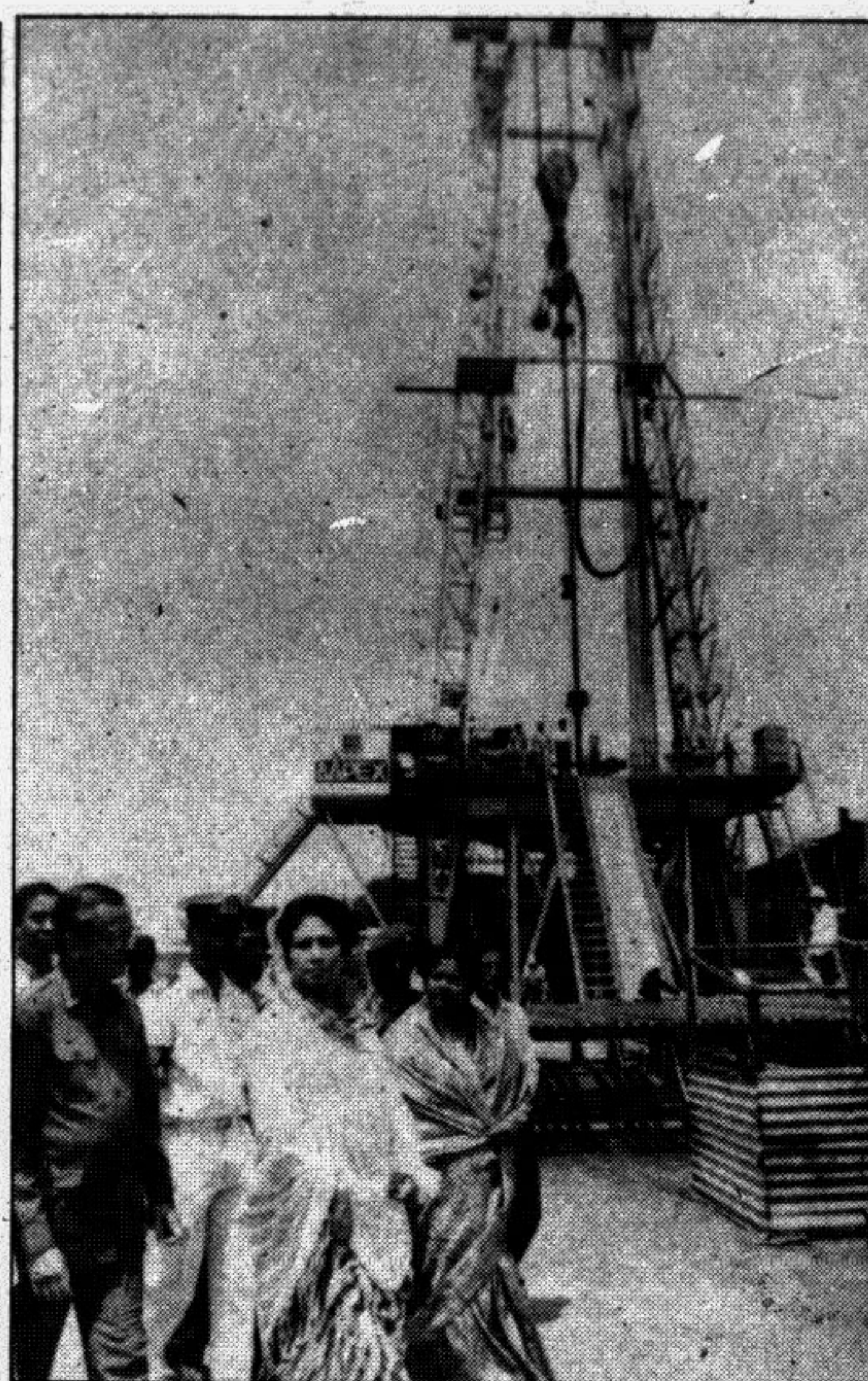
Draw backs in betel  
leaf production

Cultivation of betel leaf has been facing setback in Kushtia district putting the growers in a pitiable condition.

Shortage of inputs, high rate of carrying cost, paucity of loan and marketing facilities are the causes.

About 40 to 50 maunds of oil cake are required for one bigha of cultivable land of this product. Shades used for plantation of betel leaf are required to be changed frequently but high cost of bamboo, which is sold at Taka 90 each, is also contributing to the draw backs.

Lastly absence of proper marketing facilities for the product has put the growers in a discouraging position and its usual high cost fails to attract customers.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia inspecting the gas exploration field in Char Borhanuddin at Shahbazpur well site during her visit to Bhola district recently. — Star photo

## All that stood mowed down ..

From A M Khan

For the four thousand residents, the name of Inani village has become synonymous with destruction and hunger. Some 36 kilometer away from Cox's Bazar town, every inch of Inani has been destroyed by Monday's cyclone.

Houses, educational institutions, standing crops, trees and all that stood on the ground have been mowed down.

The residents of Inani were now virtually living under the open sky in makeshift shanties.

During a trip to Inani Wednesday, this correspondent saw half-fed men, women and children waiting in front of the Jumiapalang Union Parishad office and trying to get a dwindling supply of relief goods that had arrived only that morning.

