

First Japanese lady graduate from defence academy

TOKYO, Mar 17: The first woman to pass out of Japan's National Defence Academy graduated today...

Zulu warriors condemn Mandela

DURBAN, Mar 17: Some 5,000 spear-carrying Zulu warriors protested in Durban on Saturday to condemn what they called President Nelson Mandela's interference in their tribal affairs...

The protest was organised by the Unifetusa Labour Union, whose leader Sidney Gcaba...

Killing of 16 pupils Hamilton was wreaking revenge on adults

DUNBLANE, Scotland, Mar 17: Thomas Hamilton, the crazed gunman who massacred 16 tiny children in a Scottish primary school...

As Britain prepared to observe a minute of silence at 9:30 am (0930 GMT), four days to the minute after the slaughter at Dunblane Primary School...

Ray Wyre, a sex crime expert who has examined documents from Hamilton's home, said adults were the real target of the 43-year-old gun enthusiast...

Russia boycotts today's contact group meet on Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Mar 17: With more Serbs abandoning the capital and complaining that the Muslim-Croat government permits harassment of Serbs...

Karadzic, frequently accused of fomenting the Serb exodus from the capital, said Serbs were fleeing because they had no faith in a multi-ethnic future...

The exodus did not occur because the Bosnian Serb leadership wanted it, he said, but because the people did not see their future in the federation...

In a separate statement released Saturday, he repeated his view that Bosnia should be divided along ethnic lines.

Ideas of a single state for three antagonised peoples will merely lead to a new war, and the Serbs refuse to wage war further, he said.

His comments came as Serbs abandoned the Sarajevo suburb of Grbavica, which will be transferred to Muslim-Croat control on Tuesday...

Fearful of rules by their former enemies and encouraged by Serb hard-liners to relocate, Grbavica's Serbs hurried to load trucks Saturday while smoke billowed from apartment buildings and homes.

Serbs planning to evacuate

neighbourhoods frequently have burned buildings and harassed other Serbs planning to stay in hopes forcing them out as well.

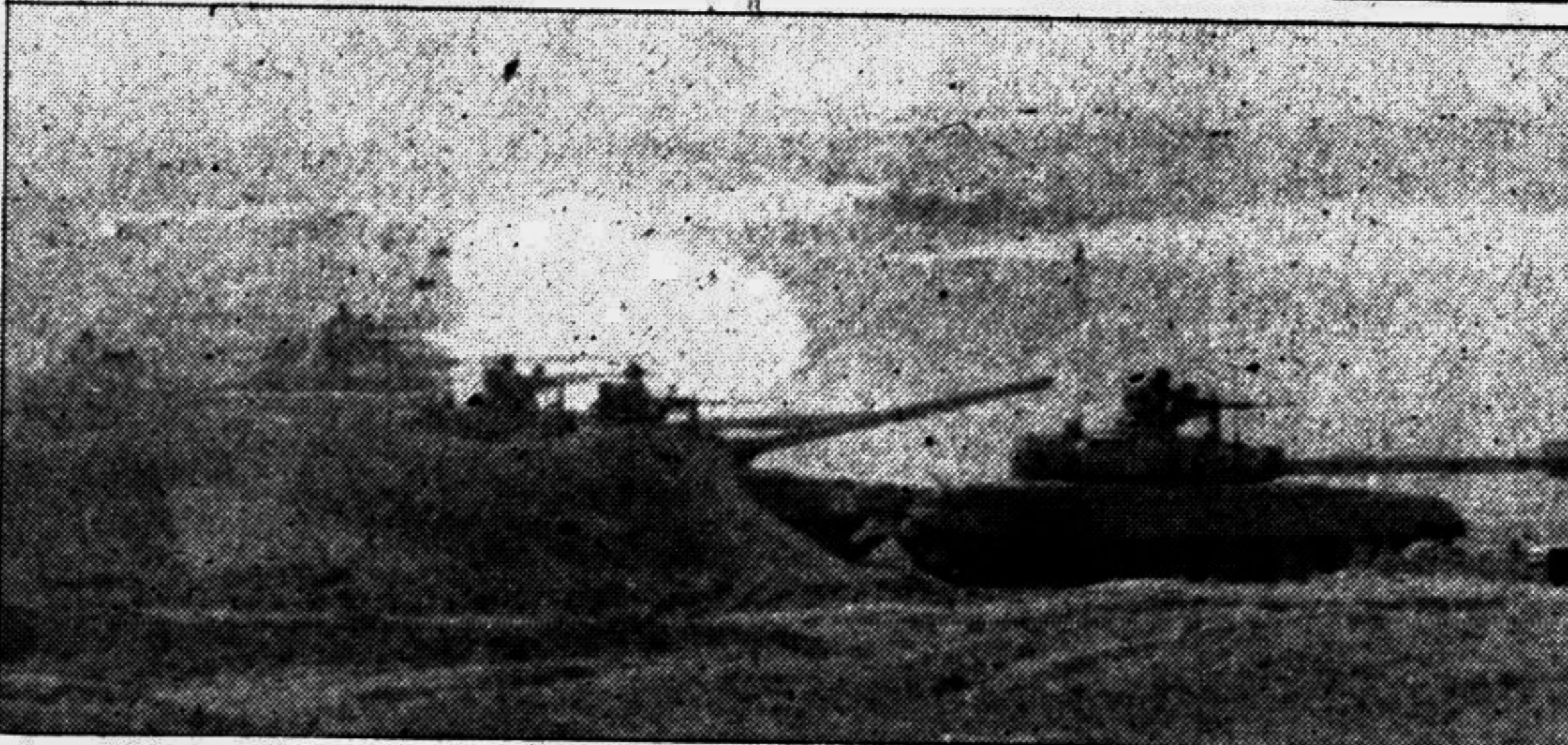
Serbs hoping to remain in the Sarajevo suburb were lying low. They had heard rumours that gangs intended to torch entire neighbourhoods on Sunday night...

