

'We intend to keep prices of grains stable'

MOULVIBAZAR Jan 24: Food Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said, government was determined to keep the prices of grains within the capacity of common people, reports UNB.

"We have taken all necessary measures in this regard," he said mentioning, the government has initiated open market sale of rice and wheat.

The minister visited a number of LSD godowns here on Sunday. Shajahan Siraj MP was with him.

Mannan Bhuiyan asked the food officials to check any kind of wastage of grains. He also gave directives to take highest care about proper functioning of open market sale operation.

The Minister expressed his satisfaction over the stock position of foodgrains at the godowns, said an officials handout.

BRCS to construct cyclone shelters in coastal areas

MAJDEECOURT Jan 24: Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS) will construct cyclone shelters in the entire coastal areas in the next few years to provide protection for the people against cyclones and tidal waves, reports BSS.

This was stated by the Chairman of the BRCS Syed Shahidul Haque Jamal MP while addressing a meeting held at the Majdeecourt during his visit to the area on Saturday.

The meeting was also addressed by the members of the managing board of the BRCS ABM Jakaria and the Acting Chairman of the Noakhali unit of the society. It was attended by cross section of people, including the elite of the town, members of the executive committee of the unit, life members and volunteers of the society.

Syed Shahidul Haque Jamal said that a large number of cyclone shelters had already been built with cooperation of the international federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, and sister national societies. Many more such shelters would be built to provide protection for the people during emergency.

He said that the society had been engaged in humanitarian activities for the needy and urged the generous people to come to the aid of the society so that more such activities could be under-taken.

Syed Shahidul Haque Jamal also distributed certificates among the life members of the society.

Two towns in Bhola to have water pipe line soon

BHOLA Jan 24: The Public Health Engineering Department has taken up a programme of water pipe line construction in two newly constituted *pourashavas* of the district at a cost of Tk 63.63 lakh in the current fiscal, reports UNB.

The *Pourashavas* are Lalmojon and Charfassion. Under 13-Town Water Supply Project about five km of pipe line will be constructed in the two *pourashavas*.

According to officials, the newly constituted *pourashavas* have no smooth water supply system. As a result, the dwellers have to suffer seriously for pure drinking water.

With the construction of pipe line will be solved to a great extent, officials said adding that a sum of Tk 12 lakh was already sanctioned for construction of two pump houses in the two *pourashavas*.