Doling out chira (flattened rice), gur (molasses) and pulse, the Union Parishad

Chairman Ahmad Sharif said, all the 28,000 villagers of his union were more or less affected by the cyclone.

In contrast to the damage, the amount of relief goods supplied from the district authorities was very small, he pointed out.

Abdur Rahman, a 60-year-old menial labour of the locality, endorsed the statement of the chairman and said, food and housing materials were urgently needed.

In Inani, the first supply of relief arrived at about 1 pm Wednesday.

Each of the 266 families of Inani received 3.5 kilogram of rice, one kg of pulse, chira, gur and biscuits.

The situation was the same in the neighbouring Rumkhapalang, Chota Inani, Nidania, Shafr Beel, Patuatak, Bailakhali, Roangkhal and Mankhali villages.

## Mosharraf to students

Resist those who work  
against democracy

DAUDKANID (Comilla), May 6: Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain Wednesday urged the opposition to make the Jatiya Sangsad effective by ensuring their active part in it to help sustain the process of development and strengthen the parliamentary democracy in the country.

"Jatiya Sangsad is the main focal centre of national development and it is the highest forum of resolving any national issue," the energy minister said, adding "parliamentary democracy cannot be meaningful in any way by boycotting the Jatiya Sangsad". "Only Jatiya Sangsad should be used as the centre for solving any issue but not any other means", he expressed.

The energy minister was addressing a student rally at Gouripur Munshi Fazlur Rahman Degree College on the occasion of the installation ceremony of the college student union in Daudkandi of Comilla.

Chaired by Principal of the college Professor Tofazzal

Hossain the rally was also addressed, among others, by general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatradal and DUCSU AGS Nazimuddin Alam, Vice-President of Comilla BNP, Obaidul Hoq Bhuyan, Information and Research Secretary of Chhatradal Shajahan Hawlader Sujon, Chhatradal leaders Moshataq Ahmed, Rafiqul Islam Shikder and Nasrullah Khan Junaed, out-going VP of the college Jahangir Alam and newly elected VP Hasan Jamal Iqbal.

Referring to the opposition demand of caretaker government the energy minister said, there is no provision of such government in the constitution. He said, the demand of caretaker government is not only unconstitutional but also a clear-cut violation and threat to the sacred constitution. He alleged that the objective of the demand for caretaker government was to create political turmoil in the country aiming at jeopardising the process of democracy and fishing in the troubled water.

Dr Mosharraf Hossain said, a party which killed democracy by imposing one party rule BAKSAL when it was in power has again been hatching conspiracy of destroying the parliamentary democracy. He said late president Ziaur Rahman had introduced multi-party democracy in the country and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had introduced parliamentary democracy. "The BNP is committed to upholding the plaque of democracy in the country at any cost."

Terming the students as the forerunners in the drive of establishing democracy, the energy minister called upon them to build strong resistance against any attempt by any quarter to hinder the process of country's development and adventure of democracy.

Nazimuddin Alam said, "Awami League will again kill democracy if it is voted to power." Chhatradal would resist any ill-motives of any quarter to jeopardise democracy and the keep the country hostage to their foreign masters, he categorically said.

Clash disrupts  
Aricha ferry  
services

ARICHA (Manikganj), May 6: Thousands of passengers remained stranded for hours as ferry services in Aricha-Nagarbari and Aricha-Daulatdia routes were disrupted due to a clash between ferry and bus workers here today, reports UNB.

BIWTC sources said ferry services in the two routes remained suspended from 2 pm to 7 pm due to the clash that ensued following assault on a driver during an altercation over loading a bus onto a vessel.

They said one of the workers of the ferry vessel Shahjalal beat up truck driver Sohrab Hossain.

Later in the evening, ferry services resumed following a fruitful meeting between labour leaders and BIWTC authorities.

## District roundup

## NARAIL

'We need freedom  
of religion'

May 6: Environment and Forest Minister Akbar Hossain has called upon all to remain alert against any attempt to disrupt productions, development and socio-economic uplift programmes, says BSS.

The environment minister was speaking as chief guest at a religious conference of Mathua community at Joypur Tarak Chand Asram recently.

Akbar Hossain said, there was no communalism in Bangladesh. The concerted participation of the Bangladesh, irrespective of religion and caste in the Liberation War had uprooted the elements of communalism in Bangladesh.

"We no longer need secularism rather, we need freedom of religion," the minister added, due to some pragmatic steps taken by the present government, the minorities in Bangladesh were enjoying religious harmony which the outside world appreciated on many occasions.

Local BNP leader Advocate Mobul Hossain and DUCSU Leader Khandakar Jahangir Alam also spoke on the occasion.

Earlier, the minister laid foundation of JCG Syed Mosharraf Junior Secondary School at Joypur and also visited a nursery project at the Jessore forest range.

## MAGURA

Taka 53.8 lakh  
sanctioned to  
improve road link

May 6: Local Government and Engineering Department has sanctioned Taka 53.80 lakh for completion of 21 projects in the district during the current fiscal year under the annual development programme, reports UNB.