Groups of Serb thugs have been roaming the area, looting and burrowing houses, UN spokesman Alexander Ivankovic said in Sarajevo.

Federal firefighters needed NATO escorts four times Saturday to fight blazes in Grbavica, Ivankovic said. In one case, a hand grenade was thrown at the firemen...

AFP adds: Russia is to boycott a session on Monday of the five-nation contact group on Bosnia of which it is a member...

French diplomatic sources in Paris said Russia was refusing to attend the meeting scheduled to take place in Geneva.



Armed forces of Kuwait and other countries in the region conduct the last day of Peninsula Shield 5 military manoeuvres with live fire exercises north of Kuwait City on Saturday.

Yeltsin blasts Parliament's call for new USSR

MOSCOW, Mar 17: President Boris Yeltsin on Saturday denounced the Communist-led parliament's call to restore the Soviet Union...

"I will allow no attempts to undermine Russia's statehood and destabilise the country," he warned the lower house, or Duma, in a statement.

Reaction continued to pour in from the former Soviet republics, where the Duma resolution was deplored as a crude Communist election ploy.

"An act of provocation," said Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosian. "Preposterous and anachronistic," said his neighbour, Georgian president

Eduard Shevardnadze, a former Soviet foreign minister. Yeltsin was a key figure in the events that hastened the Soviet Union's 1991 demise...

In language straight out of the Soviet lexicon, speaker Gennady Seleznyov said the Duma is giving Yeltsin a chance to "start the process of his political rehabilitation."

Seleznyov, a Communist, said the measure expresses popular sentiment. The Duma showed members of parliament worldwide that it can reflect the will and ideas of its voters, he said.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin saw it differently.

He said the move displayed lawmakers' inability to understand and respect their neighbours.

The measure is so outrageous, he said, that it's "hard to take seriously." But, he added, "considering the fact that it was adopted by the people trying to come to power, it's no joking matter."

Although the resolution is legally toothless, Yeltsin moved Saturday to reassure the world community and his neighbours.

He ordered the Foreign Ministry to notify other nations that the measure has no legal standing and does not alter Russia's commitment to its international obligations.