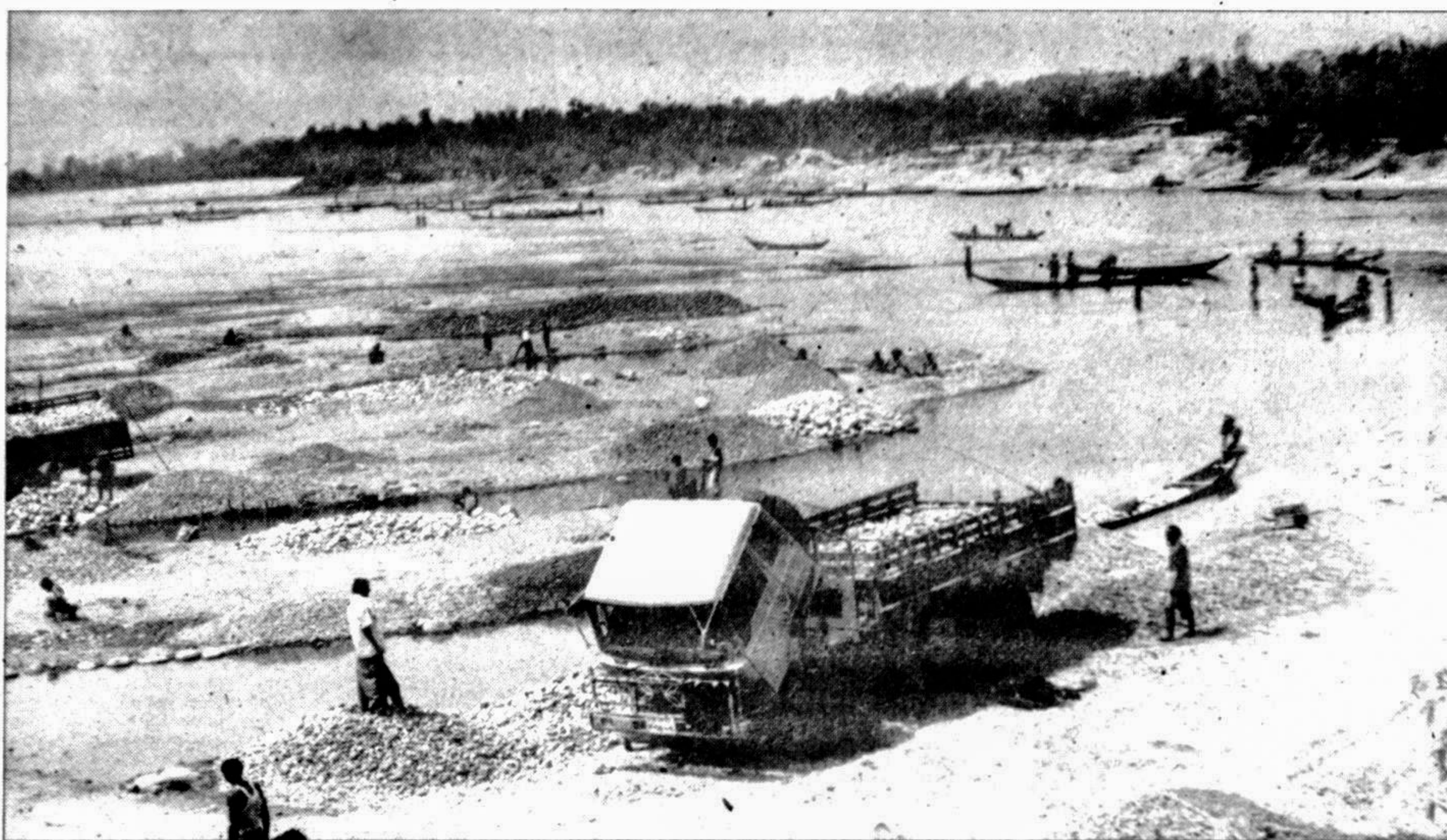
BMCH to have cobalt unit soon

BARISAL Jan 24: A cobalt unit is being built at a cost of Taka seventy eight lakh for the radio therapy department of the Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barisal, for treatment of cancer this year, reports BSS.

According to official sources the government of the peoples republic of China will supply necessary equipment for the unit.

A room with walls as thick as four feet and cast with cement and steel is being built as a precautionary measure against gamma rays. A leak proof twelve inch thick gate will be fitted in the room. Work will complete before June next.

Five similar other units, one each for Chittagong, Rajshahi and Mymensingh medical college hospitals, and two for Dhaka Medical College Hospital will be built at a cost of about Taka four crore, the sources said.



JAFFLONG (Sylhet): Hundreds of small boats carry various sizes of stones to the shore of Jafflong river. Stone traders transport hundreds of tons of stones every day to different parts of the country. The picture shows a truck is being load with broken pieces of stones. —Star photo

Call to devise proper strategies for development of CHT

RANGAMATI Jan 24: The three-day national seminar on development experiences and prospects in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) began at the Parjatan Corporation auditorium here with a call to devise appropriate strategies for the development of Chittagong Hill Tracts with local resources in keeping with socio-economic conditions and environment, says a BSS report.

The head of mountain farming system of ICIMOD, Dr Tej Pratap, Dr Waliuzzaman of ICIMOD, Programme Associate of CIRDP, Dhaka, Md Saifur Rahman, and Conservator of Forest M A Sattar presented different papers at the session.

They pointed out that Chittagong Hill Tracts with its distinct character had remained untapped though there are tremendous potentialities in respect of human and natural resources. Most of its resources are untapped or unidentified, they added.

The inaugural session was addressed by former minister Dr Fasih-Uddin Mahtab as the chief guest, and the Director General of International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Egbert Pelinck as special guest.

Chairman of Chittagong Hill

Tracts Development Board Maj General Azizur Rahman welcomed the guests and participants at the seminar.

