

Contraband goods seized in Cox's Bazar

COX'S BAZAR, July 12: Customs officials recovered huge quantity of contraband item from two vehicles on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road on Saturday and Sunday night, reports UNB.

According to official sources, a group of Customs officials led by Saidur Rahman seized one micro bus and a jeep loaded with the smuggled cigarette during the period. The contraband was smugglers managed to flee.

A case has been filed in this connection.

One 'Haji Shahab', an alleged member of an international smugglers' ring of Chittagong, is said to be the owner of these vehicles.

Meanwhile, some unidentified miscreants, engaged in smuggling, are threatening the customs officials over phone for dire consequences if they proceed with the case further, it is alleged.

Many making fortunes out of cultivating ganja

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, July 12: The cultivation of ganja in different areas of the district has been increasing alarmingly.

It is learnt that some dishonest persons have been making fortunes by cultivating ganja illegally in remote areas of Satkhira sadar, Kaligoni, Tala, Kalaroa, Assasuni and Debhata thanas of the district. The cultivation of ganja is wide spread in sadar, Kalaroa and Kaligoni thanas of the district.

Abdul Khaleq of Bishnupur village under Kaligoni thana and Mathur Rahman of Kushkhali under sadar thana were arrested by Narcotics and Liquor Department of Satkhira for cultivating ganja. They recovered 29 ganja plants. The department also recovered five ganja plants from Khalishkhali village under Tala thana.

Shahjahan Talukdar inspector Narcotics and Liquor Department, Satkhira informed that the cultivation of ganja is going on in sadar, Kaligoni, Kalaroa and Tala thanas of the district.

He added that they are unable to carry out operation in the remote areas for want of transport and other facilities.

Algae in saline bag

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, July 12: Saline injection containing algae was marketed in Saikupa bazar of the district by Mala Chemical And Pharmaceutical Industries Limited (MCP-IL) recently, it was alleged.

According to reports, a chemist purchased the saline namely DEX-TROPAC-10 (Dextrose Saline) from the company. But a big algae was detected in the bag. Batch no of the saline bag was 0155, manufacturing date February-95 and the expiry date was printed as February-97, it on the bag.

Talking to a Medical Officer (MO) of Thana Health Complex, Saikupa it was gathered that if a patient is treated with sedimented saline, he or she might be affected by rigor or severe spasm. Further more such type of saline might cause heart troubles, the MO added.

54 schemes undertaken in Barguna

PATUAKHALI, July 12: About 800 metric tons of wheat have been sanctioned for implementation of 54 uplift schemes in Barguna district under Food for Works Programme in the current year, reports UNB.

Of the total schemes, 19 will be implemented in Sadar, 13 in Amtali, 9 in Betagi, 5 in Bamna and 8 in Patharghata thanas.

The schemes included construction and repair of roads, culverts, drains and excavation and re-excavation of canals and earth work of different educational institutions.

According to another report, nine Health and Family Welfare Centres are being constructed in Patuakhali district. Under financial assistance of ADB about two crore taka will be spent for implementation of the project.

Official sources said construction of four Family Welfare Centres have been completed in Kalapara, Bauphal and Galachipa thana of the district. Construction of the remaining five centres is progressing fast.

Mother and children of the rural areas will get better health services after completion of the project.

Flood: Six out of 9 thanas hit Sufferings mount in Pabna

From Ranesh Maitra

PABNA, July 12: With further rise in the water level of Brahmaputra and the Padma on all points in the district, flood situation has worsened.

Six thanas of Pabna district, out of nine, are badly affected. These are, Bera, Santhia, Faridpur, Sujanagar, Bhangoora and Chatmohar. Pabna Sadar thana has also been partially affected. Bera is the worst-affected out of all the thanas.

All the seven unions of Bera thana including Bera Pourashaba has been largely inundated. Dhalarchar union has been entirely marooned. The entire population of the union have been shifting for safer shelter either to the Flood Control Embankments situated at a long distance from the union or even to the nearby district of Rajbari.

