

Effect of Farakka Barrage

Tributaries of major rivers in western region dying

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Apr 29: Adverse effects of unilateral withdrawal of the Ganges water by India at Farakka and upperstream has led to severe environmental crisis in 23 districts of the south-west and north-west region of the country. This has severely hit the economic growth of the country making an annual loss of about Taka 5,000 crore.

The gradual environmental crisis, has been revealed in the form of micro level desertification in the north west re-

gion. increased salinity both, in soil and water in the south-west region, massive siltation resulting in drainage congestion and causing increased intensity of flooding, reduced the potential of the Sundarbans mangrove ecosystem, quick depletion in soil moisture, lowering of ground water level changes in navigational routes in inland waterways, according to Ganges Kobadak Project authority.

A Water Development Board survey to compare discharges in previous years at Hardinge Bridge using data from 1956 to 1987 shows that the average highest discharge (August-September flow) before and after 1975 are 4,699 cusecs and 55570 cusecs respectively. On the other hand, the average of the lowest discharge (March-April flow) before and after 1975 are found to be 2006 cusecs and 809 cusecs respectively. This shows that average peak flow discharge has increased by about 12 per cent compared to average peak flow before 1975. On the same basis, the average low flow has decreased by 60 per cent.

to operate from April 21, 1975 following a temporary accord between Bangladesh and India to run the feeder canal of the barrage from April 21 to May 31, India continued to withdraw water in full capacity even after the agreement.

The barrage is 7,363 ft long having 109 gates with a total discharge capacity of 2.7 million cusecs of water.

Since 1975, the water flow in the Ganges continue to decrease and in April 1993 the lowest water flow was

Chaudanga, Jhenidah and Jessore.

Withdrawal of water at Farakka and rainlessness have further lowered the ground water level even at some places at 60 feet depth at some places in the northern districts.

The local Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), officials say the ground water level measured at 20 to 25 feet has further gone deeper. As a result, more than one lakh shallow and

June to September. The figures came down to 25.28 inches in 1988. The decreasing trend continued and was recorded at 14.96 inches in 1992 and 14.20 inches in 1993 during the same period of the season. Drought situation is also prevailing this year in all the northern and South-western districts. Some scattered rainfall were experienced in February this year but that was insufficient in comparison with the demand. As a result, about 15 lakh acres of

land brought under boro cultivation in northern districts are now at stake. Thousands of acres of land ready for aus cultivation are also lying unploughed or unsown for lack of sufficient moisture in the soil. This will adversely affect the coming aus and jute production from the northern and south-western region.

A study conducted in 1991 shows that the direct losses caused by Farakka Barrage in agriculture sector due to soil moisture depletion, delayed planting and increased salinity exceeds Taka 500 crore annually, while the indirect losses in financial term stood at about Taka 2300 crore a year.

Some doctors of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) say, random fluctuation of temperature alone with sands and dusts carried by wind and storm are causing lung diseases.

Records of the Meteorological office in northern region show that rainfall in decreasing alarmingly creating continued drought each year during March-April-May. The rainfall was 28.75 inches in 1987 from

recorded at 9,230 cusecs. The flow has been increased to some extent this year.

But in absence of any agreement between India and Bangladesh the present discharge capacity may be reduced to such an extent at any time that it will not be possible to operate the pumps any more.

This is why GK Project authority has not been able to ensure water for irrigation to the farmers resulting in the failure of aus cultivation this year too.

According to WDB sources, at least 40 tributaries of the Padma including Mahananda, Baral, Gorai, Karatoa, Atrai, Punarvaba, Pagla, Nagar etc have almost dried up. About 10 thousand shaols are now shining under the scorching rays of the sun in the river beds. About one and a half lakh ponds, canals and beels including the Chalan Beel, the largest of its kind in the country have already dried up. The flow of water in the Gorai has stopped last February. It has affected the standing IRRI-Boro crops on about 50 thousand acres of land in Kushtia, Meherpur,

hand-tubewells Tara have become inoperative throughout the northern districts resulting in scarcity of drinking and irrigation water in those areas.

