

Serious power supply crisis in Pabna, industries hard hit

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Oct 3: Supply of electricity throughout the district of Pabna, specially in Pabna town, is inadequate resulting in frequent power disruption.

The supply remains disrupted for eight to ten hours without any prior notice to the consumers.

Miseries of people in this northern town became so much acute that they cannot perform their normal work both during day-time and also during the night. Students, including the examinees, cannot study. Emergency operations in the hospitals and clinics become quite impossible. Mills and factories either being compelled to stop production or resort to retrenchment of their staff and workers.

The traders and merchants of Pabna town, finding the situation quite insecure for them, are compelled, in many cases, to close their shops shortly

after sunset. Even smaller number of pedestrians are found to move in the town areas after sunsets. Women are hardly found on the town-streets after sunset.

"People are being compelled to purchase dynamo etc. as alternative means to keep their business running and unaffected due to lack of power-supply.

This situation, which became chronic and has been continuing for years together,

Frequent load shedding

KUSHTIA, Oct 3: Frequent power failure and load-shedding have become a regular feature in the town and adjoining areas causing much inconvenience to the town-dwellers and business community, reports UNB.

According to town-dwellers, hardly a day or night passes without power disruption. Almost every night electricity goes off plunging the entire town into darkness.

Erratic power supply has also affected production in the local mills and workshops. Irrigation work in the Irrigation block with power connection is also being affected at the harvesting stage.

The price-hike of essentials in the market is largely attributed to frequent power failure. Farmers cannot crush paddy or wheat due to erratic power supply.

Besides, fluctuation of voltage damages electronic goods. Inadequate street light has also aggravated the situation.

is also causing severe loss to the industrial units. New entrepreneurs are little attracted towards investing capital in industrial sector. The industrialists of Pabna, both individually and collectively, submitted memo to the local and external authorities of the PDB held meeting with them at different places, obtained numbers of assurances but virtually to no effect.

It is also very much surprising that when, during the nights, starting from evening, the town plunges into severe darkness, police also does not come forward to save the people from hands of criminals by way of intensifying police patrols.

Cinema halls have also been badly affected. Although all the cinema hall owners have already made alternative arrangements by procuring their own dynamos, number of cinema-goers has fallen abnormally as the town-streets remains dark.

People in their houses and residential quarters also feel quite unsafe. Even the male members hardly go out and remain inside their respective houses keeping all the doors and windows tightly closed.

The irregular supply of electricity has again caused another acute problem for the town-dwellers. Water-supply goes off due to such frequent power breakdown and it is alleged that the authorities of Water Supply Department under the Pabna Pourashabha have arranged water-supply for only three and four hours a day in different localities of the town.



SAVAR: Dhamrai police recently rounded up 10 activists of so-called Chokhbandha Party. — Star photo

Measures taken to prevent plague in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Oct 3: Chittagong City Corporation has undertaken some precautionary measures to prevent the outbreak of deadly disease plague in the city, reports BSS.

In this connection a meeting was held at the corporation conference room with city Mayor Alhaj ABM Mahluddin Chowdhury in the chair.

It was decided in the meeting that two medical teams comprising seven members each will work round the clock at Chittagong air port and Fouzderhat Infectious disease Hospital from now on.

City dwellers have been requested to contact the chief health officer as soon as any symptoms of the disease are developed, the meeting decided.

Efficient management major lacunae in our society: Oli

CHITTAGONG, Oct 3: Communications Minister Oli Ahmed on Wednesday said that efficient management is one of the major lacunae in our society, reports UNB.

"Proper management in all steps and fields of personal, social and national life could contribute to the process of national development", Oli told the certificate awarding ceremony of a training course on executive development and fundamentals of management here.

Organised by the Chittagong centre of Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, the two-week training programme was attended by 41 engineers of government offices and autonomous organisations who have covered minimum 10

years in their career.

