

20,000 rendered homeless due to erosion in Satkhira

SATKHIRA, June 18: Some 20,000 people of 12 villages in Ashashuni thana of the district are rendered homeless by the erosion of the river Ghulapetu during the last few months, reports UNB.

Heavy rainfall in the recent days also inundated the low-lying areas of the district. Diarrhoea has broken out and three people died of snake bite.

700 infants loose eyesight due to lack of vitamin A

MADARIPUR, June 18: About 700 infants of Madaripur and Shariatpur districts have already lost their eyesights because of vitamin A deficiency, reports UNB.

A recent survey conducted by the district health offices revealed that infant mortality rate in these two districts has increased alarmingly with reluctance of more and more mothers to breastfeed their children. About 60 per cent of total kids of these districts have been suffering from different kinds of diseases due to malnutrition.

Sources close to the Civil Surgeons offices of Madaripur and Shariatpur said that young mothers in the both urban and rural areas are reluctant to breastfeed their children as they think breast milk is not that much essential for their infants.

Another survey in these districts showed that 30 per cent of both rural and urban mothers prefer baby foods.

Poultry, dairy farming in high school curriculum in Tangail

TANGAIL, June 18: A 10-day course on poultry and dairy farming for high school science teachers began at Tangail Thana Parishad auditorium recently under the auspices of Livestock Department, reports BSS.

A total of 47 teachers of high schools of the district are taking part in the course.

Government has taken up the programme to educate the teachers about dairy and poultry farming.

Poultry and dairy farming has been incorporated in high school level syllabus, official sources said.

Survey on pry school attendance

Girls show more interest in attending classes

NATORE, June 18: Attendance of primary school girl students is higher than those of boys in 10 northern districts including Natore, a recent survey said, reports UNB.

The survey conducted by an international non-government organisation revealed that the rate of admission of the male students is higher than those of girls in most of the schools but the attendance percentage of girls is higher than those of boys.

The report said that rate of admission of boys is higher in Natore, Naogaon, Bogra, Joypurhat, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari districts. But the attendance percentage of girl students is higher in Natore, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Bogra, Dinaipur, Gaibandha, Joypurhat and Lalmonirhat.

In Natore, the percentage of admission of boys is 81.03 as against the girl students of 77.08 per cent during the last

academic session. But the girl students attendance in the schools is 80 per cent which is 76.08 per cent in case of boys.

But in Chapainawabganj, Dinaipur and Gaibandha, the percentage of both, admission and attendance, of female students is higher.

In Chapainawabganj, the admission of girl students is 77.08 per cent and their regular attendance is 65.01 per cent while the boys' admission is 74 per cent. Their attendance is 63.07 per cent.

The admission of girl students in Dinaipur is 81.02 per cent as against the boys of 76.03 per cent and attendance of girls is 62.03 per cent and that of boys of 59.03 per cent.

In Gaibandha, 73.03 per cent boys got admission of which 75 per cent is continuing their studies. But in case of girls, admission is 73.05 per cent of which 77 per cent is continuing their education.

In Naogaon, 67.09 per cent boys are continuing their education as against their 85.02 per cent admission. On the other hand, 73.05 per cent girls is prosecuting their studies as against their 83.01 per cent admission.

The percentage of admission of boys in Bogra is 84.07 per cent while the girls students is 84.04 per cent. But the presence of girls in these schools is 66.05 per cent as against the boys of 66.04 per cent.

Some 87.07 per cent boys got admission in the schools of Joypurhat of which 72.05 per cent is continuing their education. In case of girls, admission is 83.08 per cent of which 78.06 per cent is continuing.

In Lalmonirhat, the percentage of admission of girl students is 64.04 and their presence is 56.08 per cent while the percentage of boys admission is 70.09 while their attendance is 41.06 per cent.

Soft loans distributed to 150 families in Biswanath

BISWANATH (Syhet), June 18: The government has taken up a Taka 10 crore pilot project in ten thanas under ten districts for the alleviation of poverty, reports BSS.

The project would be expanded to all thanas of the country in phases, said State Minister for Land, M Kabir Hossain while addressing a public meeting here on Monday.

Under the project, poor and unemployed people will be provided interest free loan for setting up of poultry and dairy farms, development of pisciculture, purchase of rickshaws and rickshaw vans and establishment of small industries.