According to the local Meteorological office, difference between the maximum and the minimum temperature widens each year during the dry season. The rainfall on the other hand, decreases every year. The temperature ranged from 15° to 40° Celsius in March this year in Rajshahi. In April '93 the maximum and minimum temperature were recorded at 44° and 19° respectively. Those were 42° and 20° in 1992 and 38° and 21° in 1986 during the same period.

land brought under boro cultivation in northern districts are now at stake. Thousands of acres of land ready for aus cultivation are also lying unploughed or unsown for lack of sufficient moisture in the soil. This will adversely affect the coming aus and jute production from the northern and south-western region.

Some doctors of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) say, random fluctuation of temperature alone with sands and dusts carried by wind and storm are causing lung diseases.

The Farakka Barrage began

Fire guts goods worth Tk 10 lakh, injure four

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Apr 29: A devastating fire that broke out at Davirchar Khajuria village under Mehendinganj thana of the district has gutted at least nine dwelling houses Tuesday night.

The fire originated from the kitchen of one Abdul Majid Patwari and gutted nine dwelling.

According to witnesses, during the fire incident four persons were injured. Property including paddy and rice worth of ten lakh taka were burnt to ashes during the incident, sources said.

Fire could not be controlled easily as there was no fire service station nearby.

Son kills mother

HABIGANJ, Apr 29: A woman was hacked to death allegedly by her son at Singha village in Laghai thana of the district on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Police said, Kanu Mia entered the room of his mother Magistat Bibi, 50, at noon and axed her mercilessly while she was sleeping. On hearing the hue and cry, the neighbours gathered in front of the room and caught Kanu Miah with an axe in hand.

Later, the victim succumbed on way to Bamoi Health Complex. The cause behind the killing could not be known immediately.

Another report says, a young man of Narayankula village in Mainpur thana was killed by miscreants while he was returning home from a village arbitration meeting at night on day.

Police suspect that the deceased Mozammel Haq 18 might have been killed by his opponents.

Two separate cases were lodged with the police.

One dies, 9 others fall sick after drinking syrup

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 29: A man died and nine others became sick after drinking banned Indian made phenisidyl syrup in the town today, hospital and police sources said, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Golap Chandra, 39, a sweeper of Mahmudpur area of the town. Other sick people were also sweepers.

According to local people, Golap and his nine drug-addict colleagues fell sick, apparently of poisoning, after taking phenisidyl syrup on Thursday night.

They were rushed to the Sadar hospital where Golap died this morning. Others were released after stomach wash.

Of late, the number of phenisidyl addicts has been rising alarmingly in the town, police and the local people said.

Five arrested, ammunition, arms recovered

CHITTAGONG, Apr 29: Chandgaon police on Friday arrested three persons from an autorickshaw at Mohora and recovered one foreign made gun and ten cartridges from their possession, reports BSS.

According to a police press release, a police patrol team on suspicion stopped an autorickshaw carrying two persons. After a search the team recovered the arms and ammunition from the possession of one passenger.

Two passengers Kurshed Alam, Amir Hossain and the driver Omar Faroque were taken to police custody, the press release said.

In another drive one absconding accused and one alleged hijacker along with a kirch were arrested by Chandgaon police on Friday, the press release added.

