

## 4 killed, over 40 injured in road mishaps

From Staff Correspondent  
SYLHET, Sept 26: A 40-year old businessman was killed and two others were injured when a speeding truck rammed into a roadside saloon at Nairopul area of Sylhet town Sunday night.

The accident occurred at about 11 pm. The victim, Chand Miah, was declared dead when he was rushed to the Sylhet M A G Osmany Medical College Hospital.

In another accident, a truck driver was killed and at least forty others received injuries Sunday afternoon on Sylhet-Golapganj road. The truck from Golapganj was on way to Sylhet town when it collided head-on with a passenger bus at Kuchai, about three miles off Sylhet town. The truck driver, Safar Uddin, 40, was declared dead and 28 injured were admitted to the medical college hospital.

A BSS report from Tangail adds: Two persons were allegedly killed and seventeen others were injured in a road accident recently near Dhalla on Dhaka-Tangail highway.

The accident occurred when a bus skidded off the road. The injured persons were admitted to Kumudinee hospital. A case was registered with Mirazpur thana.

## Two awarded 10 yrs' RI in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Sept 26: Two people were sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment each in two separate cases for possessing illegal arms, court sources said Sunday, reports UNB.

According to prosecution story, police on patrol duty in village Kashmir in thana arrested Asir, Anwarul and Masum alias Milton on July 7 last year and recovered a pipe gun from their possession.

A case was filed and police after investigation submitted charge-sheet against them.

After examining the witnesses and records Assistant Tribunal Judge awarded 10 years RI to Asir and acquitted two others last week.

In another case, the same Judge convicted one Tayeb Ali and sentenced him to 10 years RI for possessing illegal arms and acquitted two others. He was also fined Tk 2000 in default, to suffer two months more.

## Tk two lakh looted from shops, 4 hurt

KISHOREGANJ, Sept 26: A gang of armed miscreants attacked two shops at Nandail thana headquarters in broad day light and looted cash Tk two lakh on Friday, reports UNB.

At least four people including one shop-owner were injured in the attack. They beat the employees of shops and hit with *ramdao* on the head of the one shop-owner, Rabindra Paul injuring him seriously.

According to witnesses, armed miscreants numbering about 50 led by one Abdul Berek, stormed the shops of Rabindra Paul and Anil Paul at about 2 pm.

On hearing the hue and cry, the people of the bazar and nearby village chased the miscreants and managed to catch 15 of them.

Later, police came to the spot and arrested them. A case was registered with Nandail police under Anti-terrorism Act.

## Number of dropouts in schools falling

RAJBARI, Sept 26: State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum said, the number of dropout students in primary schools have been decreasing in the country, says UNB.

This was the result of the priority given by the government in this sector to ensure education for all, she added.

