

Smugglers frequently extracting forest resources from CHT

From A K M Zahoorul Huq



CHITTAGONG: 132 pieces of illegally extracted timber from CHT, about 400 ctf, were shipped from Nazirhat train station to Chittagong railway station on last October 22 on a passenger train. —Star photos

CHITTAGONG, Oct 27: Tension mounted among the forest officials and the conscious people following an untoward incident which took place at Chittagong Railway Station (CRS) on October 22 night between the forest officials and a section of unruly railway workers.

A team consisting of 8 to 10 forest officials was reprimanded at CRS by a section of unruly railway workers on October 22 night at 10 when they were in a bid to recover the illicit timbers brought there, forest official sources alleged.

The unruly railway workers not only resisted the forest officials to recover the illicit timbers brought there in unlawful authority extracted from the government reserved forest but also kept the government officials on duty in unlawful confinement after persecuting them for more than four hours, a high official from Forest Department (FD) alleged.

The Conservator of Forest, Chittagong Circle, M Ghulam Habib came to know from a reliable source that five wagons were loaded with illicit timbers of valuable species at Dohazari railway station and booked for Dhaka without any Transit Pass (TP) issued from FD. He directed his officials to investigate into the allegation and initiate necessary action, official sources said.

The FD team immediately rushed there and made personal and formal contact with the Station Master, Dohazari

railway station, who allegedly regretted to provide them with any details of the wagons booked, said Abul Mansur, Range Officer, Chittagong Headquarters Range, who had led the team.

In the way of searching, the FD team found the wagons apparently loaded with timbers at Kanchannagar railway station, a station out of those between Dohazari and CRS and requested the station master to let them check the contents of those five wagons, who eventually also regretted, the sources stated.

After an inter-agencies communication constantly between forest and railway, it was agreed to check the wagons at CRS. The FD team on mutual understanding locked the wagons earlier sealed by Dohazari railway station authority keeping their seal intact. The FD team also escorted the wagons till those reached at CRS on October 21 evening, FD sources said.

By then, the local high officials of FD obtained permission to check the wagons unloading and unsealing at CRS after a series of contacts made with the high officials of Bangladesh Railway, sources said.

Informing the Commissioner, Chittagong Metropolitan Police, Superintendent of Police, Government Railway Police of Chittagong and high officials of Railway Eastern Zone, Chittagong, the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Chittagong Forest Division

went to CRS to look over the check with his subordinate officers and staff in the evening of October 22, concerned sources said.

The FD team on arrival at CRS found another stock of timbers awaiting re-loading in the wagon to be carried by passenger train for two different destinations, which were booked from Nazirhat railway station. After the checking as the timbers were found totally illicit and brought there with no lawful authority. The FD team made a seizure list of 132 pieces of timbers volumed at about 400 cubic feet in presence of metropolitan and railway police, FD sources said.

Nazirhat railway station is not authorised to book any forest produces by the FD for any destination, concerned sources said.

The FD team, which went there to sort out the earlier issue on prior appointment found the Divisional Railway Manager, Nurul Islam Miah, the Deputy Chief Commercial Manager, M Obaidullah and other local railway high officials waiting in the office room of the CRS Station Manager, Serazud Daula, FD sources said.

The papers shown to us, it was found that the three wagons, bearing number 8809, 88038 and 55117 were loaded with the illicit timbers without any TP issued from the FD, while the wagons bearing number 52832 and 81812 were loaded with date expired, TP with very insufficient quantity of timbers, not supposed to

cover the spaces of the wagons," said Nuruzzaman, the DFO of Chittagong Forest Division.

These five wagons loaded with timbers were booked from Dohazari railway station on 13, 14 and 15 of this month. The validity of TP's shown with the RR against the wagons number 52832 and 81812 expired on October 9, 1995, FD sources said.

Regretting the request of the FD team to check the wagons decided earlier as per FD's procedures the railway team advised them to do that on reaching the wagons at destination in Dhaka. However, they permitted the FD team to escort the wagons till if reached at destination, sources said.