Interest free loans for poor

From Our Correspondent FARIDPUR, June 18: Urban Social Service Project, Faridpur under Social Service Department distributed seven cows among the destitute, five sewing machines among the poor seamstress and Taka 2000 each among the 39 small businessmen at a function held at the auditorium of Hitaishi High School recently. Md-Shakhawat Hossain ADC (Rev) chaired the function.

The total worth of the money and material distributed amounts to more than Taka one lakh 21 thousand.

The money was given as loan free of interest and refundable by instalments. The project aims at making the poor people self-reliant.

Md Nizamuddin, Director General, Social Service of Bangladesh attended the function as chief guest while K M Nurul Huda D C was the special guest on the occasion. Shiban Mukherjee, social service officer read out a paper explaining the aims and objectives of the project and conducted the function.

Odour that remains 27 yrs

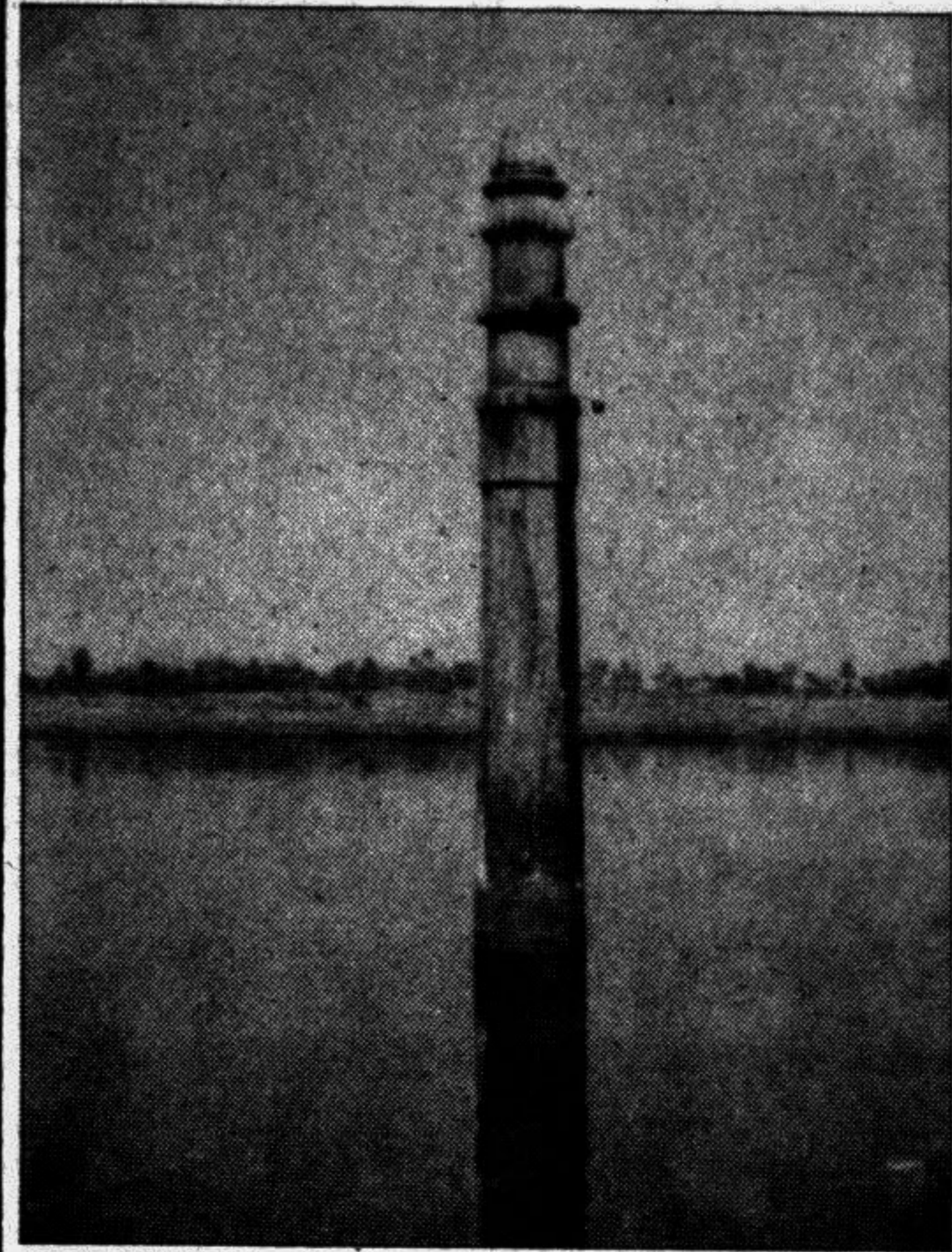
From Our Correspondent JHENIDAH, June 18: Odour of Endrine still haunts a house even after 27 years.

