

December 7, a red letter day in history of Chuadanga

Md Quamrul Arefin writes from Chuadanga

Dec 6: December 7 is a red letter day in the history of War of Liberation of the country as well as in the history of Chuadanga. On this day, 23 years ago, Chuadanga was liberated from the Pakistani Army occupation.

The situation on December 6 was very tense. Since early morning fighting erupted on both sides of Chuadanga: on the northwest and the northeast sides between the Freedom Fighters and the Pakistani Army.

It was between 10 am and 11 am on December 6, 1971 the Freedom Fighters who took shelter in Uzirpur, Pirpur and Fakir Para villages under Damurhuda thana of the then Chuadanga sub-division after receiving information that the Pak Army troops were heading towards Chuadanga from the then Pak Army bases at Damurhuda, Karpashdanga and Jibannagar. The Freedom Fighters decided that at any cost they have to check entrance of Pak Army in Chuadanga as it was a vital point for Freedom Fighters.

As decided by the Freedom Fighters mines were laid beneath the culvert on Chuadanga-Karpashdanga main road to stop enemy from crossing Karpashdanga. But due to some mistake the entire plan went down the drain as a villager, unaware of the mine, crossed the culvert with his cart. The mine blew up the culvert killing the man

sitting on both sides as planned to attack the enemy whenever they arrive.

In the meantime, the Pak Army reached near village Uzirpur and took position by the side of river Mathabhabha close to Chuadanga-Damurhuda main road. Here the enemy and the Freedom Fighters were engaged in a fierce face to face battle.

During the fighting the Freedom Fighters first opened fire on Pak Army. The Pak Army returned fire. Exchange of fire continued for hours. The Freedom Fighters, however, never advanced, nor did they let the enemy advance. This war tactics used by the Freedom Fighters held the Pak Army for about 4 to 5 hours.

The aim of this plan by the Freedom Fighters was just to keep the Pak Army engaged in the fighting with the Freedom Fighters delaying their advance.

In the meantime, a messenger was sent to Chuadanga town to see the real situation there. Another group of Freedom Fighters were then fighting with the Pak Army from village Pirpur.

After some time the messenger returned from Chuadanga and informed that Chuadanga was quite calm and the enemy troops were retreating from Chuadanga towards Alamdanga. Under such circumstances the Freedom Fighters stopped firing. They

The enemy troops stationed at Meherpur also retreated to come to Chuadanga. Meherpur was 18 miles from Chuadanga. Explosives were set up all along 18 miles from Chuadanga to Meherpur. As a result the Pak Army reached Chuadanga on December 6, at 6 o'clock in the evening on foot and later they left Chuadanga for Alamdanga the same night.

