

Farmers gherao TNO office in Gaibandha

GAIBANDHA, Mar 8: About 5,000 farmers of Sadar thana on Sunday gheraoed the office of the Thana Nirbahi Officer demanding proper distribution of fertiliser at fair prices, reports UNB.

They also staged demonstration at the premises of Assistant Commissioner's (land) office on the same day demanding allocation of fertilisers to the genuine farmers to help boost production.

According to them urea fertiliser is being sold between Tk 400 and Tk 410 throughout the district instead of government fixed price Tk 230 per bag.

Makbul of village Radhakrishnapur and Moslem Ali of

Falta, who took part in the gherao programme, said that they have been facing untold suffering due to price hike of fertiliser and other agri-inputs.

They alleged that some influential persons are procuring the fertiliser from the concerned authorities illegally and selling it to the businessmen at high rate.

They also said Irri-boro cultivation in the 16 northern districts including Gaibandha is being hampered due to high prices of agri inputs.

The agitating farmers urged the concerned authorities to ensure smooth supply of fertilisers at fair price and check the price rise without further delay.



A farmer in Dohar thana of Dhaka district weaves his fishing net ahead of the advent of the monsoon. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Development of human resources underscored

HOMNA (Comilla), Mar 8: Shipping Minister MK Anwar said development of human resources and its proper utilisation is imperative to achieve the cherished goal of socio-economic uplift, reports UNB.

He was addressing as chief guest a conference of the representatives of volunteer organisations and clubs under Horhna-Daudkandi thana of the district at the thana parishad auditorium on Tuesday.

Volunteer and youth organisations have to take local initiative irrespective of political affiliation for smooth implementation of the development programme," the Minister stressed adding "there is no alternative to take local leadership for development."

He said the youth forces are to be motivated and organised to ensure their active participation in nation-building activities.

The Shipping Minister called upon the youth community to help implement uplift programmes like pisciculture, cattle and poultry farming and afforestation to build the country happy and prosperous.

He said the government has been implementing massive development programmes focusing village as centre point.

Anwar distributed cheques of government grants for Tk 1.77 lakh among the organisations at the conference.

Representatives of about 100 volunteer organisations and clubs attended the conference, said an official handout.

The conference was addressed by Director General of the Social Welfare Directorate Nazimuddin, Vice President of Comilla district BNP Sirajul Islam, some local officials and representatives of the organisations.

Acute scarcity of fertilisers in northern region

NATORE, Mar 8: Acute scarcity of fertilisers has been persisting in the northern region threatening the cultivation of Irri-boro during the current season, reports UNB.

Agriculture Extension Department sources said about 7,78,166 hectares of land of the 16 districts of Rajshahi division have been targeted to bring under Irri-boro cultivation during the current season. Some 36 lakh metric tons of fertiliser is required for the successful implementation of the programme, they added.

But the supply of fertiliser in the market is apparently in low in comparison with the demand. Taking advantage of the situation, a section of traders have started stocking the fertilisers in their godowns well ahead of the planting season for earning windfall profit.

As a result, the price of the fertilisers has shot up abnormally causing untold suffering to the farmers.

Farmers, particularly the

marginal ones, have become desperate in procuring fertilisers and clashes are occurring in different places in the northern districts among fertiliser traders, dealers and farmers. Reports of processions and demonstrations are also pouring in from different places of the region demanding proper supply of fertilisers and other agri-inputs at fair prices.

Many farmers have been forced to plant paddy saplings without or with less application of fertilisers.

Despite some measures taken by the government, including arrangement of distribution of fertilisers through selected dealers at retail price, the situation has not yet improved.

It is alleged that the selected dealers are also selling the fertilisers in black-markets for earning maximum profit.

In Natore TSP is being sold between Tk 400 and 500 instead of its retail price Tk 310

while urea and MP are being sold at Tk 350 and 400 respectively against their fixed price Tk 230.

According to a source, some wagons of fertilisers are awaiting for unloading in Bogra railway station. More wagons are on the way to reach the same station. But the traders are reportedly delaying in taking delivery of the fertilisers to create artificial crisis.

Besides, fertilisers are also stock-piled in different private godowns in Bogra, Rangpur and Pabna, reliable sources said.

Informed sources said the low production of Aman paddy in the northern districts during the last Aman season was largely attributed to the exorbitant prices of fertilisers and other agri-inputs.