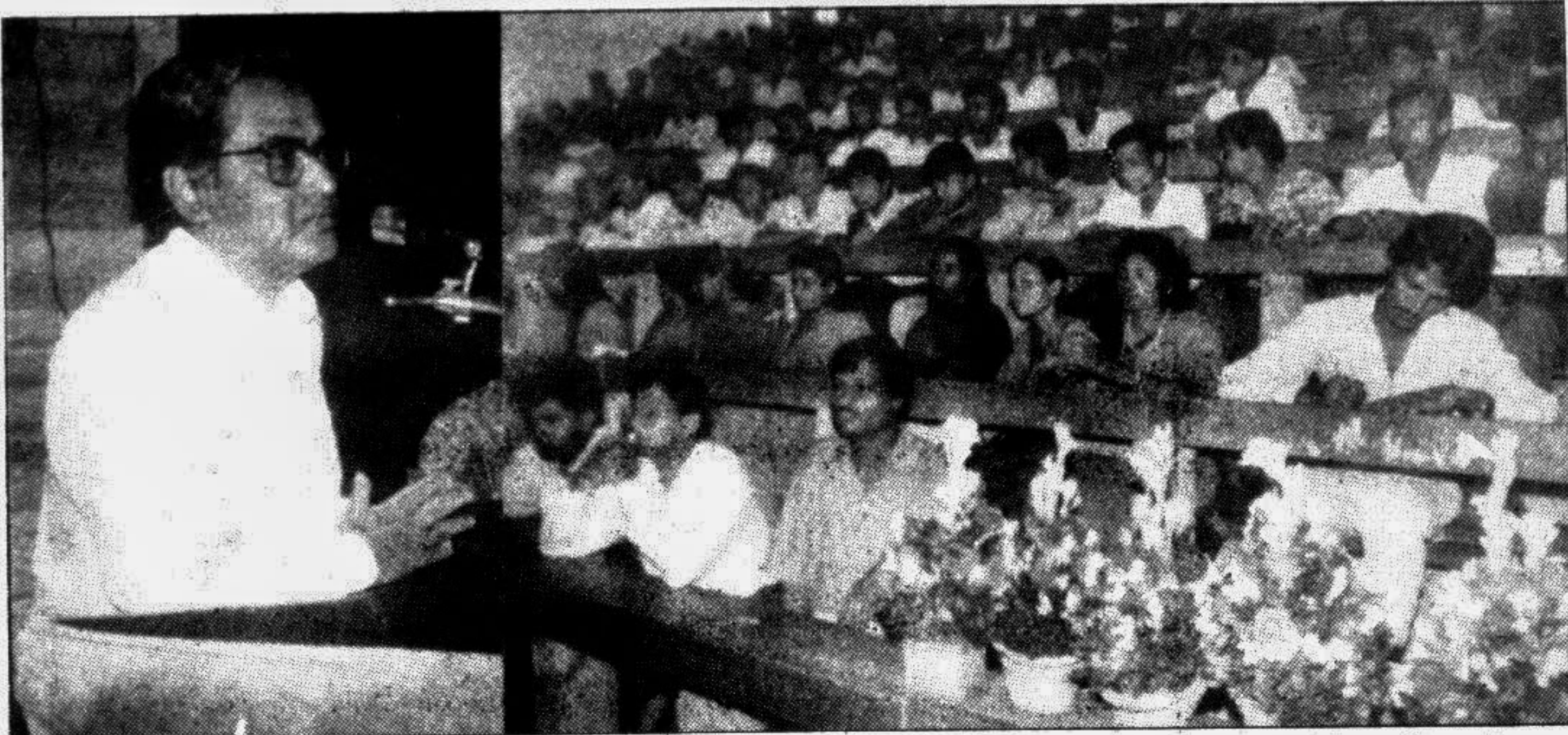
Prof Jahanara Begum was addressing a meeting while inaugurating the Shahidnagar Primary School at Bohorpur on Saturday. UP chairman Habibur Rahman presided, said an official handout.

She said Food for Education Programme of the government has been launched in the country to hold the students in the schools.

Referring to the need for women education, the state minister said, "without educating the half portion of population, country's expected national development can not be achieved."

She said, the present government believed in politics of development. But a section of opposition parties were trying to hinder the political stability of the country.

She called upon the people to be well alert against evil designs of the vested quarters



Professor M Badiul Alam, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Chittagong University is addressing the reception and farewell meeting for the students of the Department of Physics held recently at the Science Gallery. — CU photo

## Continuous drought

# Aman paddy worth Taka 10 crore likely to be damaged in Pabna

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Sept 26: Due to an unprecedented and continuous drought agriculture production has been badly affected in Pabna district.

According to an official source, the district is going to face a net loss of paddy worth Taka ten crore during the current season due to drought. However, unofficial estimates put the loss worth exceeding Taka 25 crore to the agriculture production sector alone in this northern district due to both drought and recent flood in the river Padma.

The impact of such crop failure is disastrous for the district so far as its economy is concerned. About 60 per cent of the marginal farmers have been affected badly and, since they have already invested whatever they had, they find no other means to cultivate alternate crops. The landless peasants are worst hit since they have been completely unemployed. The number of such unemployed agri-labourers exceeds one lakh. These one lakh agricultural labourers, along with their dependants, numbering about five lakh more, have been thrown into

utter miseries with no alternative arrangements for their rehabilitation.

Meanwhile, sudden rise in the prices of grains have further aggravated the situation.