Timbers carried from Nazirhat railway station without any documents unlawfully will be seized formally and removed by the FD after two-three days on conducting an enquiry by the high officials, the FD officials quoted the railway team as saying, adding that acknowledging the seizure list made by the FD team, the station manager of CRS will keep the timbers in his responsibility for the time being.

The FD reserves the lawful authority to check the forest produces in transit by road, rail or water as per existing Forest Act. The Forest Transit Rule empowered the FD to seize the forest produces, if found illegal along with the carriers, sources said.

Inadequate rain forces low output of power from Kaptai plant

BANDARBAN, Oct 27: Production of power in the Kaptai hydro-electric plant has been decreased in recent period due to fall in water level of the river Karnaphuli and lack of adequate rainfall in the region, says UNB.

As a result, production in various industrial units in Chandraghona and Kaptai including the Karnaphuli Paper and Rayon Mills is being hampered.

The plant has three units of 50 megawatt each and two units of 40 megawatt each with a total capacity of 230 megawatt. But now only 150 megawatt electricity is being supplied from here.

Official sources said, at one stage the production decreased to only 75 megawatt. But the production increased as they took some measures in last May to prevent the possible disaster.

Two crushed to death

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Oct 27: Two persons were crushed under the wheels of a truck near Komorpur on Satkhira-Assasuni road recently.

It was reported that Fazar Ali, 60, and Syed Ali, 50, both of village Komorpur under sadar thana while sitting by the side of the road after performing Fazar prayers, a Satkhira bound truck ran over them. They died on the spot. A case was lodged with Satkhira police station.

The railway team left the station instructing the station manager to compile the decision, FD sources said.

"At one stage at 10 in the night, a section of unruly railway workers, who apparently provoked by the station manager, all of a sudden, stepped up attack on us creating an alarm with hue and cry at CRS," said Nuruzzaman, who alongwith few other officers and staff were able to escape from the attack. Adding that "at beginning of the attack, the station manager snatched away the seizure list and tore apart that into pieces."

Three FD personnel including a sub-divisional forest officer, who could not escape, were confined unlawfully by the unruly railway workers, DFO said.

The confined officials were freed at about 2 am with the help of the Superintendent of Railway Police, who was requested by all the heads of government agencies in Chittagong. They were all informed of the incident and responded promptly to rescue the confined officials of FD. Nuruzzaman quoted the Conservator of Forest, Chittagong Forest Circle as saying.

According to latest report received from the concerned official over telephone yesterday, the FD could not yet recover the illicit timbers unlawfully brought at CRS from Nazirhat railway station and the five wagons loaded with illegal timbers are on the way to Dhaka.

Serious crisis of gas prevailing in Khulna zone

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Oct 27: Acute Crisis of Liquefied Petroleum (LP) Gas is persisting in greater Jessore and the adjoining areas for the last one month. As such dishonest businessmen are allegedly selling gas cylinders at double the rate causing tremendous hardship to consumers. Lack of system to control the market and distribution has brought to this situation, sources said.

According to information, the crisis was mounting in the area for a long time. It exceeded the limit recently. Inordinate delay in the transshipment of the gas to the depots of Padma, Meghna and Jamuna oil companies in Khulna from Eastern Refining at Chittagong due to transport halt, strike, siege and other difficulties in October last has deepened the crisis in the market.

Besides, taking advantage of the situation a group of local businessmen has created artificial crisis by removing the existing stock from the market and are now selling the gas at their own fixed rate in a bid to earn more profit.

Reports received from different quarters indicate that there is, in fact, no crisis in the market. Taka 450 to 500 is needed to purchase a cylinder of gas in local markets.

According to another source, there are a dozen of dealers in ten districts of Khulna Division, appointed by Khulna office of the Padma, Meghna, and Jamuna for supply of the LP gas to their consumers at Tk 210 per

cylinder. But stoppage of supply from Chittagong refinery, has marred the Khulna depots to maintain the network. It is learnt, short supply of LP gas to Khulna depots from Chittagong plant, has led to this situation.