"We, the fortunate section of the society who have got higher education at the tax money paid by the poor mass and patronage of state, must not forget responsibility we have to the less fortunate", the minister said.

"Instead of doing good to the human being awaiting our assistance we are making our fortunate", he said adding that the sense of self-seeking has overpowered our will to do something for the society.

Oli Ahmad said it was the time for self-searching and self-rectification. He said that we should be more responsible and dutiful at our respective levels to perform the task meticulously we are entrusted with.

10 Chokhbandha gang members arrested

From Our Correspondent

SAVAR, Oct 3: police arrested 10 activists of "Chokhbandha Party", an organised gang of kidnapers through massive raids in 40 villages in six unions of Dhamrai thana Thursday night.

More than 100 police personnel of Dhaka Reserve Battalion, Reserve Force and Dhamrai thana divided into 10 groups raided different dens of the gang at Kasura, Jadubpur, Baisakanda, Chowhat and Balia unions of the thana throughout the night and managed to nab the miscreants. The ASP of Savar circle, Abdullah Al-Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Dhamrai Police Station, Nazmul Haque, SI Haider Ali, SI Abdus Salam and ASI Kazi Khorsheed led the teams which started at 10.00 pm Wednesday and continued until 6.00 am Thursday. The arrested gang members were identified as Mobar Ali, 30, Mashud, 20, Dulal Miah, 20, Farid, 30, Labu, 25, Hazrat Ali, 40, Jalil, 35, Sirajuddin, 35, Amruruddin, 35 and Uzzal 40.

All of them were wanted involved in different criminal activities. Amiruddin was awarded five years imprisonment in absentia for committing a dacoity, police said.

Meanwhile, local people formed an "anti-crime committee". This committee will inform the police about any criminal activity of the gang.

A meeting between the local people and the police officials was held at Anali Khola village last Friday night. The SP, Abdur Rahman of Dhaka district, ASP, Abdullah Al-Mahmud of Savar circle and OC of Dhamrai Nazmul Haque attended the meeting.

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The meeting mainly discussed and planned to prevent any future criminal activities of the gang. The local people were given some guideline how to tackle situations Savar correspondent in case of any kidnapping.

Two commit suicide in Gaibandha

GAIBANDHA, Oct 3: Two people allegedly committed suicide and another housewife was kidnapped in the district, police said on Sunday, reports UNB.

According to family sources, a young girl Josna Rani daughter of Anil Chandra of Nijam Khan village in Sundarganj thana allegedly committed suicide by taking poison on Sept 12 following unbearable stomach pain.

Another old man Gendia Sheikh of Kazibari Sonatola village in Sadullapur thana allegedly committed suicide at his daughter-in-law's house on Sept 17 at Raghunathpur village in sadar thana hanging himself from the roof of the house. The reason behind the suicide could not be known.

Meanwhile, a housewife was kidnapped from Sirajpur village in Sadullapur thana by some unknown miscreants. The victim Anju Khatun, daughter of Azizur Rahman of Naldanga bazar was kidnapped while she was going to her husband's house in Rangpur on Sept 13.

Separate cases were lodged with the police.

Boy drowns in Gazipur

GAZIPUR, Oct 3: A boy drowned in a pond at village Gachha in Joydebpur thana on Tuesday, police said, report UNB.

The boy was identified as Korom Ali, 12, son of Khalil Fakir a worker of Nishat Jute Mills in Tongi.

On the day, Korom left his house to meet his father at Nishat Jute Mills at noon. But on the way he tried to pluck a lily from a pond and drowned following an attack of epilepsy. He was suffering from the disease for the last few years.