District LGED Executive Engineer informed that out of the total amount, Taka 28.80 lakh has been sanctioned for construction of 19 bridges and culverts on Magura-Narail road and the rest of the amount of Taka 25 lakh has been sanctioned for construction of two parts of the same road.

The work is progressing fast and is expected to be completed within June. A large number of unemployed labourers are engaged for the completion of the projects.

With the implementation of the projects road communication facilities of the district will be improved to a great extent.

## LALMONIRHAT

Massive literacy  
programme

May 6: About 30,000 adult illiterate persons are being imparted literacy in this northern district under the government strategy, "universal education for all citizens by 2000 A.D.", reports BSS.

A pioneering project has been launched with the initiative of Deputy Commissioner Kazi Farid Ahmed to wipe out illiteracy from the district within one year's time from now.

The programme was initiated on April 12 last and it is expected that a total of 26,80,000 illiterate persons in this district will be educated within a year's time in the wake of massive campaign now under way.

A total of 969 centres for mass literacy in primary schools of 42 unions and three primary schools of local pourashava area being used for the purpose. Volunteers are training the adult illiterates everyday from 7 to 9 PM.

## MOULVIBAZAR

Children suffer  
from eye, skin  
diseases

May 6: Hundreds of children in all the six thanas of the district are suffering from eye, skin and gastro-intestinal diseases, medical source said, reports UNB.

Besides, at least 300 people have been attacked by blood dysentery during the last few days in the district, the sources added.

A large number of patients are pouring into the private clinics, hospitals and chambers of private physicians in Sreemangal, Barlekha, Kamalganj and sadar thanas every day.

The sources said, paucity of drinking water and widespread consumption of adulterated foodstuff are the main reasons behind the outbreak of the diseases.

Lack of necessary medicines in the hospital and health complexes has aggravated the situation, they added.

Local people have urged the authorities to take necessary steps to combat the spread of the diseases.

## NARSINGDI

One stabbed  
to death

May 6: A man was stabbed to death by unknown miscreants in a tea stall at Charsubuddi bazar in Raipur thana last week, police said Friday, reports UNB.

The victim identified as Nuru Miah, 48 of Hasnabad village in the thana, was attacked by a gang of miscreants when he was taking his tea at the bazar tea stall.

The assassins stabbed him several times at 12 noon on April 12 and later chopped his body into pieces with a ramda, witnesses said.

The cause behind the killing could not be known.

A case has been filed in this connection with the local police but none has been arrested so far.

## BARGUNA

Pollution of  
environment

May 6: Unabated environmental pollution in the rural and urban areas of the district is threatening public health for quite a long time, says UNB.

Bad smell from cowdung and use of kutcha latrine in the rural areas of the district are causing air pollution.

It has been found that villagers unaware of air pollution effects, store cowdung adjacent to their houses from which emits bad odour and pollute the air.

During processing of raw jute the air pollution is severe. Farmers rot jute in the ponds, tanks and pools near their houses which causes serious air pollution until the period of washing of the rotten jute plants, environment experts said.

Unhealthy sanitary conditions, filthy drains and latrines throughout the municipal area further add to the environmental pollution.

Absence of slaughtering houses and indiscriminate slaughtering of sick and old cattle almost everywhere in the town are also polluting the area with germs and bacteria.

## GAZIPUR

Students awarded  
scholarship

May 6: Results of the merit test of the students of classes eight, nine and ten were published recently. The Badakalamosher Janakalyan Somity organised this test recently to award stipend among the students, says a press release.

Mohammad Mostafa Kamal, Mohammed Mizanur Rahman and Khadiza Parveen, Mohammed Abul Hossain, Lutfur Rahman & Farzana Akhter stood first, second and third respectively. Each of them were awarded in cash.

The stipend was distributed in a function held recently. Former Chairman of the Gachha Union, Dr Mahfuzur Rahman was the chief guest while noted social worker, Mojibur Rahman was the special guest. The chief adviser of the somity and the former chairman of the Gachha Union, Mohammed Moin Uddin Mia were in the chair. The headmaster, teachers of the school and the elite of the locality were present on the occasion.

## FARIDPUR

Agri fair  
concludes

May 6: A four-day agricultural exhibition to welcome the Bangla new century was concluded on Friday at Madhukhal thana, reports UNB.

Arranged by the thana agriculture office, the fair was formally inaugurated by M A Rouf, MP while Deputy Director of Agriculture Extension Department attended as chief guest.

At least 70 food items made of soyabean, potato and maize and a giant taro of 40 kgs, a sweet gourd of 39 kgs, papaya of nine kgs along with 250 varieties of different agricultural produce were on display.

A large number of people including women and children visited the fair with much enthusiasm.

Thana Agriculture officer distributed the prizes among the best stalls and individual winners.

Another report adds: A meeting of the BCS (General Education) Association of Rajendra University College was held at the college premises on April 25.

Chaired by the unit President and Principal of the college Prof M Shamsur Rahman, the meeting expressed resentment over the non-fulfilment of their 16-point demand by the government.



These children of Chakma tribal returnees have now started attending school in the Tarabunia area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.