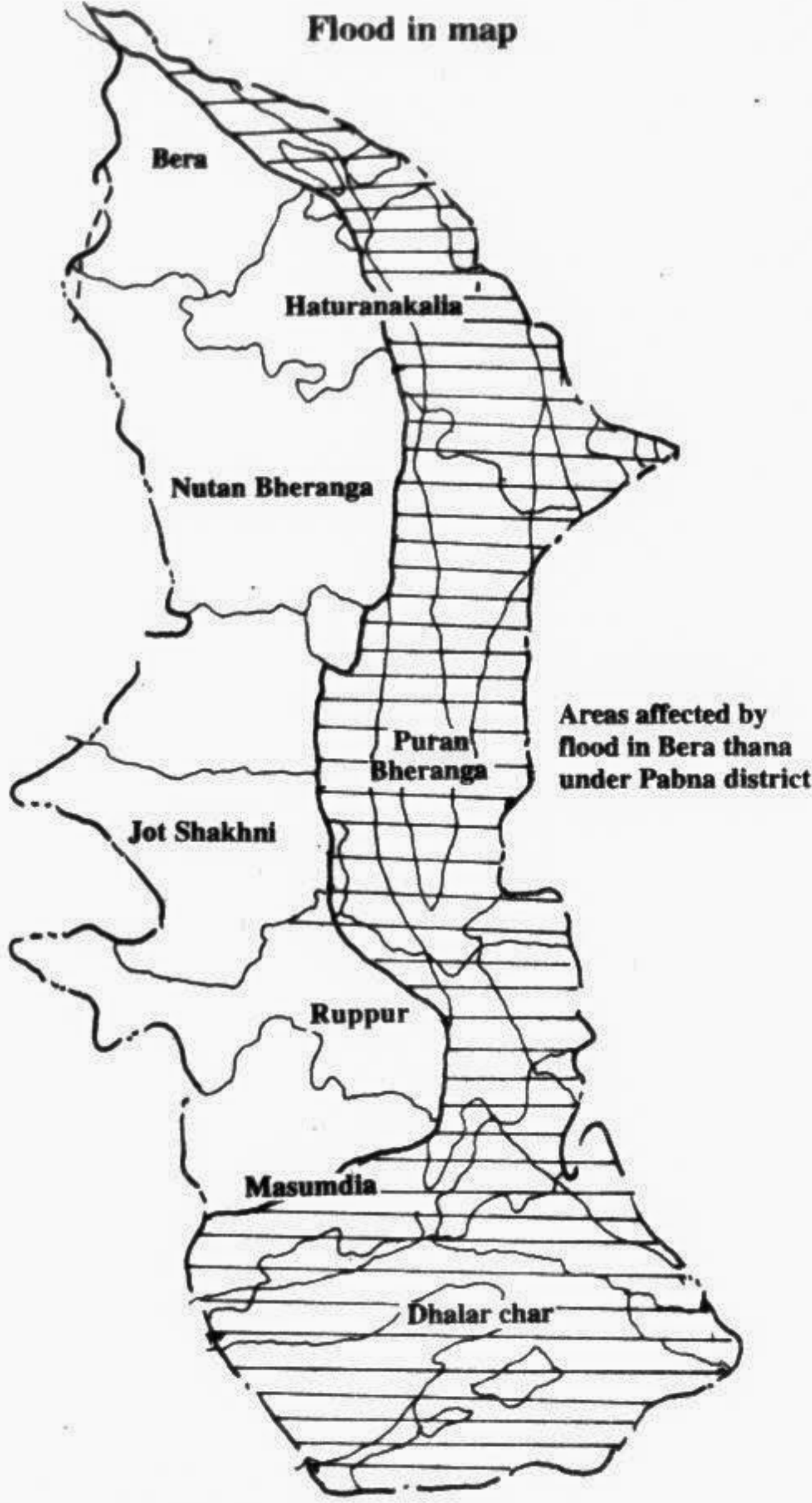
July 9, the flood hit people received no relief either from the government or from any non government agencies.

Haturia-Nakalia, Natun Bharenga,

According to reports received from Pabna on Wednesday afternoon, water level in Jamuna rose by 5cm at Nagarbari point. The river is now flowing over danger level.

More areas were inundated on Wednesday. According to flood control room in Pabna, about 400 more families were affected within last 24 hours till Wednesday afternoon.

Puran Bharenga, Jatshakhni, Ruppur and Masumdia are the other unions of Bera thana that are literally floating. The devastations caused by flood are in the areas outside the embankment.