According to the Agriculture Extension Department (AED) of Pabna zone, the target of cultivating transplanted aman paddy in the district on 41,326 hectares of land could not be achieved due to continuous drought and flood in river Padma. The AED officials said that cultivation of the said crop could be possible on over 35,969 hectares of land out of the above mentioned targeted area. They further said that of

Taka ten crore.

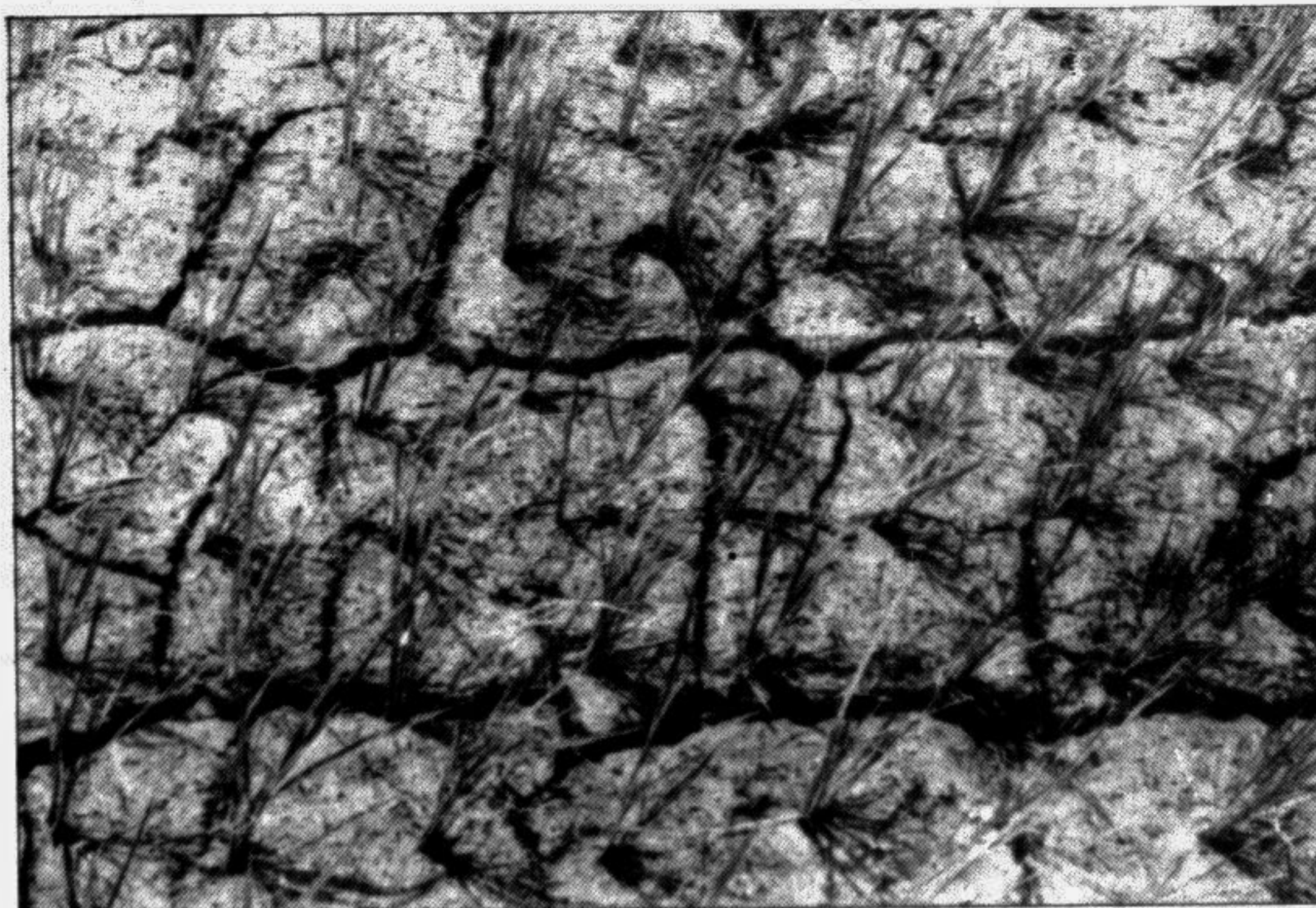
Affected areas, according to the department, are Pabna sadar, Atgharia, Ishurdi, Chatmohar, Bhangoora, Faridpur, Santhia and Sujannagar thanas of the district.