Currently the supply for the Khulna zone is only 13 thousand cylinders per month while the requirement is thirty-five thousand. It is half of the demand.

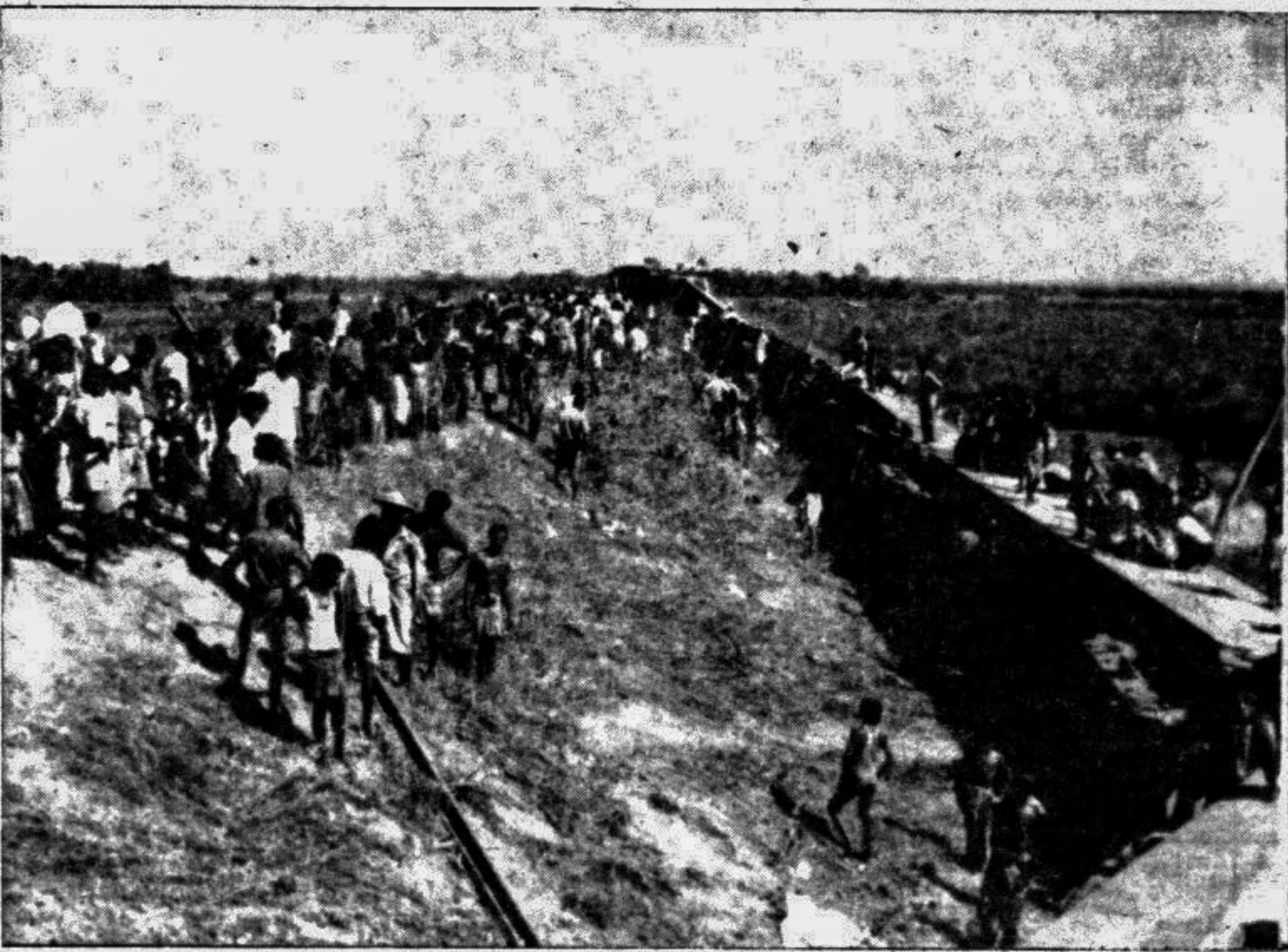
Thousands of consumers in the zone are pressing hard for selling of the gas at normal rate through rationing system by stepping up the supply immediately to avoid further deterioration of the situation.