Shortage of fund halts bridge construction work

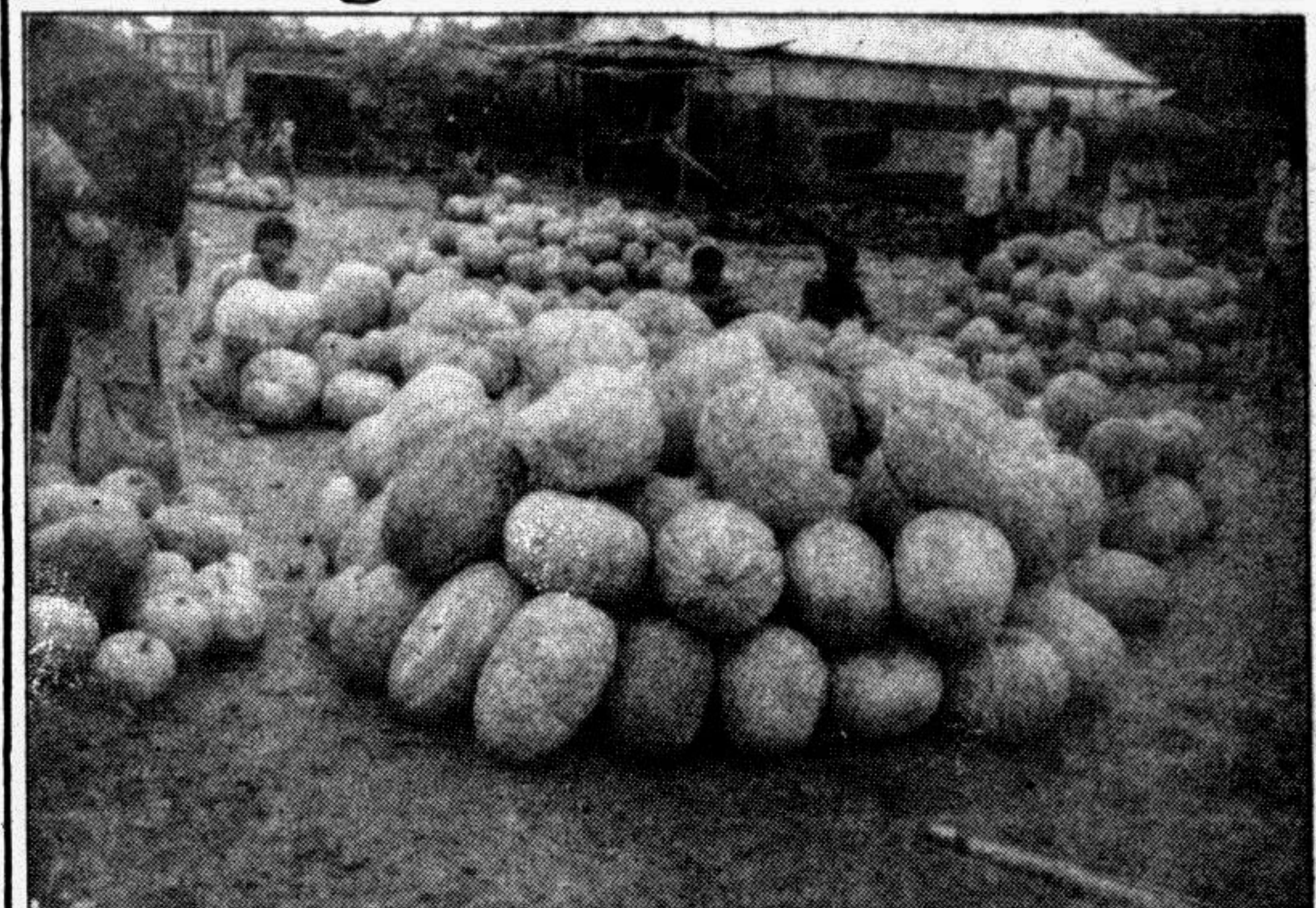
JAMALPUR, Apr 29: Construction work of 57-kilometre long Jamalpur-Dhanuakamalpur-Rowmari has been disrupted due to shortage of fund, reports UNB.

Under the Jamalpur District Roads and Highways, the project was expected to be completed during the current fiscal year at a cost of Taka three crore.

However, construction work of the last section of the one kilometre road linking Rowmari and Razibpur in Kurigram, could not be started as required fund was not available.

Meanwhile, local people have urged the concerned authorities to take immediate steps to complete the road to ensure smooth road communication.

Change the man and he will change the environment



A good crop of gourd for farmers in Joypurhat districts

In today's world socio-economic progress is dependent on comprehensive development of three Ms — man, money and machine. Development of man or human resource development is of prime concern. Human development is a process of enhancing the consciousness of the people about the cause-and-effect relationship through a continuous process of dialogue, action and reflection.

Human resource development (HRD) aims at developing people's capacity to analyze critically a given situation, to identify the underlying causes of the problem, and to determine the ways to solve them. The critical awareness activates them to think, plan and act logically so as to change their reality. Through this critical analysis, people realise that the solution to any common problem is only possible through an organised effort.

Contrary to the conventional approach, modern approach of development considers human beings as the subject and not as the object of any development effort. This implies, inter alia, empowering them, their participation in decision making process and mainstreaming them in the core aspects of development.