While visiting the flood-affected areas of Bera thana along with Ashiqul Haque Choudhury, Deputy Commissioner, Pabna and Thana Nirbahi Officer, Bera, it was noticed that no arrangement has been made for drinking water for the affected people although all the tubewells, ring-wells, Tara Pumps sunk in the areas have been damaged. Thousands of people



PABNA: Many dwellings of Bhangoora thana have been inundated in the recent flood. — Star photo

Road link between northern dists and capital may collapse any time

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, July 12: The condition of Nagorbari ferryghat, due to deteriorating flood situation, turned highly risky. Road communication between Northern districts and Dhaka may collapse at any moment.

Of the four ghats in Nagorbari,

three have been seriously damaged and are under repair works. Two of these three ghats are being shifted. Loading and unloading of coaches, trucks and other transports are being conducted with extreme caution. Hence, the whole affair became time-consuming.

Consequently, there has been a long queue of vehicles — mainly trucks loaded with valuable perishable commodities like mangoes, banana, and vegetables are compelled to wait in Nagorbari ferry ghat for days. The truck-owners, due to this situation, have increased their fare abnormally.

Unless there is some unavoidably urgent business, passengers not undertaking their journey from the northern districts to Dhaka. The journey to Dhaka and back has been taking more than double the time specially due to hazards in crossing the river Jamuna. The number of ferries plying between Nagorbari and Aricha ferryghats is also inadequate.

The situation has turned grave due to closure of ferry services between Sirajganj-Bhuapur ghats — the only other route of road communication between the northern districts and Dhaka. As a result, the route via Nagorbari and Aricha has become the only route so far road communication between the northern districts and Dhaka is concerned.

Meanwhile, steps were taken to increase the ferry services on this route between Aricha and Nagorbari ghats but none can say exactly the date from which the ferry services would be increased.

Meanwhile, sufferings of passengers, traders and also of drivers and helpers of the vehicles plying on this route, exceeded all limits.



PABNA: One and a half mile long queue of Dhaka-bound trucks from different northern districts waiting at Nagorbari ferryghat. Most of these vehicles are carrying perishable goods like mangoes from Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, vegetables, banana etc. — Star photo by Ranesh Maitra

Water level in Padma, Gorai still rising threatening new areas of Kushtia district

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, July 12: River Padma and Gorai are now in spate. Water level of these two rivers are rising fast creating panic among the people living in four unions of Daulatpur thana, two unions of Bheramara thana, Talbaria union of Mirpur thana and most of the people of Kumarkhali poura area.

Incessant rainfall during last 10 days has aggravated the situation. All low-lying areas of these places have gone under water damaging standing crops on an area of 5,000 acres of land.

With the rising of water level erosion has started in several places and people in erosion hit areas are passing days in panic.

River Gorai which turned into a

canal. With innumerable ghats in its bed during the lean period turned furious as its flows has abruptly increased with tremendous force during last few days.

With abrupt rise in water level in the river Padma near Harding Bridge, ferry service in between Bheramara and Pakshey has become hazardous. Ferry ghats are being shifted frequently to cope with the situation.

This has created difficulties in transportation of vehicles which remain stranded on both sides of the ferry ghat.

Ganges Kobadak Project, the biggest irrigation project of the country has been facing a serious setback as the 3,000 feet long intake channel linking the river Ganges has

been badly damaged by erosion of Gorai river. G K Project authority are now in great difficulties due to this erosion problem which started a few years back. The local authority informed the government about the impact of the erosion and a project profile was prepared to combat the situation, an engineer of the G K Project told this correspondent.

Meanwhile, the river Ganges while eroding the bank of intake channel of G K Project, it has also devoured vast tract of land including the approach road towards Bheramara-Pakshey ferry ghat compelling Roads and Highways Department to construct alternative road to maintain uninterrupted communication from southern to northern part of the country.

The pace of erosion has aggravated the situation. But the situation was not same two decades ago. The river Ganges and Gorai were far from their present course. The erosion took serious turn in 1982-83.

Earlier, the river Ganges and Gorai were deep and wide and could carry large volume of water. The heavy siltation has been caused by low flow of water from the upper stream for the unilateral withdrawal of water by India. The surging tide and waves directly hit the banks of the rivers

are now living under open sky and in the temporary houses built on the embankments and other high grounds.

Sinking of temporary tubewells over all the embankments and other high lands, wherever flood-affected people have taken their shelter, is of extremely high importance.