Relief for the middle and poor peasants and Food For Work programme are badly needed to rehabilitate those rural people.

Our correspondent from Chuadanga adds: Standing transplanted aman paddy cultivated on over 30 thousand hectares of land in four thanas of Chuadanga district are likely to be damaged due to persisting drought prevailing in the district.

Deputy Director of the district Agriculture Extension Department Mohammad Monsur Rahman said, "we are trying our best to mobilise the cultivators of the district to use their deep tubewells, shallow tubewells for the irrigation purpose so that they can overcome the current water crisis." He has also asked his thana level officers and field workers to visit the villages and talk to the cultivators for using their machines. There are over 400 deep tubewells, 8000 shallow tubewells and about 500 pumps which can supply water to the drought hit aman paddy fields.

Another report from Jhenidah adds: Production of



A drought affected crop field.

the cultivated area of 35,969 hectares, a total of 23,180 hectares of land could be put under irrigation network facilities and the remaining 12,789 hectares have fallen outside irrigation area. Due to drought, crop (aman paddy) on 12789 hectares of land was totally damaged.

The Agriculture Extension Department has further estimated that out of the targeted area of 46,000 hectares of land for cultivation of traditional variety of aman paddy, about 9,000 hectares have been severely affected by drought and already there has been complete damage of crops on about 2,000 hectares during the period and crop on the remaining land may meet similar fate as there is no sign of rainfall yet.

According to the estimates prepared by the AED, Pabna Zone, traditional variety and transplanted variety together on 4,000 hectares of land suffered complete damage worth

During the current season a total of 30 thousand hectares of land have been brought under transplanted aman paddy cultivation in four thanas of the district which include Chuadanga sadar, Alamdanga, Chamuhuda and Jibanagar. However for want of adequate rainfall the standing transplanted aman paddy are likely to be damaged. During the last 15 days there has been no significant rainfall in the district.

The irrigation facilities available are mainly used during the dry seasons for cultivation of Borro paddy and wheat. During the last rainy season the rainfall in the district was also insufficient as a result the cultivation target of transplanted aman paddy in the district failed.

Visiting some of affected areas it was found that the crop fields still appeared green, and if it rains now the transplanted aman paddy could be saved.

When contacted the

aus and transplanted aman paddy will be dropped by 10 to 20 per cent in the current season due to prevailing drought in the district.

Abnormal fall in rainfall throughout the district has seriously affected the cultivation of Aus and T-Aman, farmers said.

According to the Agriculture Extension Office here, the production target - 2.09 lakh metric tons of paddy during the current season - would not be achieved, as 74,172 hectares out of 84,510 hectares of land could somehow be brought under cultivation in the district.

When contacted, sources at Met-Office in Dhaka said that the rainfall is less due to the end of the current monsoon. Rainfall during September 2 to October 2 in Khulna Division will range in between 180 and 230 mm.

The normal rainfall in the division for the period is 236 mm, it added.

## Monument in honour of martyrs of Liberation War

COMILLA, Sept 26: A monument in honour of the martyred of the country's Liberation War is being erected at Comilla Victoria College premises, says UNB.

Commerce Secretary A H Mofazzal, president of the Old Victorians, an association of former students of Comilla Victoria College, has laid the foundation stone recently. A good number of government and non-government officials and local elite were present on the occasion.

The extra-ordinary memorial, designed by freedom fighter and Prof of BUET, Architect Nizam Uddin Ahmed, is expected to be unveiled by the third week of next month, said an official handout.

## Two dams cut in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 26: District administration Saturday cut two dams built on the mouth of the Kanai river in Shahjapur thana by supporters of the ruling party, reports UNB.

Police said, eight local leaders of BNP had built the dams for pisciculture early this year causing disruption of river traffic from Belkuchi to Shahjapur and Chouhali routes as well as water logging in the area.