Secretary, Special Affairs Division, Dr Fazlul Hasan Yusuf presided over the session. Some representatives from India and Nepal also attended the inaugural session.

Dr Fasih Uddin Mahtab said, Bangladesh has 12 per cent of its land covered by hills where over one million people live and Chittagong Hill Tracts calls for special attention of the government because of its importance. He stressed the need for developing infrastructural facilities in the CHT including spread of education, development of roads and health facilities for the hilly people, irrigation, power etc.

Dr Mahtab suggested development of social forestry, horticulture and collective farming in the CHT in order to bring together the scattered hilly people. Through the scheme, he said, groups of people can be brought together and allotted 20 to 25 acres of hilly land for raising forest, rubber gardens and other valuable trees which can improve the economic condi-

tion of the poor section of the people. He also suggested that handloom, textile and various cottage industries can be set up in the CHT to improve the lot of the poor tribals.

Dr Mahtab also called for more allocation of fund for socio-economic development of the CHT where tribals have a sense of deprivation for a long time. He also called for associating local tribals with development activities of the CHT.

Dr Tej Pratap in his paper narrated his experience of development of mountain areas in China, Thailand, India and other countries saying, there is need for an integrated approach for utilising the forest lands.

He said that by ensuring sustainable development in hill areas the quality of life of the people could be improved and experiments in some countries had proved successful and that quality of life and the living standard of the people had improved.

Dr Waliuzzaman of BCSIR said that CHT was an ideal place for growing as many as 79 medicinal plants and that BCSIR had already recommended 20 of them for massive cultivation in the area. He said, the terrain and the

climate of CHT are considered to be suitable for undertaking organised cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants for commercial production of herbal medicines and essence oils which may have wide market in this country. He said, CHT people should be organised to cultivate medicinal and aromatic plants and they should be given incentives for doing so which will ultimately benefit them economically.

He particularly called for associating unani and ayurvedic pharmacies with future programme for cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants in CHT.

He concluded that cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants as high value cash crop would provide a long term solution to economic problems of tribal people. Such programmes will also provide employment opportunities for thousands of people, he added.

M A Sattar of BFIDC in this paper also suggested development of community forestry in the vast land of CHT in order, to associate people with the development activities of the CHT. "We need an integrated approach to utilise the vast land of the CHT," he said.

Food poisoning kills three of a family

PABNA Jan 24: Three members of a family died of food poisoning at village Denger in Algoria thana on Saturday night, reports UNB.

The victims were identified as Aslam, 12, Mariam, 8 and Asadul, 6, all of them are the children of Muhammad Ali of the village.

Hospital sources said, all of them took vegetables prepared by the young leaves of 'Khesari' plant on that night and got poisoned. Later, they were rushed to Pabna sadar hospital where they succumbed.

Clash over land dispute, three held

SATKHIRA Jan 24: Sadar police Sunday arrested three people including a woman on charges of possessing explosives and alleged involvement in a cash over land dispute, reports UNB.

Police said supporters of rival group leaders — Shamsur Rahman and Musa Dalal — clashed over a piece of land at Sadardanga of the thana both claiming its ownership.

The groups exploded crackers and handbombs during the clash until police rushed to the spot and arrested the two leaders and Shamsur Rahman's wife, Razia.

Police also recovered five live hand bombs from the backyard of Rahman's house. No one was reportedly injured in the clash while a case has been filed.

Alleged terrorist arrested in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH Jan 24: Police arrested an alleged terrorist and recovered a pistol from his possession, reports UNB.

Acting on secret information, a contingent of police led by a Sub-Inspector raided the local Government Boys' High School and arrested Galib.

Police said Galib was wanted in connection with murder, dacoity and some other criminal cases. Later, on the basis of his confessional statement, police recovered the pistol from the residence of one Alauddin at Kanchanpur of the town.

Maid servant found dead

SHERPUR Jan 24: Police recovered the body of a maid servant from near a pond adjacent to the office of sadar Thana Nirbahi Officer Sunday, reports UNB.

Police said, Shefali, 20, daughter of Akbar Ali of Chakpathak in the town, was found dead in the morning. She was a servant in the house of Abdul Jabbar, driver of the TNO.