The farmers feared that cultivation of Irri-boro paddy which is considered as the main crops in the region will be greatly hampered in this season.

Four killed in Gopalganj road mishap

From Our Correspondent

GOPALGANJ, Mar 8: Four people were killed and 40 more injured when a bus they were travelling fell into a roadside ditch near Bhererhat on Gopalganj-Tekerhat road Tuesday morning.

Four people died on the spot and 10 other seriously injured were admitted to the Gopalganj Sadar Hospital.

The accident occurred when the driver lost control of the bus while giving side to another bus.

The dead are Mini Sarder, Eyad Ali, Jiban and another unidentified person.

A case has been registered.

Workshop on shrimp culture in Khulna

KHULNA, Mar 8: A day-long workshop on shrimp culture — its problems was held Tuesday at the local Zia Hall auditorium under the auspices of Khulna Divisional office of Bangladesh Krishi Bank. Managing Director of the BKB Khandaker Ibrahim Khaled inaugurated the workshop, reports BSS.

Mia Yusuf, General Manager of BKB Khulna Division, presided over the function.

The day-long workshop was participated by over 60 managers and officials of the BKB branches of Khulna and Barisal division.

General manager of BKB Barisal division, Abdus Sattar Mollah was the chief co-ordinator of the workshop. Speaking on the occasion, the Managing Director of BKB called for implementation of the present government policy on shrimp cultivation. He asked the officials of the BKB to abide by the government decision to disburse loans to the entrepreneurs who are engaged in the cultivation of saline water shrimp.

Prices of essentials rise sharply in Chuadanga

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Mar 8: Prices of all sorts of essential commodities including rice, atta, fish, meat, dal and edible oil have abnormally gone up throughout the Chuadanga district.

Rice is now being sold here between Taka 13 to 15 per kg, the fine quality of rice being sold at Taka 14 to 15 per kg while the coarse quality of rice is being sold at Taka 13 per kg.

It is apprehended that the price of rice might increase further.

The government has opened 4 open market sale centres in four thanas of the district but the supply of rice in these centres are inadequate to meet the demand.

In October last, when severe food crisis was prevailing in the district, the government introduced 10 open market foodgrain selling shops only in Chuadanga pourashava area but now only one government rice selling shop has been opened in the pourashava area. The price of rice is increasing day by day.

Atta is being sold Taka 11.50 to 12.00 per kg. Though harvesting of wheat has just begun, but there is no sign of possibility of reducing the price of atta.

There is no arrangement to face the present price hike of foodgrains in the district. Hundreds of old men and women, young boys and girls and children queue up at the OMS centres since morning everyday to procure rice at fair price. Rice is being sold at Taka 10.50 per kg at the government rice selling shops.

The people alleged that these shops do not open

timely and they are being harassed by the mastans there.

Fish in the local markets have almost gone out of purchasing capacity of the common people. The price of fish of all kinds have abnormally gone up. Hilsha fish is being sold at Taka 80 per kg, rui Taka 100 to 110 per kg, shoil Taka 60 to 80 per kg, magur Taka 140 to 160 per kg, koi Taka 160 per kg, shrimp Taka 200 to 250 per kg, katla Taka 60 per kg, silvercarp, minar carp and glass carp Taka 50 per kg, shingi Taka 140 per kg, lata Taka 48.00 per kg, and mrigal Taka 60 per kg.

The price of meat and poultry birds have also gone up sharply throughout Chuadanga district.

Poultry birds are being sold at Taka 75 to 80 per kg, while mutton at Taka 90 to 100 per kg, and beef at Taka 40 to 50 per kg.

The prices of edible oil like soyabean and mustard have also gone up in the local markets. Soyabean oil is being sold at Taka 50 per kg while mustard oil at Taka 60 per kg.

The price of dal of all kinds have also increased to a great extent throughout the district.

Mug dal is being sold at Taka 36 per kg, gram at Taka 32 per kg, mosur at Taka 32 per kg and kalai at Taka 30 per kg.

The vegetables of all kinds are also selling at high prices in the district.

The price of salt is increasing in the district gradually. At present salt is being sold at Taka between 6.00 to 10.00 per kg.

Local people have urged the government to take immediate steps to check the present price hike.