Change the man

There is a saying, "Change the man and he will change the environment". But the most difficult task is to change the man. Ignoring this fact, we often rush to form people's organizations. This has resulted in too many failures. Until and unless we raise consciousness of the people by involving them in analyzing critically their own problems and issues, we will not be able to initiate a self-reliant and self-sustained development process designed by, directed towards and managed by the people themselves. To initiate such a self-sustained process, it is necessary to develop fully people's awareness and skills to mobilise and organise them.

RD-12 Project, as a model for rural poverty alleviation, has been attaching prime importance to Human Resources Development, HRD in terms of economic and social development of the assetless rural poor. The project activities centre around organising assetless men and women in cooperative groups, imparting various types of training to them, providing credit support, making available to them social services which directly or indirectly contribute to the human resource build-up of the assetless men and women.

Since its beginning in July 1988 the project has mobilised 447,706 assetless men and women (137,462 men and 310,244 women). A total amount of Tk 1.765 million has been disbursed to them as credit to enable them to undertake income generating activities in various trades like kitchen gardening, fishing, cow rearing, beef-fattening and poultry. Such activities

have been providing them avenues of employment and income that lead to their economic development. Although these are considered as direct inputs for their economic uplift, such efforts have far-reaching impact on HRD. RD-12 has distinct and well-conceived elements for development of assetless men and women to sustain the fruits of development and to help build up their capabilities for furthering the pace of uplift.

Education and training

Needless to say, continuous education and training are essential for HRD. RD-12 has distinctive activities for training of its workforce and the beneficiaries. The staff training is designed to improve their knowledge and skills and, more importantly, to equip them with the right attitude required to work with the poverty-stricken rural poor. The training courses comprise of human development, institution-building, management action planning and principles and methodologies of adult education. Till now 8,804 functionaries who work directly with the beneficiaries have received training. This has enabled the project to build up a capable cadre of resource persons.

The project has been embarking upon many activities to provide various training to the beneficiaries — the assetless men and women. Such training consists of skill development, adult education and improving management capabilities. So far 4,99,693 beneficiaries have received various kinds of training. The training for the beneficiaries focuses on capacity building, skill development and, above all, empowerment of the assetless in deciding their own course of action for uplift. Some studies have been made (both within and outside the project) on the impact of training for the beneficiaries. The studies have acclaimed the benefits of training not only in respect of economic development of the beneficiaries but also on the social development aspects like empowerment, awareness building, decision-making capabilities of the poor, especially the women.

The success of RD-12 project in poverty alleviation has been widely recognised. This recognition has been possible largely due to the project's in-built system and clearly laid-down objectives of developing the assetless men and women as potential human resources capable of sustaining and continuing the efforts to build up a better future for themselves. It can hardly be overemphasized that for a developing country like Bangladesh with millions of rural poor, the poverty alleviation strategy is the inescapable choice. RD-12 project has been one of the pioneers in transforming the poor as human resources from the conventional outlook of considering them as burden.

Source: Ideas and Actions, a newsletter for BRDB's RD-12 project

There are many ancient spots to witness in Tarash

From Ashit Chowdhury

Behula, the daughter of Sai Sawdagar used to go shopping through a canal known as, Behular Khari. There she met Lokhindar, son of a renowned merchant, Chand Sawdagar. They were later married. It is said that once, while going to Chand Bazar the boat of Behula capsized in the canal. It is still believed that the boat is lying underneath.

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 29: Once reputed Tarash thana is now one of the most underdeveloped areas in Sirajganj district.

Long ago this area was called Tarash, well known for terrorism acts in Until few years ago the famous Chalan beel occupied a major portion of Tarash thana.

Five years ago the activists of the outlawed party Shrabahara ruled the area very often creating reign of terror in the area. People did not live in peace at all. Abductions, looting, highway robbery etc. were common features of the area for which many left the area in fear of becoming victims.

The three-storied 'Dol Mancha', situated in Tarash bazar, is one of the main attractions. It is learnt that in 1720 after the death of King Ramkrishna Sanyal, his wife, Queen Sarbani Devi took over the charges of the kingdom of Tarash. The 'Santal's' were major among her subjects. Following lavish expenses of the King, the Queen inherited a huge amount of debt. Later, she appointed Ramram Roy as the Dewan for smooth functioning of the kingdom.