Local people suspected that Shefali was strangled to death after violation while she was returning home from the residence of the driver on Saturday night.

Meanwhile police arrested three people including the driver Abdul Jabbar in this connection. The body was sent to sadar hospital for autopsy.

Govt expanding electricity network for overall development: Mosharraf

BHALUKA (Mymensingh), Jan 24: Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain Monday said the present government had streamlined the rural electrification programme in the country for the overall improvement of the rural areas, reports BSS.

"Rural electrification programme initiated by Shaheed president Ziaur Rahman in 1978 has become a part of the socio-economic development of the rural areas and it has got momentum during the tenure of the present government," Dr Mosharraf Hossain said.

Addressing a public meeting held in connection with the foundation laying ceremony of Mymensingh Pally Biddut Samity-2 at Bhaluka, the energy minister said, "the number of electrified villages of the country under the rural electrification programme is 14,051 while over 8200 villages have been electrified during the last three and a half years of the present government."

Members of Parliament Begum Nurjahan Yasmin, Begum Shamsunnahar, Khwaja Ahsanullah, AKM Fazlul Hoq,

Amanullah Chowdhury and Whip MA Karim also spoke on the occasion.

The energy minister listed to various development programmes of the government in different sectors and said, "the present government of Begum Khaleda Zia believes in the politics of production and development, not in talk talks."

"He said certain opposition political parties, on the other hand, had resorted to negative politics like *hartal* and blockade to impede the development process of the country."

Referring to the mass resignation of the opposition from the parliament Dr Mosharraf Hossain described it as a slur in the parliamentary democratic system.

"They have belittled the mandate of the people because they did not seek cognizance from their respective voters," he said.

Earlier, the minister formally laid the foundation stone of Mymensingh Pally Biddut Samity-2. Chairman of Rural Electrification Board (REB) bring Enamul Hoq and other high officials of REB were present on the occasion.

Rampant felling of trees, branches in Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH Jan 24: A section of anti-social activists have been looting trees worth crores of taka from both sides of roads on Jhenidah-Jessore and Jhenidah-Chuadanga highways under Roads and Highways Department in Jhenidah, it is alleged.

According to reports, some dishonest persons are involved with this evil-doings. They are reportedly cutting away small and large branches of trees mostly during the night.

Local people alleged that a section of office employees are directly or indirectly involved with the miscreants. They said from the site of newly constructed TV building to Dakbanga bazar, branches of almost all big trees were cut down. The same thing obtaining between Bishoikhali Bazar to Kaiganj. The condition of the trees between Nagarathan and Halidhani in Jhenidah thana is also very bad. The trees are seen almost branchless.

Local people also alleged that just after felling of branches, the miscreants carry these to local brickfields and tobacco curing factories. Due to frequent felling of branches,

a huge number of trees were found dead and many are going to die.

The Executive Engineer of Roads and Highways Department, Jhenidah told that they are lodging cases against those miscreants in this regard but police could not arrest the criminals as yet.

When contacted, Jhenidah police said that R & H Department authorities do not inform police in time. As a result, they can not arrest the criminals.

While visiting Bishoikhali, Nagarathan, Halidhani and some other areas, local people alleged that the people who are involved with cutting the branches of trees are very influential.

While the tree plantation programme is in progress all over the country, in Jhenidah it is being destroyed rampantly, which is undoubtedly contradictory.

Leaders and local people appealed to the authorities to take necessary action against the criminals and dishonest employes of Roads and Highways Department at an early date.

Despite govt ban

Brickfields continue to use firewood as fuel

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ Jan 24: Firewood is being used widely in the brick fields of Sirajganj district.

It is gathered that about 24 brickfields have been set up in different parts of Sirajganj district. Despite government ban on using firewood in the brickfields, the brickfield owners are widely using firewood in the kilns. Other than fruit trees, date trees and bamboo roots are also used for the kilns.

To protect the ecological balance the government imposed ban on use of firewood in the brickfields. But the brickfield owners did not pay heed to the order and continue to use firewood openly. Meanwhile, a mobile court

led by Magistrate Pirzada Shahidul Haque realised fine amounting to Tk 20,000 from four brickfield owners of Sirajganj district for using firewood.