The district administration ordered the removal of the dams as demanded by the local people. Three ruling party MPs of Shahjapur, Belkuchi Kamarkhand Chowhali supported the move.

The dams were cut in presence of district officials, police from Shahjapur, Chouhali and Belkuchi thanas and several thousand people of the locality.

## Minister visits drought-hit areas

RANGPUR, Sept 26: Housing and Public Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia visited drought-hit areas of Taraganj and Peerganj thanas on Sunday and urged the people to face the natural calamities with courage, says UNB.

He also assured them of supplying agricultural loan and necessary inputs on easy terms and said that concerned authority has already been directed in this regard.

## 466 tons of wheat allotted for implementation of 273 schemes

MAJDEE COURT (Noakhali), Sept 26: A total of 466 tons of wheat have been allotted for implementation of 273 schemes in six thanas and three pourashavas of the district under the ongoing Food for Works Programme, reports UNB.

Official sources said, the projects included repair of rural roads, earth filling of educational institutions and clearing of water hyacinths from the ponds and lakes.

Under the programme 48 tons of wheat were sanctioned for 22 schemes in Chatkhil thana, 116 tons of wheat for 68 schemes in Begumganj thana, 45 tons for 20 schemes in Companiganj thana, 73 tons for 35 schemes in Hatiya thana, 51 tons for 33 schemes in Senbag thana and 112 tons for 68 schemes in Sadar thana.

## Ghanis face extinction in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Sept 26: For want of working capital, patronisation and non-availability of necessary inputs the bullock driven mini oil mills locally known as "ghani" business of Satkhira district are on the verge of extinction rendering unemployment to many families engaged in this traditional profession for generations.

Being unable to cope with the problems many oilmen of all the seven thanas namely, Kalaroa, Tala, Sadar, Debhata, Assassuni, Kaligonj and Shymanagar of the district have already given up their profession while others also are following.

It is gathered that oil production using ghanis has been the main occupation of some 5000 families through out the district for many years. But now a days they are hardly able to carry on their profession due to scarcity of inputs as well as fund.

While talking to this correspondent one Hossain Ali, an old man involved in this profession of Sadar thana said, he was thinking of giving up this age-old Profession because of poor return. He further said, the price of oil seeds, bullock and other materials for making ghani had increased several

times during the last few years. As a result, production cost of edible oil produced as the ghanis are not commensurate with the market price of oil.

When contacted another oilman, Asgar Ali of Kalaroa thana said he had been engaged in this profession from very early days when he was only 12. Being unable to earn bread for his family of eight members he has already given up the profession. Now he sells edible oil net supplied from the ghanis.

Abdur Rashid, a middle aged oilman of Tala thana, also gave up his profession and now has chosen to pull rickshaw. Same is the case with several hundred other oilman of the district who have become either days labourers or rickshaw or van pullers.

It deserves mention that bullocks are essential for running the ghanis. However, most of the ghani owners can not afford to buy bullocks as they are expensive. The oilmen are also facing fuel shortages.

Procedure of bank loan disbursement is too complicated, they say. The oilmen are left with no other alternative but to borrow money from money lenders or *mahajans* at much higher rates of interest.

## Poor services offered by PHED in Kushtia dist

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Sept 26: Despite loss of innumerable lives caused by diarrhoeal disease every year in the district the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) is still allegedly ignoring to ensure supply of safe drinking water, it is learnt.

The department is responsible for installing tube wells, repairing the disordered tube wells and maintain them properly to ensure adequate supply of pure water for the rural people who constitute 85 per cent of the total population.

But it is alleged that the officials hardly visit rural areas to inspect the operation of the tube wells and take effective measures to stop rampant stealing of spare parts and repair and replace of the same.

As a result, the number of disordered tube wells in the areas are increasing sharply causing untold sufferings to the people.

At present more than one thousand tube wells remain out of order. Most of the rural people are forced to take wa-

ter from ponds, rivers and canals and became easy prey to various intestinal diseases including diarrhoea and dysentery.

The villagers urged the concerned authorities to look into the matter and take immediate steps to ensure smooth supply of pure water in the rural areas.