Ramram Roy was a wise councillor and soon brought the kingdom into a profitable concern. One of his brothers was a top official of the then Nawab of Dhaka. When mother of Ranram Roy died, her funeral was celebrated gorgeously. By spending Taka one lakh each from the two brothers. After completing the funerals, Dewan Ramram Roy constructed the three-storied 'Dol Mancha' or better known as Tribal Temple at Tarash Bazar by the side of Harisava' using the left over money.

The 'Kapileswar' Temple, another ancient spot, situated in village Chebcharian about 12 kilometers from Tarash thana headquarters. Long ago, Basudev Talukder alias Narayan Dev Chowdhury served as an employee of Nawab Islam Khan. The Nawab presented 200 mouzas as 'Jaigir' being satisfied at his services.

One day, when Basudev was walking by the side of a jungle he found a cow giving milk in the bush. Out of curiosity, he discovered a statue of 'Shiva' in the bush and brought it to his house. He then constructed the 'Kapileswar' Temple and donated Gopinathpur and Charitapak Mouzas to bear the

expenses of the Temple.

The Binsara village, about six kilometer from Tarash thana sadar is known as the birth place of Behula, a heroin of the folk tale Chand Sawdagar. At that time, the village was known as 'Nichanagar'. Bacho Bania alias Sai Sawdagar was the father of Behula. In this village, there lived a big well known as 'bach. Banlar Koop with four feeder wells inside. Each feeder well, was covered by red earthen jars which were filled with snakes. More than 260 small and big ponds were dug in this village for use of the commoners in the area. The well were repaired by the then Tarash upazila parishad in 1986.

The house of Bacho Bania was situated on about 40 areas of land. Most of the areas are allegedly occupied by illegal occupants at present. The house of Bacho Bania was believed to be demolished by an earth quake and has not yet been recovered. There was also a milk pond inside the house which was full of poisonous snakes. By the order of the ruler of the area every subjects had to bring milk as food for the snakes inside the pond.

Behula, the daughter of Sai Sawdagar used to go shopping through a canal known as, Behular Khari. There she met Lokhindar, son of a renowned merchant, Chand Sawdagar. They were later married. It is said that once, while going to Chand Bazar the boat of Behula capsized in the canal. Still it is believed that the boat is lying underneath.

Other than the mentioned temples and buildings there are few more places of historical importance at Tarash. The archaeological department can take initiatives to preserve the past glories of Chalan beel oriented Tarash thana.

Communication network of Tarash can be developed with the districts of Natore, Pabna, Bogra.

A better communication and effective campaign to attract the tourists may bring about a welcome changes in of Tarash.

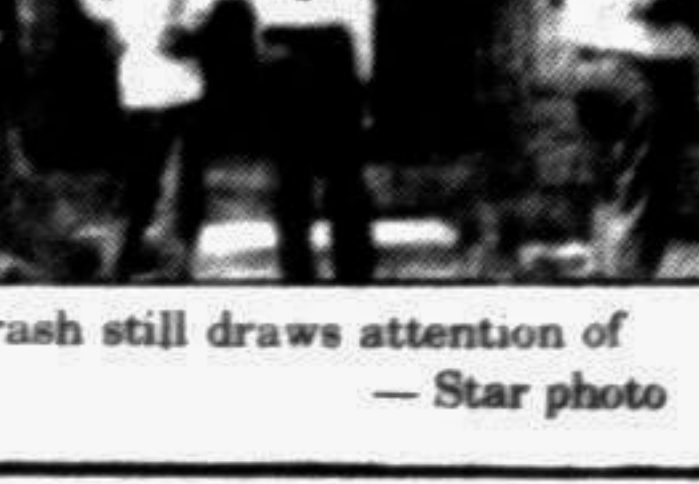
Some of the famous temples have already collapsed and some are on the verge of destruction. To preserve the archaeological richness of Tarash in the interest of the nation's cultural heritage which in future, will help to attract tourists from abroad needs urgent maintenance.