When visited, some brickfields in Belkuchi and Kamarkhanda thana it was observed that piles of firewood are awaiting burning. Coal was also found there. But the kilns are burning firewood.

When contacted, some brickfield owners told this correspondent that use of firewood are considerably cheaper than coal. Firewood is available on credit but coal is sold only on cash payment. So they are interested to use firewood in the brickfields.

Bus journey hazardous on routes of Natore

NATORE Jan 24: The passengers are suffering much due to rough driving and overloading of buses in different routes of North Bengal including Natore, reports UNB.

Reckless driving and overloading of the buses, minibuses and trucks plying on Rajshahi-Nagarbari ghat, Rangpur-Nagarbari ghat, Rajshahi-Rangpur, and Rajshahi-Rushtia routes are common features causing accidents frequently.

Most of the vehicles carry passengers beyond their capacity violating traffic rules and drive violating the specified speed limit both on highways and busy roads.

Bus journey has also become hazardous due to bad condition of roads and misbehaviour of helpers and conductors. Passengers also suffer much as they cannot reach their destination in time due to frequent stoppages at unscheduled points.

It is alleged that the conductors of most of the buses and minibuses realise fare at exorbitant rates from the pas-

sengers. Moreover, the passengers suffering aggravate much as there is no passenger sheds at most of the bus stands. Passengers particularly children and women suffer much in the absence of latrine and urinal facilities.

According to a report, there are about 90 bus stands in these routes. The 28 kilometre long Natore-Bogra and 108 km Bogra-Rangpur-Dinajpur routes are in deplorable condition. At present these two routes have become almost unfit for plying of vehicles.

Bikrampur-Palashbari road is not completely metalled which has been badly damaged during the last flood. Natore-Guradaspur, Natore-Bagatipara, and Baneshwar-Bagha roads are too narrow. Buses, minibuses, and trucks are facing problems while plying on these roads.

The passengers also alleged that in spite of repeated appeal no measures have yet taken to renovate these routes.

The ever expanding Satkhira town faces housing problem

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA Jan 24: An acute housing problem in Satkhira district headquarters is prevailing.

This is an important district and a flourishing commercial centre. As a result many government and semi-government offices, private enterprises, banks, insurance companies, and other small industries have been set up here. Moreover, there are many educational institutions including 5 colleges. The employees who serve in these offices, firms and institutions face accommodation problem.

As there is an acute space problem in Satkhira, the town can hardly cope with the growing demand of accommodation. Although the population of the town has increased considerably in the past few years, the construction of new houses did not take place proportionately.

These are some houses or buildings which are let to the employees who come from outside. The number of such houses or buildings is so inad-

equately that many of the outsiders compel to reside in masses.

In the last few years more government offices have been established here. But there has not been any accompanying rise in the construction of houses. This has aggravated the already existing housing problem. Bank and insurance company branches have been set up here in the recent past. This has aggravated the problem further. The house rent is exorbitant. A single room along with a kitchen will cost a man at least Taka 500 to Taka 600 according to quality and the tenant will get no facility for water supply, ventilation and electricity also in some houses.

The townhouses and buildings are not constructed in planned way. As a result, the hygienic and sanitary conditions are completely ignored by the owners of the houses or buildings. The town has a population of 85000 whereas the housing facilities are not

commensurate. As a result people with low incomes can hardly think of a rented house.

The only hostel of Satkhira Government College can hardly accommodate 50 students where as the minimum demand for seats is not less than 400. The Satkhira government women college has also a hostel which accommodate only 40 students whereas the minimum demand for seats more than 200. The college is not able to provide accommodation to the lady teachers. The guardians of the students of these two institutions urged the concerned authorities to expand this two hostels for catering the needs of acute house problem. There is no other hostel for the students of 4 other colleges of the town. The PN High School has a hostel only in name. It can hardly accommodate 10 students whereas the number of students on its rolls is about 800. The Government High has no hostel.



CHANDPUR A seven year old child performing a dance recently at the annual cultural function at the district police line. —Star photo