Troops, MILF gunbattles leave 23 dead

COTABATO (Philippines), Mar 17: At least 23 people, 15 of them Muslim guerrillas, were killed in gunbattles with security forces in the southern Philippines, a senior army commander said here today...

Around 2,000 Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels mounted simultaneous dawn attacks on army outposts in 10 villages around the towns of Lambayung and Sultan Sabrang...

The army fought off the attacks using heavy weapons, killing 125 MILF rebels. One soldier and seven civilians were also killed, he said.

Urgello said the MILF rebels blew up a bridge in Lambayung, Sultan Kudrat province while retreating, resulting in the deaths of three Muslim civilians hiding under the span.

It was the worst fighting this year between the army and the MILF, a breakthrough factor of the main Muslim insurgent group Moro National Liberation Front (MNL).

Marchers demand better conditions for immigrants

ROME, Mar 17: Several thousand people representing political parties, trade unions and a variety of associations demonstrated Saturday in Rome to demand better conditions for immigrants...

Organisers said 15,000 people had turned out despite the driving rain to attend the rally that was to continue through the night with a series of rock concerts by Italian and foreign groups in a central square.

The marchers sang, danced and carried banners as they made their way through the city.

The rally, attended by many immigrants from Africa and Asia, was called by Italy's main trade union organisation Cgil.

This is a demonstration to reassert everyone's rights, including the rights of people who don't vote, Fulvio Venturi, Cgil spokesman said.

Italy is home to up to 520,000 illegal immigrants, according to various official estimates. The central statistics office has recorded almost one million legally immigrants, one of the lowest rates of migration in Europe.

Farooq Abdullah unhappy over talks Kashmiri leaders slam rebels' talks with Delhi

SRINAGAR, India, Mar 17: Muslim politicians in Kashmir on Saturday criticised an unprecedented dialogue between India's Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan and a delegation of Muslim separatists, saying it was a futile exercise...

All those who took part in the so-called talks in New Delhi on Friday are rejected and tired militants who only seek personal benefits, Kashmir's chief Muslim cleric Umer Farooq said in this state summer capital.

India is trying to adopt a policy of divide and rule but it will face defeat and have to bend to the will of the Kashmiri masses, said Farooq, chief of the All Parties Freedom Conference, grouping some 30 rebel and political outfits.

The 22-year old leader said talks on the Kashmir problem were meaningless without Pakistan which administers part of the disputed state.

PTI adds from Chandigarh: The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and National Conference leader, Farooq Abdullah, today expressed "unhappiness" over talks between the home minister and some militant group leaders in Delhi.

Indian parties plan to go for high-tech electioneering

NEW DELHI, Mar 17: Indian political parties plan to go high-tech and battle it out on the air waves as they prepare to launch their campaigns for parliamentary elections only a month away, reports AFP.

Huge mobile television screens, cable advertising, laser technology and musical car horns will be the highlights of a hectic campaign which will take off as soon as election dates are announced, party leaders say.

We will concentrate more on the visual medium this time, said spokesman Vithal Gadgil of the ruling Congress(I) Party, which analysts expect to perform poorly in

what could be a do-or-die election. India's parliamentary elections, held once every five years, are expected in April or May. The Independent Election Commission is to announce the poll dates this week, but election fever has already caught on.

Political parties vying for a majority or a strong showing in the 545-seat Lok Sabha, or lower house of parliament, have to reach a whopping 550 million voters across the country during the month-long campaign period.

For once, the printed word faces stiff competition in cities.

The Congress, the country's oldest party, has started scrutinising in thousands of aspirants to pick its candidates, and beaming programmes in praise of Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao on state-run television.

The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party determined to oust the Congress this time, to sell its leaders, candidates and ideology to millions of middle-class homes through cable television.

The viewers will be dictated by what is shown on TV, said BJP spokeswoman Sushma Swaraj, adding that the BJP's star campaigners

would also fly more often this year to reach more people in less time.

The Hindu-revivalist BJP also plans to distribute scores of car horns that will blare a musical "BJP, BJP"....

Even some regional parties, their influence confined to state borders, plan to tour hundreds of villages in vans mounted with large television screens — a novelty in areas where TVs are rare.