Meanwhile, kutcha latrines have been posing threat to public health in the district headquarters for quite a long time. Human excreta are reportedly seen polluting the environment. Flies, mosquitoes and other insects carry germs spreading the diseases among the town dwellers.

Many kutcha latrines have been set up by the side of the roads, rivers and canals much to the inconvenience of the local people.

When contacted, the district Public Health and Engineering Department officials said they had adequate stocks of rings and slabs for setting up of low cost sanitary latrines.

## Extend services to remote areas of country : Kamal

FARIDPUR, Sept 26: Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf called upon the voluntary organisations like Lions Club to extend their services to the remote areas of the country, says UNB.

The Minister was addressing the installation ceremony of the district Lions Club on Friday at Kabi Jasimuddin Hall. State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum was present as special guest.

Presided over by Advocate Sarwar Jan Miah the function was also addressed by newly installed District President of Lion Shahajada Miah and Lion Fakir Asraf.

Referring to government efforts to develop education, health and other social sectors of the country, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf said, gov-

ernment allocated a large chunk of national budget for this purpose. He also said, the non-government organisations (NGOs), voluntary organisation like Lions Club should supplement the government efforts by their programmes and activities to combat problems like illiteracy, blindness, gastro-intestinal diseases like diarrhoea, cholera and iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) like goitre.

The Minister expressed his satisfaction that the voluntary organisations and NGOs have been doing commendable services in many areas. In this respect he lauded the initiative of Lions Club of Bangladesh for establishment of Kidney Hospital in Dhaka at a cost of Taka 10 crore. He assured that government would extend all possible support for commissioning the project.

## Mongla Port faces environmental hazard

Gouranga Nandy writes from Khulna

MONGLA PORT (Khulna): Sept 26: The second seaport of our country, is now facing an environmental hazard. Part of the Sundarbans is also being threatened. Besides, sources say, channel of the port is also going to be silted off. This, however, is a regular problem of Mongla Port. This time, on the 14th August, Panamanian flag ship M V Pavlina-I caught fire, and then sank in the river Pasur. This accelerated the channel problem situation.

Due to the sinking of the ship, a huge quantity of sand regularly carried by the high/low tides is being gathered there. As a result the river bed is fast silting up. Also, a huge quantity of crude oil which was in the engine tank of the sunken ship is floating on the river water now

and spreading out fast. The water is being polluted and, as Mr Mosharraf Hossain, Deputy Director of the Department of Environment based in Khulna, says already a large number of fishes are facing the danger of extinction and the adjoining forest, a threat to survival. He mentions that the loss, in terms of money will be around Tk. 100 crore.

The DD has visited 20-30 kilometers river side and forest area south of the port and found that the river-side grass has become black. Cattle grazing there will be affected. There are many shrimp beds on either side of the river. These shrimp hatcheries are connected with the river. When the polluted river water will enter into the hatcheries,

the effect will simply be damaging.

The polluted river water is flowing to the sea. As a result, sea water is also being at the mouth of the river polluted. So hilsa and other kinds of fishes there are also faced with the similar threat.

Sources from the mangrove forest, Sundarbans, say that about 50 sq. kilometers of the forest area has already been affected by the floating oil. Any kind of oil, as one knows, is just a deterrent to the normal growth of the Sundari, Gewa, and many other species of valuable trees. The Forest Department, however, is trying to collect actual data through a survey.

Mr Anisurul Karim, a distinguished Sundarbans expert,

who at present is working in a honey project funded by UNDP, says if the oil enters deep into the forest area, then Sundari trees will become the real victims. Because, this special species, very much depended on sweet-saline water, uses its upper roots for "breathing". During the high tide the floating oil comes in contact with its roots and chokes breathing.

We only hope that the respective departments and authorities must be able to contain the floating oil and remove the sunken ship to save the fish and forest resources and clear the port channel. Mongla Port and the Sundarbans, both so vitally important to our economy, certainly deserve optimum care from the government.



GOPALGANJ: Huge quantities of banned medicines were recently seized in the district town from a private car heading for the capital from Khulna. The drugs included 'Tidijesic' injection bottles. The value of the drug was estimated to cost about Tk 2.5 lakh. Two persons were arrested. — Star photo