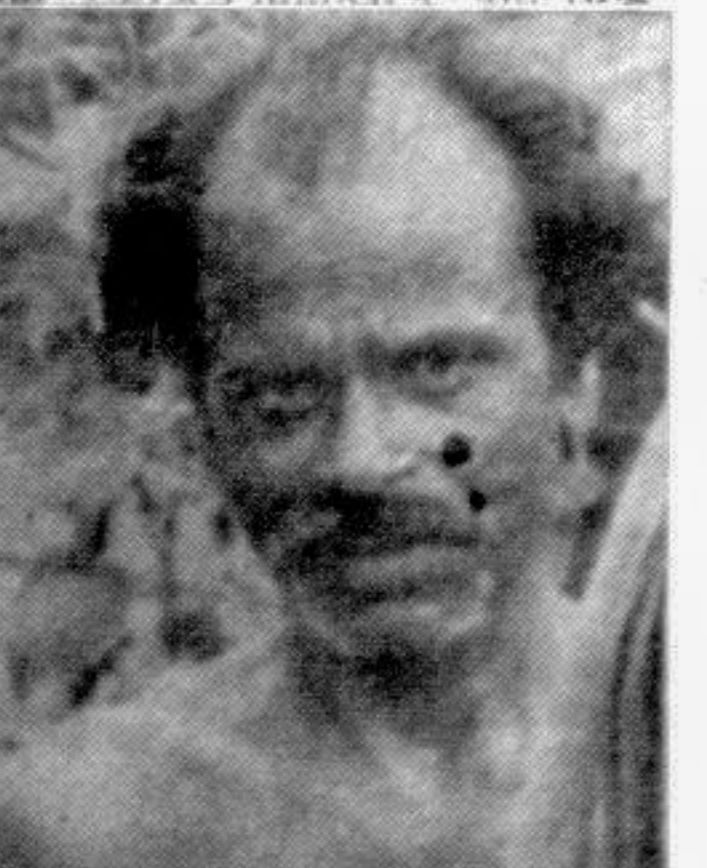
MUNSHIGANJ, Oct 3: What do Rohingyas in Teknaf, Biharis in Mohammadpur's Geneva Camp, and the new squatters in Baro Naupara in Lohajang have in common? They are all refugees. But unlike those in Teknaf, and Mohammadpur the squatters in Lohajang have no recognition as refugees.

They are the victims of atrocious erosion of the angry Padma. Even worse, they have no place to live in. At least the Biharis and the Rohingyas have some place to live in.

Kartik Mandal, 55, lives in a half-built temporary shelter at Naupara along with his wife and two sons. He lost his last piece of land in the Padma erosion, last year. He, along with 736 other families, moved to Naupara in 1992. Many of the local people objected to their settlement there. "No one wants us. We have no place to live in. Where do we go?" asks Mandal from Bhozgaon.

Shehr Banu, 49, also a victim of Padma erosion, has lost everything. She now breaks bricks earning Tk 40 a day on an average to buy bread for her four young sons and her sick husband. "This is increasingly becoming a burden for me. I cannot bear this pain any more," says Banu who once lived a happy life. "I had a milch cow and a small piece of land to plough. I needed no more, but Padma one day, put an end to all my dreams, explained Banu.

As every year, erosion in Dighirbari, Bangla Bazar and Hashail unions of the district has caused immense sufferings



Shehr Banu breaking bricks

Kartik Mandal to thousands of common people who lost their homesteads worth crores of taka. Erosion during the last three years has devoured hundreds of acres of land throwing thousands homeless and landless.

Lohajang, a well-known business centre since the British days fell prey to the Padma's cruelty. "We may not see the remaining part of the



These men are clearing remains of the government hospital building. The main building of the hospital stood where the cargo ship sails.

Dighali Bazar, the main business centre of the district, next year. Trans unions worth crores of taka take place here every week through mainly, kasha and thana, clothes trade. More than 1200 shops have been dislocated in the bazar since the start of the severe erosion three years ago.