Contrabands worth Tk 65 lakh seized from Jessore, Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent

Jessore, Oct 27: BDR personnel Jessore, seized contrabands worth Taka 65 lakh 30 thousand six hundred six taka from different border areas of Jessore and Jhenidah districts and arrested two alleged smugglers during the month of September last, said BDR sources.

According to the source, contrabands included Indian saree, shallow machine parts, motor parts, cycle parts, machinery parts, salt, sugar, phenidyl syrup, imitation ornaments, cosmetics, clothes and crockeries. All seized contrabands were deposited with Jessore and Benapole Customs godown.



SYLHET: Eleven bogies were derailed when the Sylhet bound inter-city Parabat Express met at a tragic train mishap near Satgaon Railway Station on Sylhet Akhaura section on last Wednesday afternoon. Five persons were killed and other 150 were injured in the accident. —Star photo by Iqbal Siddique

Jamuna, Brahmaputra erosion in Jamalpur — no end to miseries

From Our Correspondent

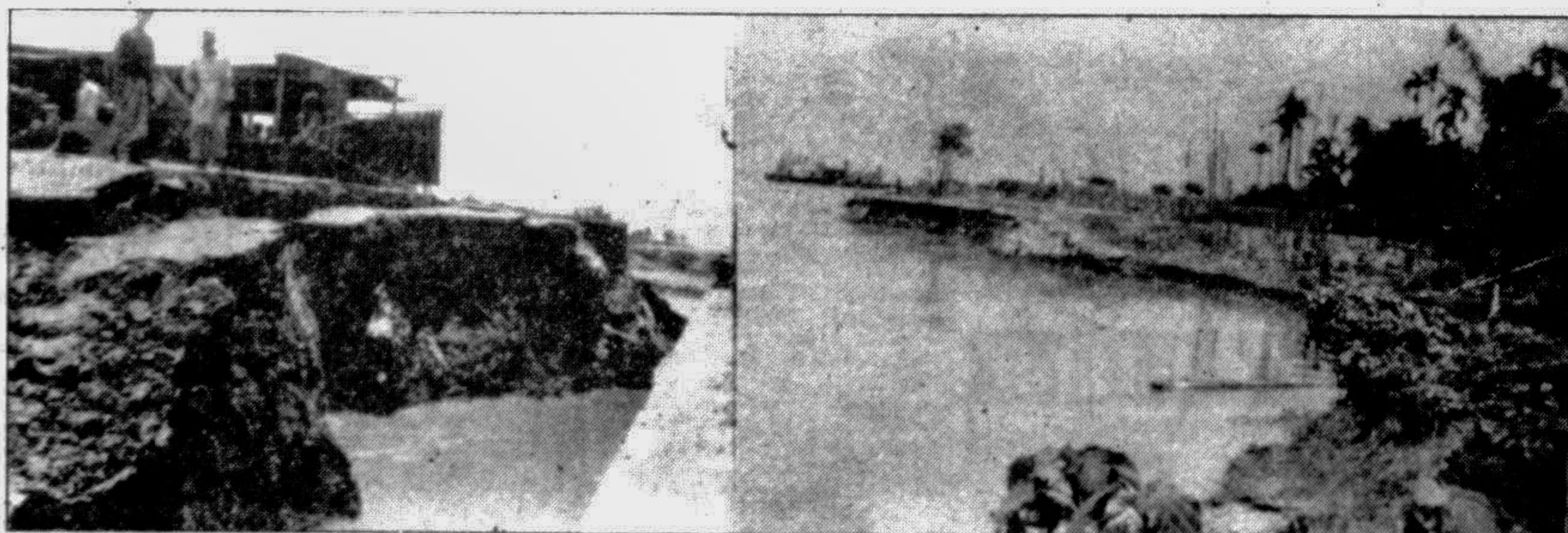
JAMALPUR, Oct 27: The Jamuna and Brahmaputra rivers already devouring vast tract of land in the district continues to grab fresh areas threatening educational institutions, markets, government offices, residential areas and railway ferry port.