While visiting the flood-affected areas under Bera, Santhia, Sujanagar, Faridpur, Chatmohar and Bhangoora thanas, this correspondent gathered that 36 unions out of 72 of the district, have already been affected and everyday fresh areas are experiencing inundation. Six of the affected unions have been completely submerged. Over 450 square kilometres of area have been inundated out of 1529 sq kilometres area of the affected thanas.

A total of three lakh people have been affected out of 11 lakh resi-

Our Sherpur correspondent says, flash-flood in five thanas of the district has affected nearly 3 lakh people.

Ferry service has been snapped for last five days, according to reports received here on Tuesday night.

Affected people are suffering from lack of food, drinking water, medicine and shelter. Standing crops, livestock and poultry have been badly damaged.

dent of the affected thanas. The number of affected being about 55,000. The number of houses totally destroyed are 15,000 while 7,000 houses more have been partially damaged.

Standing crops on 13 thousand hectares of land have been completely destroyed and crops on 15 thousand hectares in addition have been partially damaged.

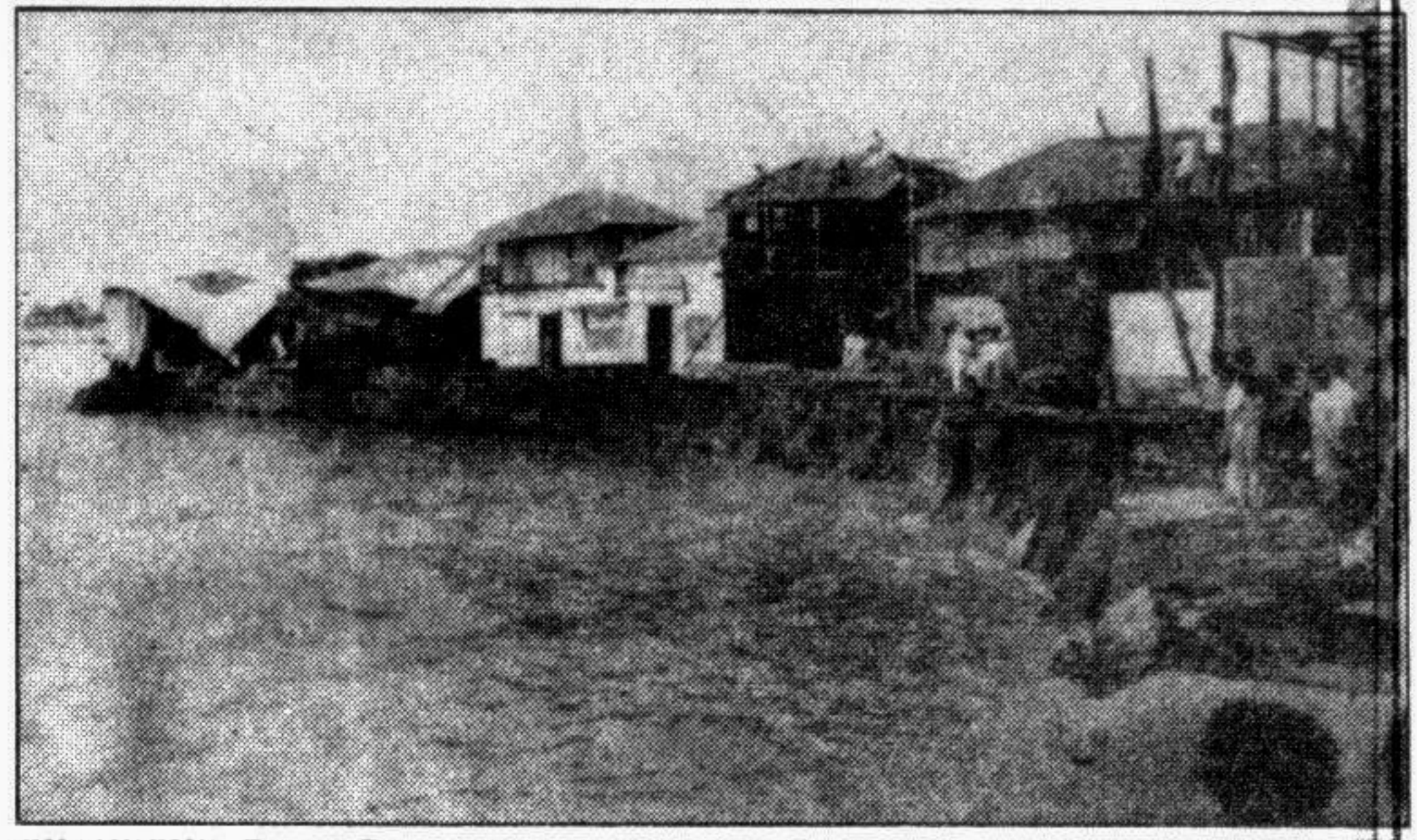
Besides, 84 educational institutions in Bera thana, five in Santhia thana four in Sujanagar thana and 24 in Bhangoora thana have been inundated. One hundred kilometres long katcha roads in Bera thana, 172 kilometres in Santhia thana, 100 kilometres in Faridpur thana, 500 kilometres in Sujanagar thana, 25 kilometres in Chatmohar thana, and 80 kilometres of roads in Bhangoora thana have been completely or partially damaged.