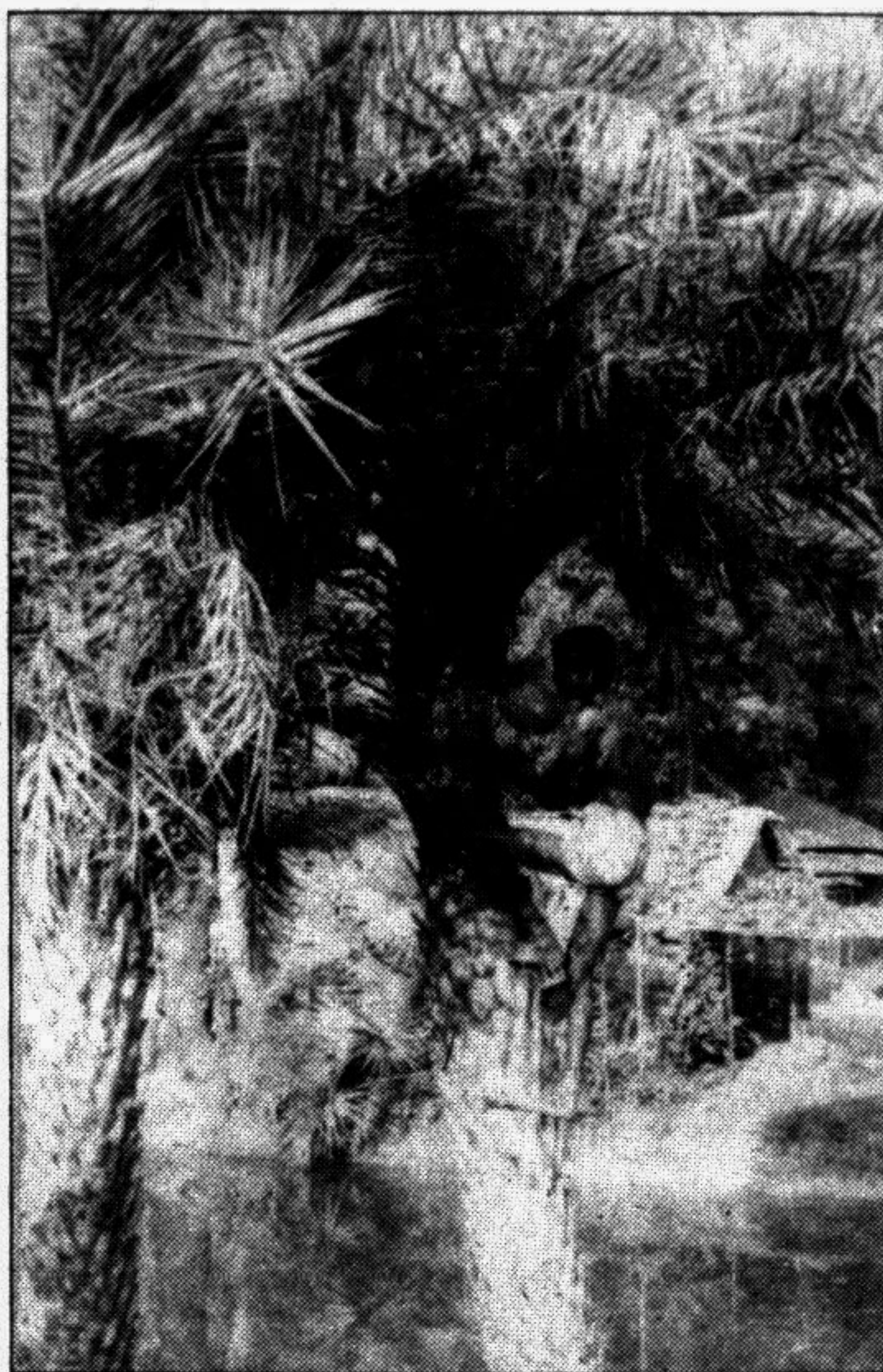
Before leaving Chuadanga the Pak Army left about 200 guns at local town football ground. Besides, on December 6 in the evening before leaving Chuadanga the Pak army blew up the eastern side of the river Mathabhabha by charging high powered explosives.

The entire Pak army stationed at Chuadanga left firing on some important places of Chuadanga town at night of which the residents were unaware.

Having had this information the Freedom Fighters arrived at Chuadanga from different sides and thus on December 7, 1971 Chuadanga was totally freed from the occupation of Pak army and liberated.

It may be noted here that as soon as the War of Liberation began on March 26, 1971 a four-member advisory committee was formed at Chuadanga to conduct the war. Chuadanga was the southwest war front. It was made the provisional (temporary) capital of Bangladesh during the War of Liberation.

The advisory committee



The delicious juice

From Our Correspondent

KURIGRAM, Dec 6: Bangladesh is a land of beauty and remains so even today. Nature has given many gifts to the people of the country.

Date-tree is one of the natural gifts. Juice is extracted from date-trees during winter. Date-juice is delicious. It is also used as raw material for manufacturing 'gur' (molasses).