Price-hike in Lalmonirhat

LALMONIRHAT, Mar 8: Price of rice has shot up abnormally Tuesday in the local markets causing untold suffering to the fixed income group and below poverty line people, reports UNB.

According to local people coarse rice is being sold at Tk 15 per kg.

Local traders said the crisis was caused due to short supply in the market. Meanwhile, hundreds of people rushed to the government's open market sale centres where 750 kgs of rice are being distributed in each centre daily at fair prices.

Some local people said the supply of above quantity of rice in each centre can meet only 10 per cent demand.

The Deputy Commissioner while contacted assured that he would try his best to increase the quota in each centre to solve the crisis.

2 killed in Sylhet road mishap

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 8: Two people were run over by two vehicles of picnic parties in separate incidents on the Sylhet-Tamabil road Tuesday.

Abdur Rouf, 25, of village Palia of Khadimpura Union under Sadar thana was crushed under the wheels of a speeding minibus near Islampur in the morning. The minibus sped away after the incident, police said.

In another incident, Tota Miah, 50, of village Pakhail under Jaintapur thana died on the spot when a speeding minibus ran over him near Sarighat bridge. Police later seized the bus. The bus was going to Jafflong carrying a picnic party from Narayanganj, police said.

Two cases have been registered.

Women, child labourers on rise in Cox's Bazar

COX'S BAZAR, Mar 8: The unusual spurt of women labour force in the Cox's Bazar district in recent days has been causing concern among the social welfare activists. Female labourers seek work but the opportunities for their work have been shrinking.

According to social welfare and labour leaders, thousands of female day labourers are seen husking paddy, working in the brickfields, shrimp processing factories and taking part in earth digging. Unmarried girls and divorcees constitute the majority of the women labour, they said adding opportunities for their work have been shrinking for various reasons.

Recurring floodings, cyclone and other natural calamities for the last few years have been damaging crops in the district affecting small and marginal farmers adversely.

As a result, many families have been rendered helpless, they said. Finding no other way out the distressed women are forced to go out to earn a living.

The leaders called upon the

government to create job opportunities for poor women by extending soft credit facilities for small and cottage industries in order to make them self-reliant. The female day labourers in the district have been facing problems for want of work.

There are about 8,000 female labourers in Sadar thana, Ramu, Teknaf, Ukhia, Moheshkhal, Kutubdia and Chakoria thanas of the district.

A large number of young women are found working who are either dowry victims or divorcees. The poor parents cannot provide them with food and shelter and that is why they are out to earn a livelihood. The number of women labourers is increasing day by day in the district, specially in the rural areas, due to cyclone and other calamities which damage crops and dwelling houses extensively.

The women labourers engaged in various works including construction are paid less than their male counterpart though they perform the same duty. The concerned authorities have been urged to look into the matter and take appropriate steps to mitigate the sufferings of the women labourers.

Meanwhile, the number of child labourers are increasing sharply throughout the district. They are seen engaged as rickshaw pullers, hotel boys, house servants, hawkers and others. Presently, there are about twelve thousand child labourers in the district.

In the thana towns of Ramu, Moheshkhal, Kutubdia, Chakoria, Ukhia and Teknaf and in some other important places of the district, there are about 6700 boys under 12 years who are seen pulling rickshaw without licence.

From three to four thousand child labourers are presently serving more than 300 hotels and restaurants. It is learnt that most of them get only two meals a day. They work from morning till late at night without any rest.

In some areas of the towns about two thousand boys and girls are serving as house-servants. Of the total, 60 per cent are female and most work for food, while others get Tk 50 to 100 a month.

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Eid-ul-Fitr celebrated

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Mar 8: Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated in Chuadanga in a befitting manner on Friday.

The main Eid congregation was held at local central Eidgah maidan. Maulana Abdur Rahman, imam of Chuadanga pourashava jame mosque conducted the main prayer.

Besides, Eid congregations were also held at local police line, VJ High School premises, Palash Para Jame Mosque, Baitul Mamoor Jame Mosque, Court Jame Mosque, C & B Eidgah maidan, Barabazar Jame Mosque, Adarsha High School premises, Raibazar Alla Madrasa and Buzrukgarari Matrasa.