About 1500 shops and scores of houses including mosques and madrasahs were



Shehr Banu breaking bricks

engulfed. The Lohajang Hospital, the police station, the historical Gandirmath, Banari High School, Hashail Bazar, Munshiganj-Muktarpur road and many other structures have been devoured causing loss of property worth Tk 130 crore, according to unofficial sources. The very existence of the telephone exchange at Naupara and whatever remains of Dighali Bazar area under threat this year.

Abdul Latif Mollah, 41, owner of a small tea stall, lost all his six rice and furniture shops. All this happened last year. This year too, he lost about 240 decimals of land. Mollah, father of three daughters and two sons, now runs a small restaurant selling tea and snacks. "I cannot afford any more to buy toys for my kids", says Mollah who once earned good profits but now hardly makes Tk 75 a day. "Was this the destiny" he asks himself. "My life has been ruined. I have nothing left", says Mollah, a bundle of despair.

The worst affected is the 20 kilometre length of river bank from Mawa in the west to Hashail in the east. Erosion starts from mid-June and continues until mid-October, as is the case with many other rivers in the country. The severity in Munshiganj is not



A number of rice wholesaler shops threatened by the river erosion in Naupara market.

"The change is already visible. Most of them have turned destitutes and have started begging, many have started stealing or even committing dacoities. It wasn't like this a few years ago. This impact on the society is more serious than that of the river bank erosion".

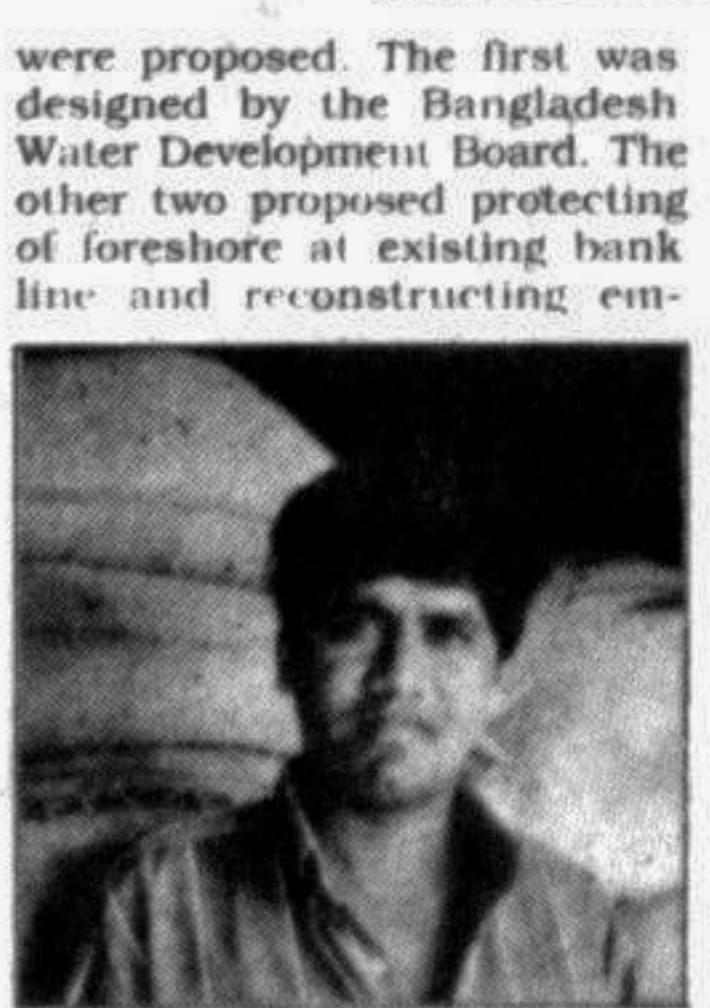


The erosion affected people settling in south Naupara.

All photos by A K M Mohsin

however, that high compared to the erosion in Sirajganj, Chandpur, Kishoreganj and Tangail. In terms of commercial importance Munshiganj would perhaps, stand third, after Sirajganj and Kishoreganj.