Like every year, the devastating erosion has once again taken serious turn with the rise in the water level in the rivers. This year too, erosion has forced thousands of people homeless. About five lakh people, mostly poor, have taken shelter on roads, and other places. The railway ghat was earlier shifted to a new site. Many of the shops at the ghat area were devoured recently.

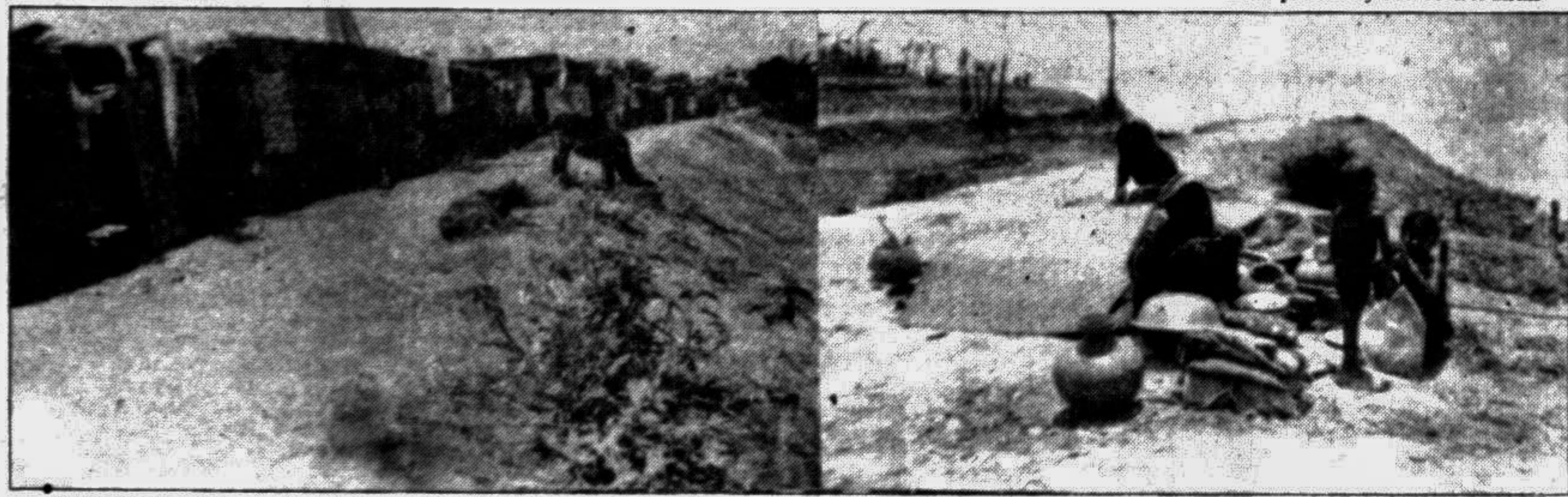
Measures so far taken by the concerned authority to check erosion in the district were alleged to be inadequate. Thousands of acres of crop land in the district, grabbed by the river erosion during the past years, has seriously affected crop output of the district. This year too, standing crops were affected by both drought and erosion.

According to unofficial sources, more than 80 per cent areas in five unions of Islampur thana have been washed away by the river erosion in the last seven years. The worst affected unions are Kulkandi, Belgassa, Chinaduli, Shapdari and Nowrapara.