The two-storied 'Dol Mancha' built in the beginning of the 18th century, was the contribution of Balaram Chowdhury who served under Subedar Murshid Kuli Khan. In 1718, he constructed a palatial building at Kunjaban of Tarash. They temple served as a worship for his family members.

The house of Balaram Chowdhury has disappeared with the passage of time, but the temple still stands a masterpiece indeed. Balaram Chowdhury also had ordered to construction of Tarash-Dhaka road via Chatmohor some 300 years ago.

Some of the famous temples have already collapsed and some are on the verge of destruction. To preserve the archaeological richness of Tarash in the interest of the nation's cultural heritage which in future, will help to attract tourists from abroad needs urgent maintenance.

SIRAJGANJ: A temple in Tarash still draws attention of tourists



Star photo

Doctors show little interest to serve in remote villages

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Apr 29: For want of physicians, medicare facilities and negligence of authorities patients of five health complexes of Jhenidah district have been suffering badly. It was alleged.

According to reports, posts of eight physicians were created for thana health complexes (THC) of Saikupa, Harinakundu, Kaliganj, Kotchandpur and Moheshpur. But two posts in Saikupa THC, one post in Harinakundu THC, two posts in Kaliganj, two posts in Kotchandpur and two posts in Moheshpur thana health complex are vacant for long. As a result the patients have been suffering due to physician shortage. Further, the Thana Health and Family Planning Administrator (THFPA) in Saikupa health complex allegedly have not been carrying out their duties as they reportedly stay outside the headquarters. It is further alleged that the allocated residence has been allegedly given sublet to a medical officer in the 'AQ' marked house of the THFPA.

Some employees informed that due to absence of the THFPA administration crisis was created though it was reported in monthly Service Committee (SC) meetings repeatedly. Further, absence of medical officer at emergency room causes much inconvenience to the patients, it was also alleged.

Local people alleged that almost all the physicians are engaged in private practice and they leave emergency room without notice. As a result the patients with serious wounds or symptoms are allegedly treated and admitted by the medical assistants (MA) instead of medical officers (MO).

Saikupa thana health complex is the victim of this evil practice, local people alleged. They also alleged that the matter was repeatedly informed to the civil surgeon (CS) Jhenidah but no measure was taken against the medical officers so far.

Patients, both in outdoor and indoor are suffering badly for want of sufficient medicines. They are treated with low-quality antibiotics like Tetracycline or Cotrimoxazole instead of broad spectrum antibiotics. Outdoor patients (OPD) are mainly treated with low-cost antacid, ferrous sulphate or ferrous fumarate tablets, paracetamol tablets and vitamin-B complex tablets.

Bed crisis has become an acute problem too. In the health complexes of Jhenidah district there are only 25 beds available. But in Saikupa, Kaliganj and Kotchandpur and Moheshpur thana health complexes on average 35 patients are admitted. In Saikupa THC sometimes the number of admitted patients rise to 50, it was told.

Arrest of killers of JP leader demanded

KHULNA, Apr 29: The major opposition parties at a public meeting here today demanded immediate arrest of the killers of local Jatiya Party leader Sheikh Abul Kasem who was gunned down by unknown assailants on Tuesday, reports UNB.

At the all-party meeting held at Mailapota of the city to condole the death of the JP leader, they blamed the government for failing to curb violence, saying that rule of law was absent in the country.

It was addressed by Moudud Ahmed, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Syed Deedar Bakht and Mia Muya Hossain of the JP, Begum Monnujan Sufian and Mostafa Rashidi Shuja of the Awami League, Sheikh Ansar Ali and Shah M Ruhul Kuddus of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Advocate Firoz Ahmed of the CPB and MA Wahab of the Muslim League.

Earlier, the qulhwani of late Kasem was held at the City College hostel ground near his Sher-e-Bangla Road residence.

One killed, valuables looted

CHITTAGONG, Apr 29: A gang of decoits shot and killed a villager and looted valuables worth about Tk 48,000 from South Harla village of Chandanish thana in the early hours on Thursday, reports UNB.

Police said the miscreants broke into the house of Shah Alam and looted booties. Later the decoits stormed a nearby house of Shah Alam's, Abdul Jabbar, 55. When he cried out in fear the decoits shot him.