According to sources Agricultural Extension Department (AED) in the district rented a house near the post office of Saikupa town to store the pesticide. Although they left the house in 1968, the bad odour of the pesticide still grips the house.

The owner of the house complained that he cannot get rid of the bad odour despite frequent washing.

Deebar Dighi and Kaibarta Khanda-relics of past

From Our Correspondent



RAJSHAH: The Kaibarta Khanda seen standing in the middle of Deebur Dighi. The structure commemorates the end of Buddhist dynasty and rise of Hinduism in Bengal.

Bengal for 25 years were Dibya, Rudak and Veem.

Most of the historians say that the King Dibya (Dibya Raja) dug the large pond (Dighi) and built the pillar (Khanda) made of granite stones. It is said that the Kaibarta community considered their capture of power as the victory of Hinduism over Buddhism as the Pals were Buddhists.

The pillar has eight surfaces. It is 31 feet and 10.5 inches high, nine feet nine inches in circumference and two feet five inches in diameter.

The Deebur Dighi had an initially area of 550 bighas (183.33 acres). But, in course of time the dighi had been reduced to about only four bighas for not having renovated for hundreds of years. The earth of the pond grew coal-black being rotten for years after years. The bed of the pond always remain covered with fungal, herbs and shrubs, it was observed.

The Forest Department planted trees in some lands around the dighi and the rest of the lands and the pond were given lease to some people. Concerned sources said that the dighi was renovated for the first time and in 1987 at a cost of Tk 18 lakh. Two signboards of Varendra Research Museum of Rajshahi University are seen beside the dighi on which some valuable information are provided.

Local people said that some travellers went there to visit the Deebur Dighi especially in dry seasons. In the winter seasons, many picnic parties visit there. But the roads to reach the place are made of earth and full of ditches and holes. The owners of vehicles usually refuse to go there. Local people say that if the dighi is renovated, having gardens and picnic spots and other facilities and the roads are made pucca, a huge number of tourists and picnic parties can be attracted and the place can thus be transformed into a popular tourist spot. They said that the maintenance cost could be managed from its own resources.

It is learnt that the dighi and the pillar was built during the reign of the Kaibarta dynasty. The granite pillar is also known as Kaibarta Khanda. History says that the Kaibarta community belonging to Hindu religion achieved too much influence during the last stage of the Pal dynasty. They captured higher posts in the council of Mahipal, who lacked efficiency to rule the kingdom.

For his weakness, anarchy and dissatisfaction spread all over the kingdom. The Kaibarta feudals used the opportunity. They killed Mahipal and captured the crown in 1075 AD.

The Kaibarta community ruled the Bengal upto 1100 AD. The three rulers of the Kaibarta dynasty who ruled

Thousands of people grabbing khas land in districts

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, June 18: Thousands hectares of khas land in a total of twenty rivers in south-western zone of the country are in possession of local influential people who are reportedly making fake documents to legalise possession.

According to source, all these land transfer documents have been processed with the collaboration of district revenue office personnel.

Another source said that water bodies including beels, baors, rivers in the area have been illegally recorded in favour of private parties on the basis of fake documents. It is learnt, many of these baors and rivers have been divided into number of sections turning into big ponds and fishery projects under private ownership. There is no denying the fact that all these water bodies are khas which government is owner. Siltation at the rivers following unilateral withdrawal of water from the Ganges by constructing Farakka Barrages causing all rivers to die in the region.

The rivers including the Betna, Bhairab, Kudla Mukteswari, Kupadak, Mathubhanga and Chittra have been seriously affected. Betna, that originated from Moheshpur in Jhenidah, has lost its existence up to Sharsha in Jessore. The entire portion is divided into ponds, and fishery projects or was brought under different cultivation schemes.