The Congress and the BJP and their rich fund raisers also plan to issue a wide variety of stickers, badges, key chains and T-shirts sporting party symbols.

Simultaneously, millions of colourful posters and cloth banners and life-size cardboard hoardings and cutouts of party leaders will be plastered on homes and streets all over the country.

The only parties remaining faithful to the printed word are the cash-starved Communists who, despite their limited appeal, hope to mop up about 60 crucial seats in what could be a hung parliament.

Since the first elections in independent India in 1952, money has come to increasingly plan a dominating role during hustings — the bulk of it going for campaigns.

Rao of the Centre for Media Studies said the investigation into a bribery scandal involving virtually all parties, which is threatening the careers of a number of top politicians, was acting as a damper on high-tech electioneering.

The parties seem crippled by finances because of the scandal, he said. They are very apprehensive about raising funds, and are doing it in a discreet manner... it may finally end up in a low-profile campaign.

Dacoity in eight shops in Kushtia

KUSHTIA, Mar 17: Valuable worth about Tk 8 lakh were looted in a daring dacoity committed in eight shops in Kumarkhali market on Thursday, reports UNB.

Police said dacoits numbering 10 entered the market at midnight by overpowering the nightguards and robbed some television and VCR sets, from electronics shops, and gold and cash from Mukta Jewellery and Janata Flour Mills.

A case was filed with the police.

Protest rally in B'baria

From Our Correspondent BRAHMANBARIA, Mar 17: A protest rally was held by opposition parties as part of the indefinite non-cooperation programme at District Bar Association yesterday.

Presided over by Amanul Hoque Chinnio, the rally was addressed, among others, by Kazi Nazrul Islam Khadem, Adv Lutui Hai Sachho, Sayed Sirajul Islam and Abdul Wahid Khan.

Prices of building materials rise

BANDARBAN, Mar 17: Development works are being hampered in the district for non-availability and price hike of building materials due to the on-going non-cooperation programme, reports UNB.

Acute crisis of rod and cement has been prevailing here since last week while bricks are being sold at between Tk 2,800 and 3,000 per 1,000 as against Tk 2,000 earlier.

Traders said they cannot bring here rod and cement due to total disruption in road communications with Dhaka, Chittagong and other parts of the country.

Sarbahara men kill one

KUSHTIA, Mar 17: An arbitrator was killed reportedly by activists of the outlawed Sarbahara Party while he was conducting an arbitration at Kehurtala village in sadar on Friday, reports UNB.

Police said the miscreants shot Abdul Gani, 40, son of Rasul Khan, in front of the people gathered in connection with the arbitration. He was the second victim of the gang who killed district President of Krishak Sangram Samity Nabisuddin on March 2.

A case was registered with the sadar police. The body was sent to Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