Why date-tree gives juice only in winter? The scientists could not give answer to this question. The behaviour of date-trees has definite cultural affinity with the life and land of Bangladesh. During the winter or in late autumn, the farmers have their new harvest. As soon as harvesting is over, they celebrate Nabanno festival. During this season various kinds of *pithas* or cakes are made. The delicacy of *pithas* needs sweets either to be used in preparation of the *pitha* or to eat with *pitha*. Date-tree juice provides a tasteful sweet when boiled.

The date juice is called *ros*. When this juice is further boiled, it is solidified to make 'gur' or molasses, a delicious type of sugar.

The men who trim the date-trees to extract juice are called *gacchis*. The *gacchis*

climb on the trees and take out a portion of the bark on the top of the trunk. They use sharp *dao* or a special knife for this purpose.

The *gacchis* who are also artisans, do their duties in a superb manner. They are familiar in rural Bangladesh. They are easily recognisable with their sharp *dao* and a pitcher hanging from their waist belt.

When the trees start oozing out juice, they (*gacchis*) fit a small stick (*noil*) beneath the cut *chokh* so that the juice could find an easy route to flow inside the pitcher. The pitcher fixed to hold the juice in the evening. The date trees ooze out the juice throughout the night to be collected early in the morning. A tree gives two to four litres of juice even more every night, depending on its quality or location, it is observed.

Date-trees are now used as fuel in the most of the brick fields. The date *gur* may be exported with the adoption of modern technology. Date-trees on both sides of roads and railway tracks throughout the country should be nursed. It will not only maintain the tradition but also provide employment to 'gacchis'.

Second US visa lottery

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tive, family or employment preference.

There is a limit of seven per cent of the lottery visas (3,850) for the natives of any one foreign country.

Because some people who are picked in the lottery will not complete the visa application process or will be found ineligible for visas, the computer will pick applicants for more than the available number of visas. Those picked are numerically ranked in order of selection. If the visas are not filled by the initial selections, more names are randomly chosen.

Applicants who are not chosen in this year's lottery can apply again next year.

The individual requirements for visas awarded in the lottery are the same as for other immigration visas, with one added factor: Education.

Applicants must have at least a high school education or its equivalent, or, within the past five years, have had two years of work experience in an occupation that requires at least two years of training or experience.

Once a person is chosen in the lottery and completes all the documentation required, arrangements are made for a visa interview. Being picked in the lottery is not a guarantee of a visa, the official emphasized.

Spouses and minor children (under 21-year-old) of successful applicants may also apply for visas.

Like other visa applicants, lottery visa holders must show that they have the financial means to support themselves in the United States — a sponsor, job offer, or independent financial means.

The official noted that the worldwide total of 55,000 visas in this programme includes spouses and minor children of successful applicants. "There are a limited number of visas, so persons should not wait", once they are selected, to complete the visa process, he said.

US officials emphasized that applicants for the lottery must follow exactly the instructions for the entry, the size of the envelope and the mailing address, and be received during

the announced 30-day period.

For the lottery, applications must be submitted by regular mail or air mail only. Those submitted by hand, datafax, messenger or by any means requiring a form of special handling — such as registered mail, express mail or certified mail — will be disqualified.

On a plain sheet of paper, applicants should include (typed or clearly printed in English alphabet):

— applicant's full name; the date and place of birth of the applicant and the spouse or any minor children who might also wish to immigrate; the applicant's mailing address; and the applicant's native country if it is different from country of birth.

The mailing address must be clear and complete, since that is the address to which notification and instruction letter for persons selected for the visa process will be sent. A telephone number is optional, but useful.

A consular official noted that the mailing address need not be the applicant's home address. It can be a mail box or the 'in-care of' address of another person anywhere. The important thing, he stressed, is an address where the applicant can be reached.

There are no other requirements for entry information on the application. There is no entry fee for the lottery, and no signature is required.

The envelope must be a regular letter or business envelope. This is so the envelopes can be handled by the numbering machine for the lottery.