Mukteswari, touching down Changaches Jhiker-gacha, Jessore, and Keshabpur thanas in Jessore, has gone out of existence too. The entire area has turned into paddy land and at some places, fishery projects were taken recently. Kudla, Kopadak fares no better, Chittra Mathavanga and Nobaganga look similar.

It is alleged that taking advantage of the growing situation local hoodlums and village headmen have come up to grab the property by dividing the river into sections and constructing embankment all around by excavating tanks on huge areas for fisheries project.

Latest report says that Bhairab, originated from Changacha is now virtually a vast paddy land down to Jessore Nowdagram. Large number of tanks have been excavated recently under fisheries department. Complaints have been received to the effect that number of tanks on the Bhairab near Jessore town, have been excavated under personal initiative, while the river is still khas and belongs to government.

Obviously, help and cooperation from Revenue Department has led to this situation. According to official source, land emerged out of siltation or shoals in baors, rivers can not be brought under cultivation or be treated

as paddy land until its character from river to land is changed by official order of district administration. It is a long process, requires enquiry order to be issued by Deputy Commissioner and report back through various channels.

When large portion of beel under Chowgacha thana in Jessore became land and local influential and jotdars began to enjoy it by cultivating, district administration took up the matter very seriously. The then Deputy commissioner, Fazlur Rahman leased out the entire land in favour of local landless co-operative society first by holding on the spot enquiry by competent authority and then by changing character of the land.

Another report says that the Kulia baor under Chowgacha thana was khas property. But after liberation war some dishonest men of the area got it rewarded in their name and began to use as their own, it was alleged.

The then Deputy Commissioner, Jessore, Abdul Mukhtar Chowdhury on being informed, looked into the matter. He took initiative to cancel all fake and fictitious documents that were reportedly prepared and produced in the court by that party. He got back the baor again in khas Khattian of the government. It has been leased out from Jessore district administration recently.

Women learning to earn through small business in Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, June 18: Baliakandor is a small village under Pagla Kanai Union Parishad in sadar thana of Jhenidah district. Most of the families of the village were poor day labourers. The Women's Entrepreneurs Development Programme (WEDP) of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) changed the socio-economic condition of the village. Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) and BSCIC jointly mounted a campaign to change the living condition of the village poor, says a Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) source.

Talking to Md Atiar Rahman, Regional Manager (RM), BKB, it was learnt that they had taken up the WEDP and few similar programmes to eradicate poverty from the society. BKB could play an important role as it was established for the development of rural people and poor farmers. BKB aims at reducing the number of unemployed people, the RM added.

The programme was initiated in 1992 as an experiment and 50 per cent of the BKB branches were included in the programme by February 1995, all the branches were included in the project. Poor people can get loans from BKB for agriculture production, poultry, fish cultivation, small trade, paddy husking, blacksmiths, pottery, and such other professions, sources said.

When this correspondent visited a WEDP village at Baliakandor, he witnessed a change in the living standard. Talking to Momena Khatun, 32, a housewife it was gathered that her family was passing days in extreme hardship as her husband Amjad Mollah, a day labourer, could not support the family of five. During last year she took a loan of Taka seven thousand from WEDP for paddy husk-

ing. Now she earns at least Taka 1300 per month after paying her monthly instalments of loan. She has constructed a tinshed house and sending their eldest son to school.

Rupban Khatun, 23, another housewife of the same village said that her husband could hardly manage two meals a day for the family. She took Taka four thousand as loan for paddy husking about one year back and recovered the whole amount. Now she earns Taka 45 to 50 daily from the project and earns another Tk 15 to 16 daily by selling milk. The cow was purchased with the project money, Rupban said. Her son goes to school.

Payra Khatun, 25, is also a

housewife of village Baliakandor who took Taka three thousand as loan. Today she earns Taka 25 to 30 daily. She had purchased two bullocks to cultivate land in the village.

Another success story is of Hira, 38, a mother of four children. She had purchased a sewing machine with loan money amounting to Taka four thousand from WEDP about one year back. After three months training she was allocated the loan and today she earns between Taka 60 and 75 a day.

All these women told that before getting the loan they could not sign. WEDP arranged to make sure they could at least sign their names and they never gave thumb

impression on any paper again.