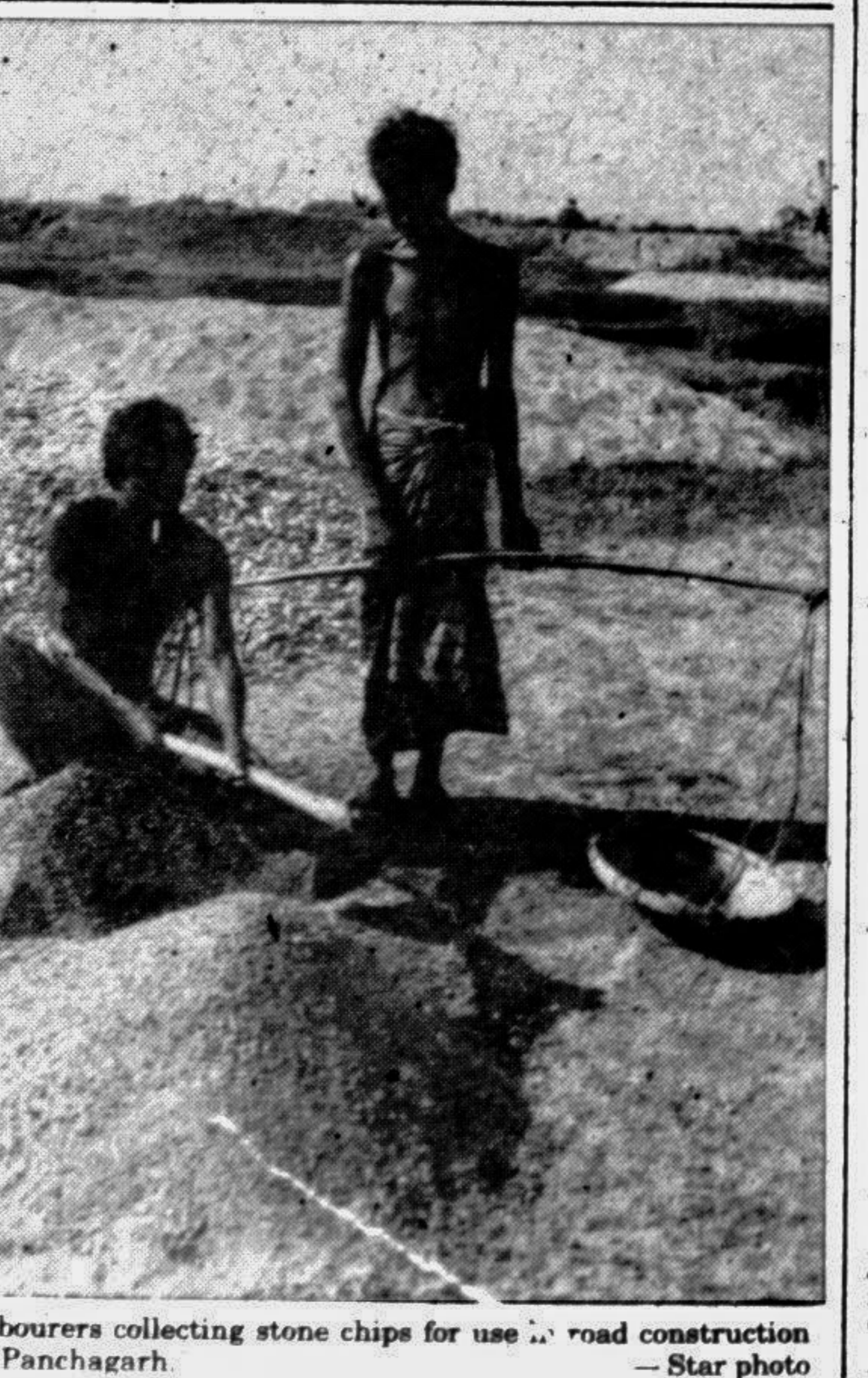
Number of unlicensed rickshaws rises in Natore

NATORE, Mar 17: With the increasing of its number, unlicensed rickshaws are creating traffic jams on different roads of the town. Besides, several factories are making rickshaws despite a ban on its manufacture, it is learnt.

Natore pourashava banned the manufacture of new rickshaws as this was decided by a committee comprising representatives from the pourashava. The rickshaw, a slow and safe mode of transport is playing the town roads causing unnecessary jams and inconvenience of the passengers everyday.

The exact number of rickshaws could not be known. However, a pourashava official said its number may cross seven thousand mark.

If the increase of number of rickshaws is not checked right now, the traffic movement will be hampered badly in the next couple of years, said a traffic sergeant.



Labourers collecting stone chips for use in road construction at Panchagarh. — Star photo

Notes from Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent

Food for work programme

JHENIDAH, Mar 17: Government has allocated 1,478 metric tons of wheat for the implementation of 147 schemes under Food For Work Programme (FWP) in Jhenidah district in current dry season.

According to sources, 354 metric tons of wheat was allocated for 38 schemes in Jhenidah sadar thana, 250 metric tons for 22 schemes in Saikupa thana, 212 metric tons for 20 schemes in Hari-nakundu thana, 246 metric tons for 15 schemes in Kali-ganj thana, 109 metric tons for 14 schemes in Kotchandpur thana and 307 metric tons for 38 schemes in Mohepur thana of the district.

The projects which included earth-filling works, construction of roads and culverts, excavation of ponds are likely to be completed by April, sources said.