Typed or clearly printed in English alphabet in the upper left hand corner of the front of the envelope must be the applicant's native country, followed on the next lines by the applicant's full name and mailing address. This information must be the same name and mailing address of the applicant as shown on the application sheet.

The regional address for processing entries from Bangladesh and other Asian countries is:

DV-96 Program
National Visa Center
Portsmouth, NH 00210
USA

Jessore town freed today from enemy occupation

From Atiur Rahman

JESSORE, Dec 6: People of Jessore celebrates December 7 in the history of Liberation War of 1971 as deliverance day.

On this day, the town was liberated from Pakistan occupation forces without causing any bloodshed. The enemy forces retreated towards Khulna by vacating Jessore Cantonment previous night. It was indeed a surprise to all.

The allied forces leader, Sector Commander of 8, Major Manzur entered the town early morning. The Cantonment was found completely desolate. No human being, or any animal was seen on the town streets. Only buildings were standing with marks of damages caused by mortar shells during the war. Dead bodies and skeletons of men, women children were found all over the roads and lanes. The total atmosphere was very dreadful.

Within hours, the situation changed. The whole town became packed with surging crowds. They greeted brave Freedom Fighters and the Indian Army. They were welcomed as heroes. They breathed a sigh of relief and got a new life.



The enemy forces left Jessore town leaving hundreds of buildings damaged using tank shells. — Star photo

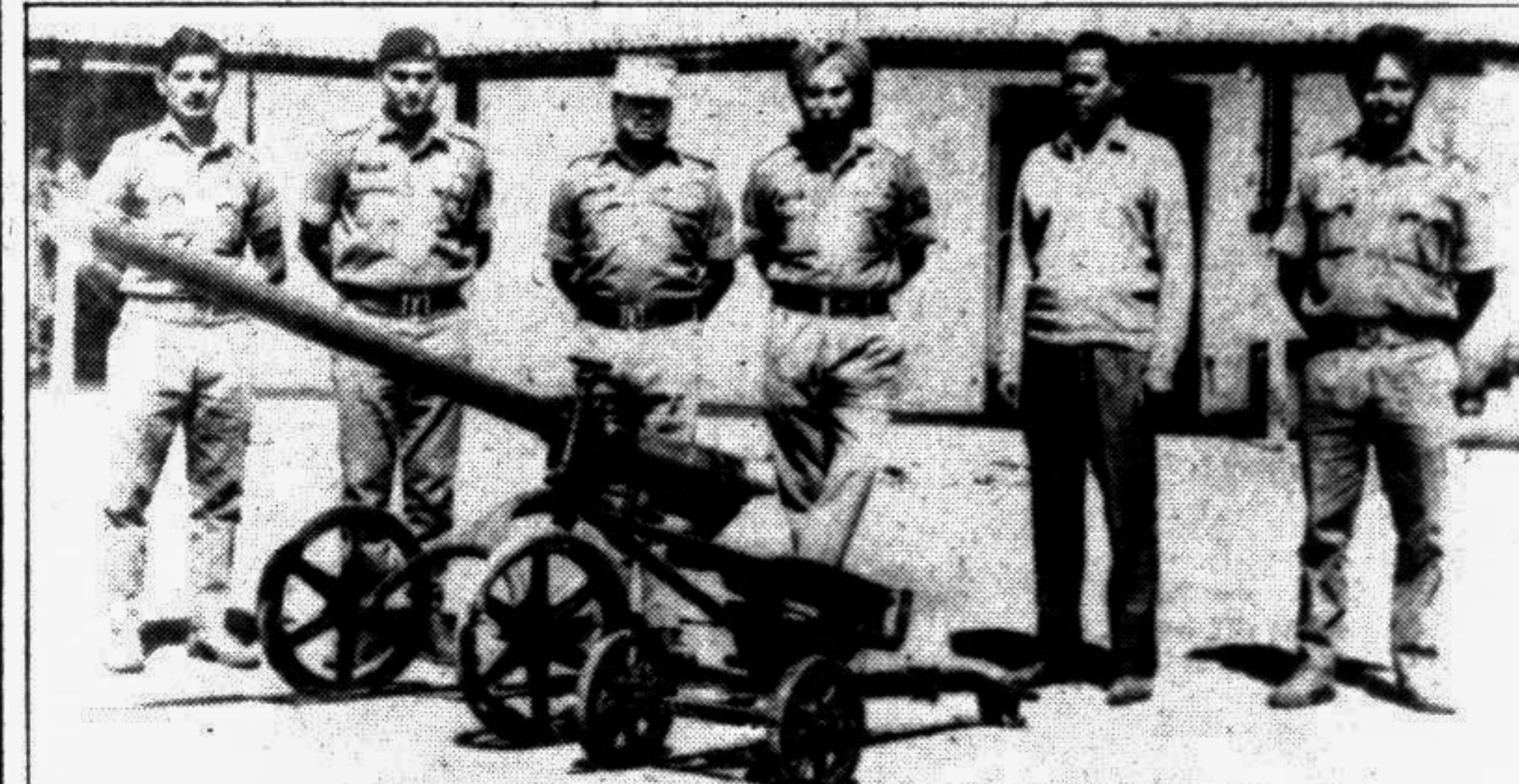
December 4, three days before fall of Jessore. In that meeting, sources say, Niazi made inflammatory speech to revitalise the courage and morality of his soldiers and to mobilise public support against the FFs (Freedom Fighters). All his efforts went in vain.