According to a study conducted by two foreign and one local engineering firms in March 1990, erosion in Munshiganj occurs at both banks due to wave attack during high river surges and not due to the banks collapsing into the deep scouring river channels. The study reports found that there is a foreshore in front of the river bank. The experts suggested that to prevent further erosion the growth of scour in the fore shore should be stopped. Based on an overall revetment, three alternative solutions



Shanto Maran

were proposed. The first was designed by the Bangladesh Water Development Board. The other two proposed protecting of foreshore at existing bank line and reconstructing embankment. Finally, a combination of the two sets of designs was selected which said that by means of cut and fill a suitable slope can be created on which a permanent embankment could be constructed. Its total cost would be around Tk 30 crore. The cost compared to the overall economic losses was peanuts. The government has, however, no approved project for implementation. It has done very little to protect Munshiganj from erosion, according to a number of local elites.



Shanto Maran, 40, a businessman by profession, moved his business sites seven times to escape erosion. The present location of his rice wholesale

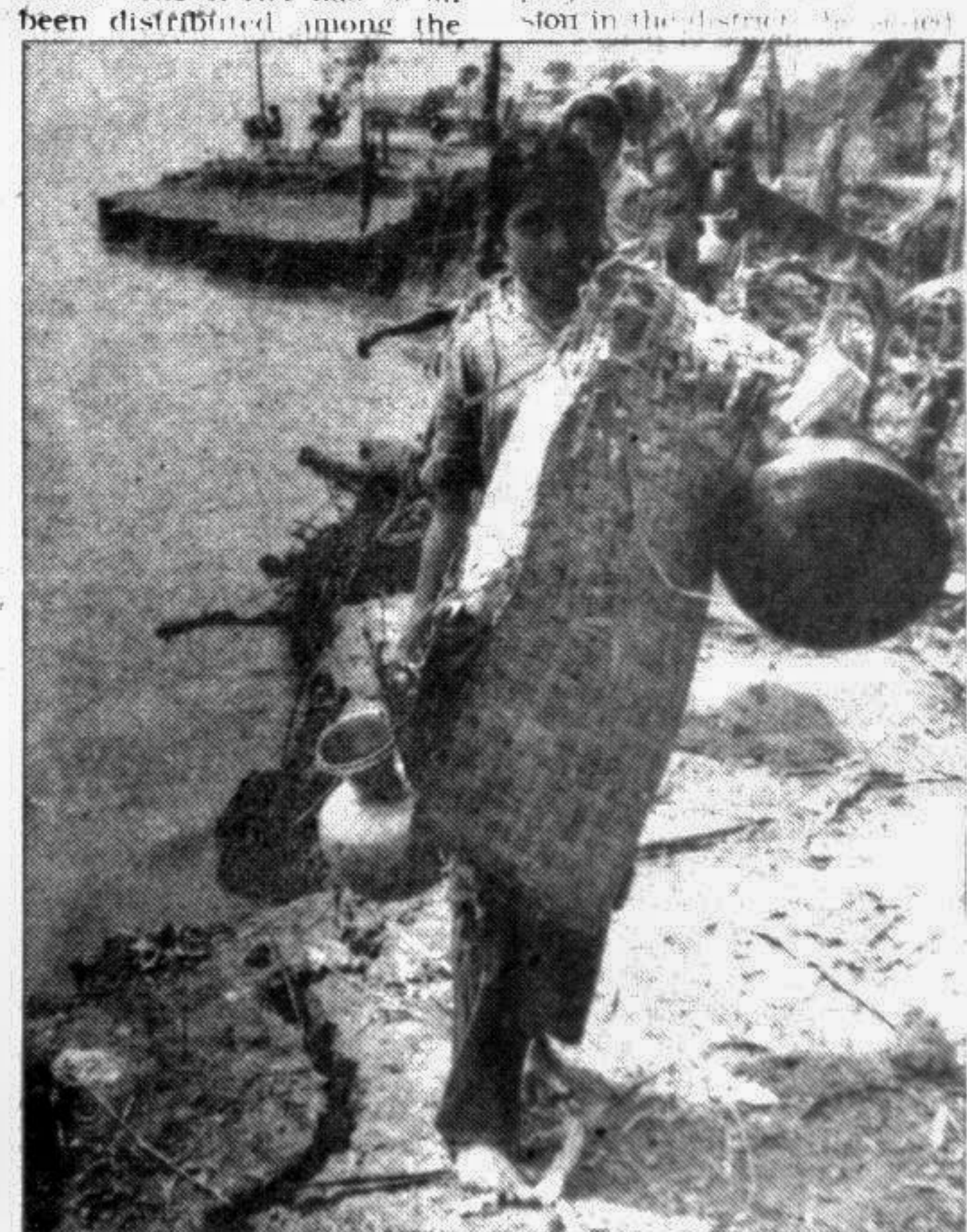
shop, only 200 yard from the river bank, doesn't look very safe. "Business is very dull. I never faced this kind of situation before", said Maran.