Erosion in the district continues to affect rural poor who have lost at least 30,000 acres of crop land in the past few years. About 54 villages in five unions of Islampur thana alone were affected forcing hundreds of people to take shelter in different places. It was alleged that the erosion victims were not provided with any relief goods. Many of the victims have fallen sick who urgently need medicare. The severe erosion has also threatened many build-



JAMALPUR: Erosion of the river Jamuna which turned furious recently continue to devour vast areas in the district. The photos show (L) an affected area of Kulkandi union in Islampur thana. More than one fourth areas of Pirispur village (R) in Islampur thana were washed away this year by the mighty Brahmaputra. —Star photos by Md Meherullah



JAMALPUR: The erosion victims of the district took shelter (L) on the Harindara flood control and irrigation embankment. An affected family living under the open sky near Bahadurabad Ferry ghat. —Star photos by Md Meherullah

ings and similar structures. The 100 years old Gothail bazar, Gothail High School, Gothail madrasa, Chinaduli High School, Belgassa High School, Kulkandi High School, Shaheed Smriti High

School, Chinaduli madrasa and at least 15 government primary schools would probably not escape the threat of erosion. The Jamalpur-Dewanganj road, only 8 feet away from the erosion site of

bank of Brahmaputra at Kangalkusa point, may collapse any day. Kulkandi union parishad building, Chinaduli union parishad building, Madarganj thana health complex building also face similar

condition by the Jamuna erosion. Meanwhile, a 50-mile long portion out of total 63-mile long Harindara flood control and irrigation embankment from Pullah Kandi via

Bahadurabad ghat to Jagannathganj ghat has been washed away by the erosion of Jamuna during the last 10 years. This year continuous erosion affected 60,000 acres of crop land. A source of

Operation and Maintenance Division of Bangladesh Water Development Board (WDB) informed this correspondent that smooth maintenance and repairing works of the embankment is disturbed as both sides of the embankment are occupied by the affected landless people.

Due to pressure of flood water the Dewanganj and Islampur portion of the embankment was damaged recently. Different NGOs distributed house building materials among some families.

Erosion affected landless people who are mostly agricultural labourers were facing starvation. Scarcity of drinking water, clothing and medicine were also prevailing.

When contacted some erosion victims told this correspondent that they took shelter on the embankment, Islampur thana court building and different government khas land after they had lost their land due to the erosion of the river Jamuna and Old Brahmaputra. Different NGOs in the meantime are helping these people providing them with food and house building materials. Recently, they have submitted an application to the Dewanganj thana authorities asking for their rehabilitation.

One Nurul Islam, Chairman of Shapdari union under Islampur thana, told this correspondent that he took shelter in Islampur thana officers staff quarter with all his family members after he lost his homestead by the Jamuna erosion.

Total damage was estimated at Taka 25,000 crore after the liberation period in all the affected areas in the district.

Recently Rahima Khondokar, MP, visited erosion affected areas of Kulkandi union and distributed relief goods.

Tk 17 lakh allocated for post-flood rehabilitation programme

From Our Correspondent

MOULVIBAZAR, Oct 27: The government has allocated Taka 17 lakh 10 thousand for execution of post-flood agriculture rehabilitation scheme in Moulvibazar district.

The district Agriculture Extension Department (AED) had taken up a massive rob-crop cultivation programme under the said scheme. According to the AED source, the agriculture rehabilitation scheme included cultivation of 626 hectares of transplanted aman, 725 hectares of boro-paddy, 22 hectares of wheat and 20 hectares of vegetable.

Under the scheme seeds, saplings and fertilizer will be distributed among the flood affected farmers free of cost for cultivation of aman, boro, wheat and vegetable.

A total of four thousand 179 flood-affected poor farmer families will be benefited with implementation of the scheme.

Land dispute: Brother kills brother

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, Oct 27: One Jheku Mia, 32, was allegedly killed by his brother of village Bataraddi Para under Nayanagar union in Melandah thana of the district here recently.

According to report Jheku Miah was coming home from Local Malancha bazar. On the way his eldest brother Insan Ali stabbed him. He was killed on the spot.

Family sources said the murder was committed as sequel to a land dispute.

A case has been registered with Melandah thana police in this connection.