Jessore Airport was pounded by bombs and mortar shells by allied forces from across the border on Nov 22. This continued without interval till incharge of Jessore Cantonment, Brig. Hyat Khan shifted the headquarters to

killed a soldier belonging to the Pak Army. This incident inspired many people to come forward.

Advocate Moshir Rahman, MP elect, Jessore, was picked up by Pakistani Army from his residence at dead of night on March 26. Later he was killed inside the Cantonment on April 24. Pakistani Army during the Liberation War killed noted social workers like Sudhir Babu, Narayan Shah and many others.

The Pakistani Army left control over the Jessore town



Two artillery pieces were seized from the enemy forces. One is used to destroy aircrafts and the other for destroying tanks. — Star photo

The scenario turned pathetic when reports of genocide, violence, plunder and arson committed by the enemy troops began to pour in from different areas. The day was marked by mixed feelings. It may be noted here that Pakistani forces took shelter at Fultala and Shiromani on way to Khulna to regroup themselves in a bid to try for the last time to regain territory of power in Jessore.

Liberation of Jessore after long nine months of fierce battle against the Pakistani Army was a costly one. Thousands of lives had to be sacrificed.

The forces in Jessore took lead right from the beginning and never lagged behind in responding to any attack by the enemy. The National Flag of Bangladesh was hoisted at Jessore Collectorate Building

and remained confined to Cantonment from March 29. The next day the Bengalee soldiers in Jessore Cantonment revolted. Lt Anwar was killed in the face-to-face clash with the enemy.

Hundreds of supporters from Narail and neighbouring areas came to Jessore and opened the Jessore central jail releasing all political prisoners on March 31.

On April 4, Pakistani Army



The defeated enemy forces left behind a tank in Chowgacha thana of Jessore during Liberation War. — Star photo

The enemy's loss of control over Jessore was not a simple one. It took allied forces a fortnight to advance towards Jessore Cantonment after total defeat of Pakistani forces at the battle of Muktinagar on Nov 22. They had to wait at Chowgacha thana for clearance signal to get the way out for retreat. Meanwhile, General Niazi rushed to Jessore and held a public meeting at local stadium on

by a group of revolutionary students on March 3, 1971. Police opened fire on the procession killing one Chambala on the spot. The next day the National Flag was hoisted at local *Idgah Maidan* again at the initiative of Syed Mohabbat Ali, Mahamudul Haq, Sabha Khatun, Amal Sen, Late Abdus Salam, Abdul Hai and others. They created barricade at Arabpur on gateway to Cantonment on May 17 and

suddenly came out of Cantonment and launched attack on innocent people in the town and created havoc killing hundreds.