A total of 410 feet of pucca roads in Bera thana have also been completely damaged. Twenty-five culverts in Bera thana have also been damaged. Five Model villages and 83 Mosques in Bera thana have also been badly affected.

More losses are being feared in this district within the coming days.

Meghna erosion turns serious Chandpur town threatened

From Our Correspondent



CHANDPUR: Puran Bazar, a popular commercial centre of the town may be engulfed by the river Meghna. — Star photo

CHANDPUR, July 12: The erosion of the river Meghna in Chandpur has taken an alarming turn due to onrush of water from the flood hit areas of the country threatening the very existence of this riverport.

Town protection embankment breached at many places and a big area at *Nutan Bazar* and *Puran Bazar* have eroded. Chandpur launch and steamer ghat, railway station, railway colony are threatened by the erosion. Many cracks have appeared at several points of the embankment due to pressure of water coming down from the upper regions. Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) has undertaken a scheme to repair the damaged portions of the embankment at a cost of Taka 1.20 crore. The current repair works are nothing but an eye wash, alleged an official. The present repair works will not be effective to check the erosion. A long-term town protection scheme is yet to be taken by the government.

Chandpur town protection work was initiated in 1974 when Chandpur town was threatened by the erosion. Accordingly a scheme was taken under the name of Chandpur Town Protection Scheme at a cost of Taka 80 crore.

According to the scheme an embankment from Chairchar to Chandpur and three groynes were to be made. But only one groyne was constructed and the rest of the work of the scheme could not be implemented due to shortage of fund.

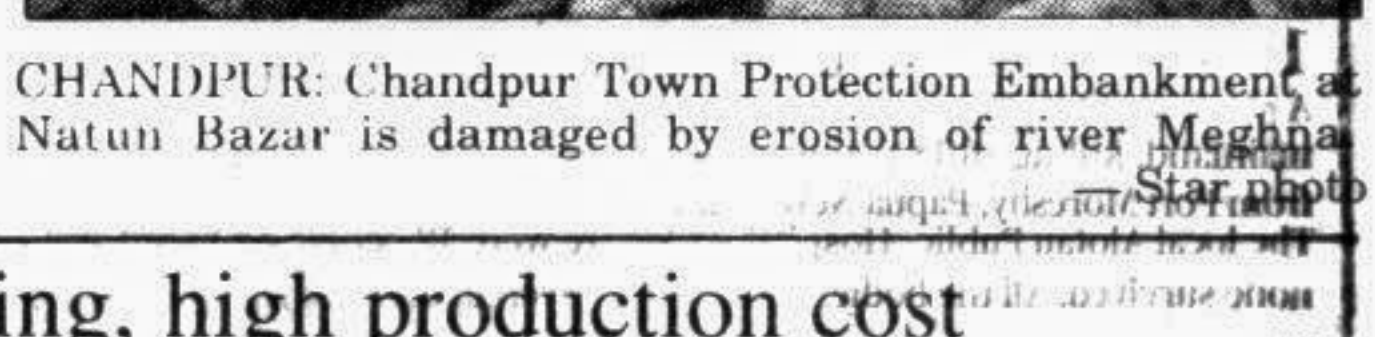
Another scheme — Meghna Survey, was undertaken at a cost of Taka 300 crore but due to fund con-

straints the scheme was postponed. Now the work of the town protection scheme is progressing very slowly. Every year BWDB sanctions some fund for maintenance only. The people of Chandpur have urged the government time and again to save Chandpur from the erosion on permanent basis.