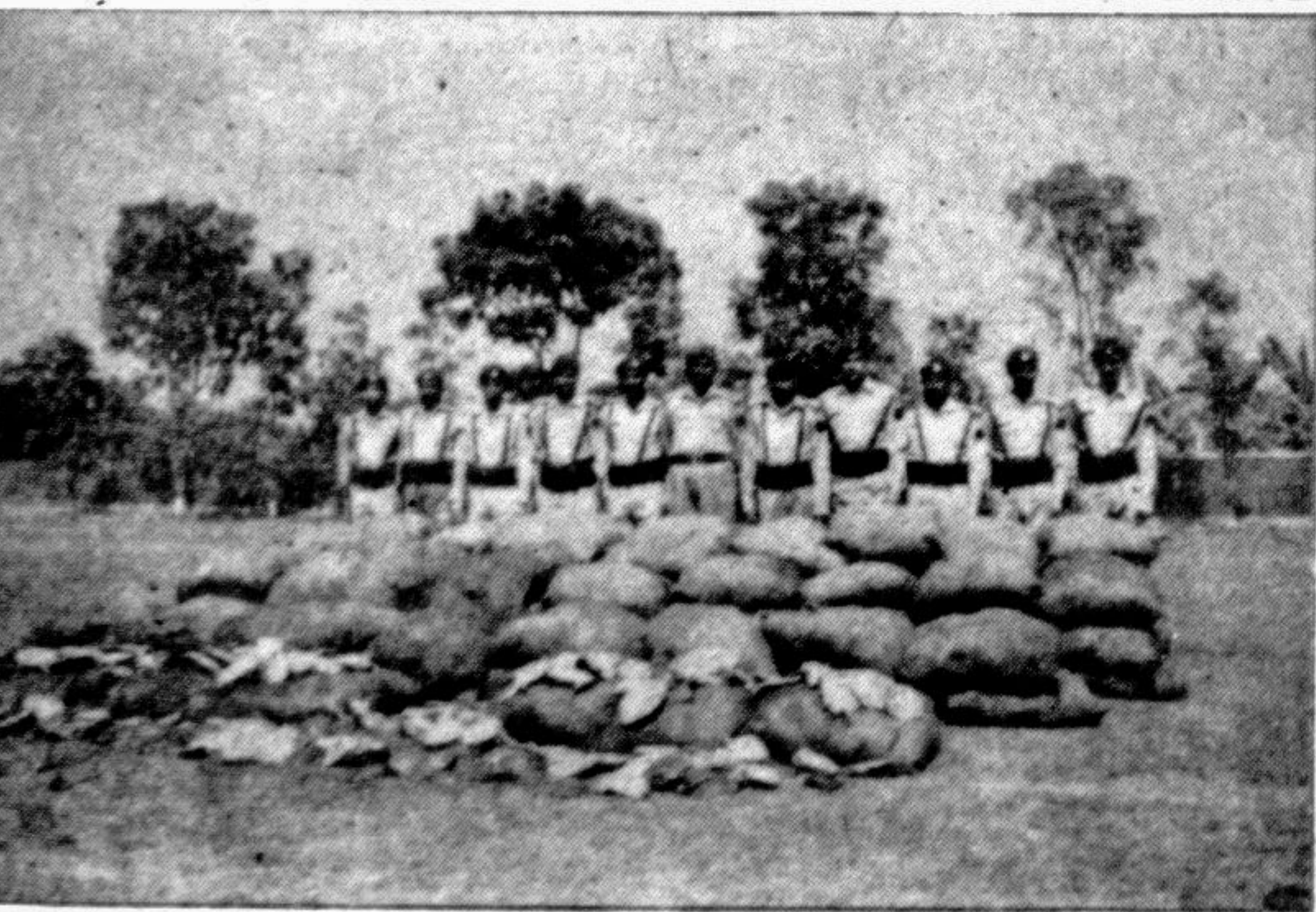
Krishi Mela held in Magura

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Mar 8: Two Krishi Mela were held at Sripur and Muhammadpur Thana headquarters for three days recently. The Bangladesh Agriculture Department of Magura district has organised the exhibition. Md Abul Hossain Molla, Deputy Director of Magura District Agriculture Department inaugurated these two agricultural exhibitions.

Local agricultural co-operative societies participated in these exhibitions on February 19 to 21. High varieties of crops and fruits, modern equipment, mechanical system of cultivations and new process of irrigation were shown in these Krishi Mela.