From Nov 20 onwards Freedom Fighters backed by Indian Army as allied forces prepared to liberate the area from Pakistani occupation.

Battle of Muktinagar at Chowgacha opened the gate of victory in history of Liberation War 1971.



Civil Surgeon Jessore, Dr Amjad Hossain addressing the Imams at a workshop on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation held at Keshabpur recently jointly organised by the Islamic Foundation and the UNICEF. — Star photo



This building was used to announce news through mikes fitted on its roof. — Star photo

on the spot. The Freedom Fighters had to go for another plan.

The Mathabhabha river is situated near Chuadanga-Damurhuda main road. Village Uzirpur is two miles from Chuadanga. Pirpur village is on the other side of river.

Mathabhabha. Pirpur village is also very close to Uzirpur village. After failing with the first plan, the Freedom Fighters decided to take shelter at village Fakir Para. Accordingly they crossed the river Mathabhabha and shifted their shelter at village Pirpur in two groups. They waited taking po-

later moved to village Alokdia, three miles west of Chuadanga town on Chuadanga-Meherpur main road from village Pirpur.

Bilal led the Freedom Fighters in engaging the enemy. Others who took part in fighting were Abdur, Menal, Montu, Alam, Abdur Rahman, Lantu, Bablu and Zafar and many others.

The enemy was also retreating from different areas of Alamdanga thana after they were defeated.

The enemy intended to hold Kushiha in control and accordingly they were retreating towards Kushiha from Chuadanga and Alamdanga

was formed with Dr Ashabul Hoque, the then MP from Awami League as its chief advisor and the other members of the committee were Barrister Badal Rashid (former MP) and Advocate Eunuch Ali (former MP and now local Awami League chief). Barrister Badal Rashid expired last year.

The then wing commander of EPR stationed at Chuadanga Major Abu Osman Choudhury (now retired Lt Col.), who was also a member of the advisory committee, conducted the War of Liberation in this region.

Chuadanga was occupied by the Pak army on April 15, 1971.



This bridge leads to Meherpur from Chuadanga. Known as the Mathabhabha bridge, the enemy forces blew up the eastern portion of the bridge while retreating from Chuadanga town on Dec-6, 1971.

Kurigram welcomes winter

From Our Correspondent

KURIGRAM, Dec 6: Hot and humid days have disappeared. The sky is clear. The lush green fields wear a dewy look. The lotus flower and vegetable gardens add scenic beauty in the morning. The farmers of Kurigram district have started reaping aman paddy. Sugarcane growers and harvesting sugarcane.

The 'gacchis' have started extracting juice from the date-trees. The winter breeze blows and the people of the district have started welcoming the winter.

In order to face extreme cold people of all walks of life of the district are coming to

the town for purchasing warm cloths like coats, sweater, pullovers, jackets etc.

Poor people who can hardly afford to protect themselves from the attack of the extreme cold find it little too high the prices of ready made quilts. A double size quilt is sold between Taka 500 and 600 which is beyond the reach of poor people who have no alternative but to shiver at night.

The winter breeze is quite extreme in Kurigram. William Shakespeare wrote:

"Blow, blow the winter wind
Thou art is not so unkind"
Winter vegetables have been

grown in plenty in the district and the vegetables fields wore a floral look adding scenic beauty of the plain.

Winter vegetables like palang shak, radish, cabbage, cauliflower, bean, lettuce, brinjal are available in the local markets. The prices are relatively reasonable. The prices vary from Taka three to Taka 12 a kilogram of any sort of vegetable. Tomato, another popular item of winter vegetables is not available yet. Green tomatoes are being brought in the district for sale. The price is a bit too high. A kilogram of green tomato is sold at Taka 20.