Meanwhile Chandpur fish market, 20 business farms, railway yard, mosques have already been eroded by the river at *Nutan Bazar*. A big temple, one girls high school, 30 business farms, 20 dwellings and a large area of land were eroded at *Puran Bazar* causing a total loss of Taka 10 crore.

Realising the grievance of the situation, Jamuna Oil and railway station authorities have already dismantled their establishments. Many particularly businessmen are busy in dismantling their business farms. The overall business transactions at *Puran Bazar* are in a stand still.

It is apprehended that if the erosion of the river Meghna continues unabated at this rate, the future of century old Chandpur railway station launch and steamer ghat, railway police station, rest house, railway high school, Chandpur irrigation project will be endangered by the erosion within a few days.



CHANDPUR: Chandpur Town Protection Embankment at *Nutan Bazar* is damaged by erosion of river Meghna. — Star photo

Smuggling, high production cost Sirajganj handloom lies in ruins

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, July 12: Handloom oriented cottage industries in Sirajganj district faces closure due to manifold reasons including price hike of cotton yarn, dyes, chemicals and open entrance of smuggled Indian clothes.

It is learnt that the economy of Sirajganj district is mainly dependent upon handloom oriented cottage industries. According to an unofficial survey conducted in 1993, it was revealed that there are 20,000 semi-automatic handlooms in Belkuchi, 25,000 in Shahzadpur, 15,000 in Chowhali and 10,500 in Ullapara thanas. During last one year more than 8,000 pitlooms were installed in the district only to produce high class *jangis*. At least five workers including women and children are engaged directly or indirectly from processing to finishing for each lungi. Other than the workers of Sirajganj, a considerable number of skilled weavers from other districts are engaged in the handloom factories.

Sources of Bangladesh Handloom

Board have told that yearly 132 crore meter long cloth are required in the country at the rate of 12 meter per head. Handloom products meet 65 per cent of cloth of the country. Major portion of handloom products are supplied from the districts of Sirajganj, Pabna, Tangail, Narsingdi, Dhaka and Jamalpur.

Such a prospective sector of production faces closure due to abnormal price hike of cotton yarn, dyes and chemicals. Some of the factory owners alleged that 90 per cent count of cotton yarn is now sold at Tk. 50,000 to Tk. 56,000 per bale (400 lbs).

Besides, influx of smuggled Indian cloth led to fall in demand of home made products. Higher prices of raw materials incur higher cost of production and the home products fail to compete with Indian cloths. The marginal weavers have meanwhile closed down their factories incurring heavy loss. The devastating floods of 1988 also led to a considerable num-

ber of handloom factories to closure.

The government introduced a scheme of handloom loan to encourage the sector in 1984. Loan amounting to Tk 5,500 and Tk. 3,500, was disbursed respectively to semi-automatic and country loom owners through the scheduled banks. The scheme failed as a considerable amount of loan was grabbed by fake weavers.

Recently, in a public meeting at Gobindaganj under Gaibandha district, Prime Minister have declared that interest of handloom loans will be exempted and scheme for disbursement of new loans will be introduced. The declaration have encouraged the factory owners. The gerbilweavers have called upon the government to take steps, so that handloom loans can not be grabbed by fake weavers.

Handloom sector needs more attention of the authority by introducing supply of cotton yarn, dyes and chemicals at fair price and curbing smuggling.



SYLHET: President of Investors' Forum, Sylhet, MS Shakil Chowdhury addressing an open discussion meet on the potentiality of starting a stock exchange and establishment of new industries in the greater Sylhet region. It was also participated by Muktabis-Ur-Noor President, Aftab Chowdhury VP and Abdus Sattar, Secretary Sylhet Press Club. — Star photo

Gunbattle for ownership of shrimp gher in Moheshkhali

COX'S BAZAR, July 12: A gunfight erupted between two rival groups which continued for five hours at Ghona in Moheshkhali thana over the ownership of a disputed shrimp enclosure on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Police said, the gunbattle started to capture the shrimp bed. A police contingent rushed to the spot but details of the casualties in the shooting could not be known immediately.

So far, four people had been killed and more than 200 injured in skirmishes since the set up of the shrimp enclosure in 1971, police said.