Women members also informed that they were aware about primary health care, birth control, primary education and sanitation, which they learned through lessons.

Rozy Khatun, 40, a destitute woman who was passing her days in hardship, first took a loan of Taka five thousand to run a bakery at Jhenidah a few years back. She had already started construction of a five storied building and now she earns several lakh taka every year, it was learnt.

Regarding the programmes and activities of WEDP, Rousan Ara Maqbul, Officer-in-Charge, Jhenidah informed that they had been giving

loans among the distressed people against bread manufacturing, bullock-driven oil mills, tooth powder project, needle work, nakshi kantha, pisciculture cultivation, embroidery, tailoring, paddy husking and other small business projects. Before giving loan they give two types of training, 'management training' and 'skill development training' among the loanees.

The members of WEDP must be able to sign, because WHDP do not accept any thumb impression, Rousan Ara informed. WEDP officials and employees also prefer the women members who have small family. Apart from loan function, they had been teaching the rural women about children's education,

family planning, sanitation and other basics. Illiteracy programme is another function of WEDP, she added.

The Officer-in-Charge informed that they had distributed Taka 47 lakh 36 thousand among 1564 loanees in 103 villages out of 290 villages of sadar thana of the district. They are going to introduce a new project on weaving industry, it was added. About the next programme of WEDP, Officer-in-Charge informed that they will form groups of 10 or more members and WEDP will invest money among loanees directly and more people would be benefited with the new programme as WEDP is a hundred per cent successful programme of BSCIC, sources said.



JHENIDAH: A woman weaving a rope-shelf in a project arranged by WEDP at Jhenidah. — Star photo



JHENIDAH: Some women members are taking training on stitching nakshi kantha at WEDP office in Jhenidah. — Star photo

Erosion in Sirajganj 350 families rendered homeless in 24 hours

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, June 18: Erosion situation in Kazipur, Sirajganj Sadar, Belkuchi and Shahzadpur thanas further deteriorated rendering more than 350 families in 15 villages homeless.

Erosion of Jamuna have washed away different portions of Brahmaputra flood control embankment including Ramgati, Banglabazar, Pashtakwri and Raotara.

Due to continuous erosion around Sirajganj launch and ferry ghats the IWTA have shifted the ghats. Sirajganj

town protection embankment in front of BL Government High School is threatened.

When contacted over telephone the Executive Engineer of Sirajganj BWDB told that the town protection embankment is out of danger. He further added that due to fund constraints and early onrush of flood water, construction of damaged embankments at Banglabazar and Panehutakri could not be done. Ongoing Tk 1.6 crore project at Simpa could not be completed either.

Construction of bridge Deadline crosses: 40 pc work still incomplete

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, June 18: Construction works of Dhagara bridge on Fulzor river in Raiganj thana has not yet been completed even four months after the scheduled time.

This is causing troubles to more than three lakh people of Raiganj, Tarash and Dhunat thanas.

It is learnt that a 480 feet long baily bridge with concrete foundation was sanctioned at Dhagara with an estimated cost of Tk one crore thirty lakh. Construction works started on February 19, 1993 and was supposed to be completed within two years. Although four months have passed after the scheduled time and 40 per

cent works of the bridge is yet to be completed.

When contacted, the contractor of the project told that 'well drive car bailing item' necessary for the bridge is not sanctioned by the authority causing delay in completion of the bridge.

Meanwhile, higher authority of the Roads and Highways Division (RHD) from Bogra and Pabna have visited the site and instructed the contractor to complete the works. The Executive Engineer of Sirajganj RHD told this correspondent that the works will be completed by June 1995. But the project is not expected to be completed as per deadline, it is observed.

Flood situation worsens in Gaibandha

GAIBANDHA, June 18: Flood situation worsened in the district following rise in the water levels of different rivers and continuous rainfall during last few days, reports BSS.

Low-lying areas near the river Brahmaputra, Teesta, Chagot and Jamuna have already gone under flood water.

School boy commits suicide

From Our Correspondent FARIDPUR, June 18: A school boy of village Kurapara under Nagankanda thana committed suicide by taking poison recently.

It is reported that on the day of incident Zainal, 17, had a quarrel with his mother over a family affair.