The settlement of the squatters has created another problem. It has changed the socio-economic condition of the society, said Md. Abdul

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Truck-loads of boulders left in the open sky. No one knows for what purpose



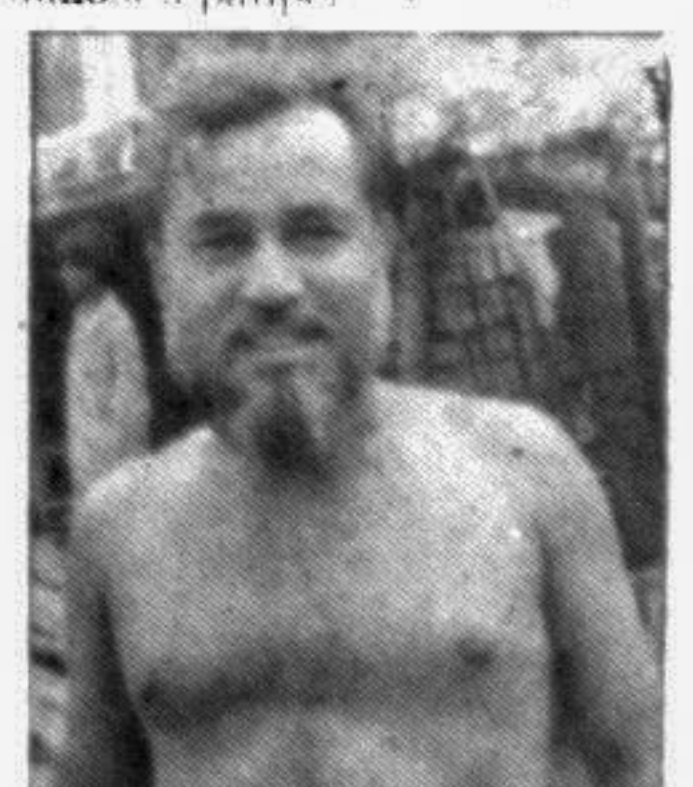
A sad departure

settlers in Naupara as relief. "But what shall we do with the grains, it's only temporary and helps only a few of us. We want a permanent solution to this problem. The loss is enormous. No one seems to be bothering about it".

The role played by the local Member of Parliament Wing Commander (Ret'd) Hameedullah Khan so far has been virtually zero. There have been many ministers from this district. They too have done precious little to save us", alleged a number of people. Motahar Ali, 46, said, "Till now all we have received are a few truck-loads of boulders, perhaps for use as decoration pieces".

The settlement of the squatters has created another problem. It has changed the socio-economic condition of the society, said Md. Abdul

"It seems, since nature has made us refugees at our own home we have to seek God's mercy to save us from His wrath. To look for help the government has so far proved futile", said one who was once a rich trader and now turned almost a pauper.



Abdul Zabbar Talukdar