Prizes and certificates were distributed at the concluding function among the best agriculturist and co-operative society.



JESSORE, A BDR team seized huge quantity of smuggled Indian turtle here recently. — Star photo

40 pc work of cobalt unit completed in Barisal

BARISAL, Mar 8: Construction work of the Tk 78 lakh cobalt unit for the radio therapy department of the Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital for treatment of cancer is progressing fast, reports BSS.

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 12-inch thick lead gate will be fitted in this room.

About 40 per cent work of this unit has already been completed and the rest is expected to be completed within June next, the source added.

The government of the People's Republic of China will supply necessary equipment for the unit.

Public Works Department has been implementing the project.

Body recovered in Narsingdi

NARSINGDI, Mar 8: Police recovered the body of an unidentified youngman from the Haridhota river bank near Hazipur Railway godown on Friday morning, reports UNB.

The neck of the victim was tied by rope and the body bore several marks of injuries. The villagers first found the body and informed the police.

Police suspected that the miscreants killed him after snatching his belongings.

The body was sent to the sadar hospital for autopsy. A case has been filed.

Smuggled goods worth Tk 4 lakh seized

SATKHIRA, Mar 8: An enforcing agency - personnel seized smuggled goods including sari, machinery parts worth about Tk four lakh from different border areas of Satkhira on Sunday, reports BSS.

An official source said that they also arrested three persons in this connection. Three cases were registered with Kalara.

Extend your help for uplift projects : Jahanara

RAJBARI, Mar 8: State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum has called upon the people to extend their support to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia for ensuring development and progress of the country, reports BSS.

She was addressing a big public meeting at Katakhal of Goaland in the district recently.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by Acting General Secretary of Rajbari district BNP Kazi Matin and BNP leaders Advocate Asaduzzaman Lal and Payer Ali.

The state minister said during the last four years the present government implemented massive development programmes.

Work of 157 projects on in Savar

SAVAR, Mar 8: State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Harun-al-Rashid Monday said the present government had been carrying out development programmes throughout the country under food for work and test relief programmes during current fiscal year, reports BSS.

He said the objectives of the programmes are to construct and repair roads, development education and religious institutions, as well as creating employment opportunities.

The state minister was addressing a rally at Amin Bazar Mafid-e-Aam High School after inaugurating the earth work of local health sub-centre under food for work programme here.

Presided over by UP chairman Mafiz Ahmed, the function was also addressed by Niamat Ullah Shabu MP, district BNP vice-president Deen Islam and other local leaders.

Referring to various development activities, he said projects under food for work and 122 projects under test relief are being implemented this year in Savar thana.

He called upon all to help implement the project.

BNSB treat 15000 poor patients in Sylhet

From Our Correspondent

MOULVI BAZAR, Mar 8: A total of 15,524 poor eye patients of various remote villages of the greater Sylhet region were treated by the mobile medical team of the Bangladesh National Society for Blinds (BNSB) Eye Hospital, Moulvi Bazar during the last four months.

The BNSB Eye Hospital had set up 20 eye camps in Sylhet — 10 camps in Sylhet district, 3 in Habiganj district, 5 in Sunamganj district and 2 in Moulvibazar district.

Of the total patients, 8632 were male and 7352 were female. A total of 1918 cataract patients were operated upon during the period.

Spectacles were also distributed to the poor patients free of cost.

One killed in Sunamganj clash

SUNAMGANJ, Mar 8: Police set up camps and deployed armed battalion at Modhipur and Radhanagar of Dharmapasha thana amid tension following Sunday's clash in which one person was killed and five others were injured, reports UNB.

Khadem Ali, 35, was killed in the clash which erupted after a cow damaged crops at village Holdikandi. The five injured people, including a woman, were admitted to Dharmapasha and Mohanganj hospitals.

Villagers said lethal weapons including firearms were used during the clash.

Sources said police was posted after senior officials of the district administration visited the area Monday.

Scout rally ends in Tangail

TANGAIL, Mar 8: A four-day long Scout rally concluded at local Bindu Basini High School ground recently. A total of 304 scouts including 40 girls took part in the programme, reports BSS.

The programme included parade, P.T. cultural function and camp fire.

Manzurul Karim, National Scout Commissioner and Prof. Syedur Rahman, among others, spoke at the inaugural function.