Kidnapped girl rescued

JHENIDAH, Mar 17: An abducted schoolgirl, Shahina Akter, was rescued from village Shatbaria in Kaliganj thana of the district recently.

According to police sources, Shahina was kidnapped by some youngmen near Kacharitala in Hari-nakundu thana at about 1:20 pm on March 6 when she was returning from school. The abductors took her away in a microbus. Acting on a secret information, police rescued her and arrested Mamunur Rahman and Rezaul in this connection on the next day, police said.

One killed in clash between rival families

JHALAKATHI, Mar 17: A man was killed and two others were injured in a clash between two rival families at village Chalis Kaunia in Rajapur thana on Saturday, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Yunus Molla, 45. Police said the clash erupted between the family members of Yunus Molla and his relation Apter Ali Molla over felling of a palm tree.

Yunus, is mother Amena Begum, 70, and brother Abdul Jalil, 25, were stabbed by their rivals during the clash. Yunus died on the way to hospital. The injured were admitted to Rajapur Hospital.



Bundles of fire-wood being carried on a bi-cycle for use at home in Sherrpur. An acute scarcity of fire-wood prevailing in the area. — Star photo

Prospect of citrus fruit farming bright

From Our Correspondent MOULVIBAZAR, Mar 17: Prospect for orange farming in Moulvibazar district is bright. But the growers have been facing problems for a long time due to lack of government patronisation.

It is learnt from Moulvibazar District Agriculture Extension Department that there are one lakh 27 thousand 528 plants of orange in Shahbajpur and Nizbahadpur areas of Baralekha thana and 50 thousand plants in Jaifarnagar area of Kulaura thana. There are about two thousand acres of land under orange cultivation in these areas. Every year huge quantity of orange produced in these gardens.

Orange plants are cultivated by local people, who lack knowledge about the cultivation. There was no motivation programme from any agriculture department. A Subject Matter Specialist (SMS) of Moulvibazar district Agriculture Extension told The Daily

Star that they have no policy to patronize the orange cultivation. The Agriculture Extension Department with the help of Agriculture Research Institute at Akbarpur under Moulvibazar district had arranged several training programmes for orange growers to inspire them. A team of foreign experts had also visited the orange-growing areas of Kulaura and Baralekha thanas of the district.

However, some orange growers of Baralekha and Kulaura thanas said. Now they are able to take proper care of the orange plants. They added that only few years ago large number of orange plants were destroyed due to ignorance.

Motorcycle collides with autorickshaw

KUSHTIA, Mar 17: Four people were injured, three seriously, when a motorcycle collided head-on with an autorickshaw on Kushtia-Jhenidah road on Friday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the accident occurred two kilometre from the town in the afternoon and the injured were rushed to the Sadar Hospital.

The seriously injured were identified as Sadre Alam and Aked Ali, both motorcycle riders and Abdul Wahed, a telephone operator of Islamic University who was in the taxi. Of them, condition of Abdul Wahed was stated to be critical.

Police seized the autorickshaw, but its driver managed to escape. A case was filed with the police.

Another report says: Police arrested an absconding accused on the same day. He was wanted in connection with several criminal cases.

Serajul Islam was arrested from Jadua village by Mirpur police following a tip off. A pipe gun was recovered from his possession.

Protesters demand release of kidnapped students

RANGAMATI, Mar 17: Several thousand people demonstrated at Bagachhari thana in the hill district Saturday demanding immediate release of four students abducted by the tribal outlaws, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the agitators under the banner of Bangalae Chhatra Parishad demanded release of their abducted members within three days and submitted a memorandum to the local administration.

Earlier on Wednesday, police reinforcements were put on guard in the area to avert untoward incident.

Meanwhile, the district administration said they were trying to rescue the abducted students from the capture of Shantibahini.

Shantibahini men kidnapped five persons last month. They are Moker Hossain and Jamal Uddin — supply manager and clerk of Karnaphuli Paper Mills, Ishaq, a fisherman, Molluquddin, a day labourer, and Dewar Hossain. Meanwhile, the Shantibahini members pressured the locals for tolls and also continued abductions despite a ceasefire remaining in force.