

Magurchhara gas field fire

Forest Department likely to claim compensation from Occidental Co

From Rajat Kanti Goswami

News snaps

Training for farmers
NETRAKONA, July 30: A seven-day training for the grass-roots farmers organised by the Agriculture Extension Department concluded at Nandail thana under Mymensingh district on Sunday, reports BSS.

Held at Zia Hall, Nandail, the training course was participated by 210 farmers of the thana. Agriculture Extension Department officers from Mymensingh imparted training to the farmers about various methods of modern farming and plantation of trees.

4 killed in separate incidents
JHENIDAH, July 30: Four persons including a woman were killed in separate incidents here during the last three days, reports BSS.

Police said Babul, 22, and Momin, 23, were reportedly murdered by a group of miscreants at a village under Kaliganj thana on Saturday last while Nurjahan Begum, 25, was allegedly beaten to death by some unidentified persons at village Kutubpur under sadar thana on Friday last. Purna Chandra, 35, another victim was killed by unidentified assailants at village Narayanpur under Moheshpur thana on Saturday. The bodies were sent to the Jhenidah General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

7 transport workers held
PATUAKHALI, July 30: Police arrested seven unruly transport workers from the Patuakhali bus stand on July 20 last, reports BSS.

Police sources said, the arrested workers have been sent to jail hajat, after producing before the court of 1st class magistrate Md Bazul Aziz. It is alleged that the arrested persons had involvement in ransacking two BRTC buses near Patuakhali bridge on July 16. They also reportedly beat up the supervisors and drivers of those buses for which a case was filed with the Patuakhali sadar thana police.

Sanction for children welfare complex
MEHERPUR, July 30: The government has sanctioned Taka 95 lakh for the construction of a children welfare complex in Meherpur district headquarters in the current fiscal year, reports BSS.

An official source said, 2.13 acres of land has already been acquired for construction of the children welfare complex. The complex will consist of a school building, a library, a guest room and a dormitory for the orphans. Work of the project has already begun and will be completed by the middle of 1998.

Cement scarcity in Lalmonirhat
LALMONIRHAT, July 30: Construction work of government and non-government buildings is being hampered in the district due to the scarcity of cement and price hike of building materials like rods, cement and bricks, reports BSS.

A large number of masons and labourers remained unemployed as their employer/contractors could not start work. One bag of cement is being sold at Tk 230 to Tk 270. A section of dishonest traders mixed white soil with cement to earn maximum profit. They also used to take out 4 to 5 kgs of cement from each bag. It is alleged by buyers.

Virus fever breaks out in Netrakona
NETRAKONA, July 30: Virus fever has broken out in all the thanas of Netrakona district during the last few days, reports BSS.

According to reports reaching here from the areas, a large number of people specially children and women have been attacked with the disease.

The journalists while visiting Netrakona Sadar Hospital on Monday saw a large number of patients were coming in the outdoor of the hospital for treatment. Some virus fever patients said, they were experiencing high temperature, pain in their body and headache.

Tk 14cr land tax realised
CHANDPUR, July 30: The government has realised Tk 14.65 crore land development tax from 11 districts under Chittagong division in fiscal 1996-97 which was 4.50 crore more than the previous year, reports UNB.

This was disclosed at a revenue conference of Chittagong division, held at the conference room of Chandpur Circuit House recently with State Minister for Land Affairs Farhad Moshirraf in the chair. The state minister in his speech said revenue income must be increased with a view to successful implementation of development activities taken for the people's welfare.

Villagers clash leaves 25 hurt
MANIKGANJ, July 30: At least 25 people were injured, seven seriously, in a clash between the people of two villages over having connections of electricity, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said the bloody clash occurred at Joyanagar High School premises when a group of unruly people of Gindol village attacked the villagers of Bahirkhola village. The seriously injured — Moslem, 60, Moides, 25, Amol Ali, 20, Sun, 16, Faruq, 18, Abbas, 19, and Ruma, 14, of both the villages were admitted to the Manikganj Modern Hospital.

3 labour bodies joint procession
SIRAJGANJ, July 30: Three labour organisations, including that of ruling Awami League and opposition BNP, brought out a joint procession in the town in support of SKOP-sponsored strike, reports UNB.

AL backed Jatitya Sramik League, pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal and JSD's Sramik wing brought out the procession and paraded the main thoroughfares of the town at 7.30 pm. Leaders of the three allies — Samsher Ali, Shah Jamal, Abdur Rahim, Anwar Hossain and Sujabat Ali — organised the procession.

Alleged violators yet to be nabbed
SHERPUR, July 30: Police here could not arrest the notorious rapist even after long time of filing of the case by the mother of the victim, reports UNB.

A maid servant Chandana, 12, of village Darikalinagar in Jhenaidah thana was allegedly raped by her house lord Narayan Chandra Devnath on the night of May 12. When the girl lost her consciousness due to bleeding the house owner treated her by a local quack. He also warned her not to disclose the matter. But the mother of Chandana, Minati Barmon, came to learn the matter and lodged a complaint against seven people including the house owner under the Women and Child Repression Act with the sadar thana police on May 25. Subsequently the case was transferred to the Detective Branch.

Youth killed by snake bite
From Our Correspondent
MAGURA, July 30: A youth died by snake bite in Shalika thana of the district recently, family sources said.

Bibek Chandra Biswas, 30, son of Nirapado Biswas at village Dhaneshwardi died by snake bite in his house when he was sleeping in his room.

Housewife beaten to death
From Our Correspondent
JAMALPUR, July 30: A housewife was beaten to death by her husband at village Bachchara under Jamalpur sadar thana recently. The victim identified as Shahnaq Perveen, 23, was under pressure to bring dowry from her father after her marriage with Mukul Miah of the village. On the day of occurrence Mukul pressed her to bring Tk 50,000 from her father and beat her when she refused to comply with his demand.

Rally on Community Approach
From Our Correspondent
JHENIDAH, July 30: A Rally on Community Approach was held at Mallikpur area office of Unnayan Dhara recently.

Presided over by the Chairman of the organization Advocated Tofazzel Hossain, it was attended by Matur Rahman, Additional Deputy Commissioner (revenue) as the chief guest and Monoranjan Biswas, district information officer, Jhenidah as special guest. Advocate Parveen Akter Salma, Vice-Chairman, Talib Bashir Nayan, Director and Delwar Kabir, Training Coordinator of Unnayan Dhara, Rafuddin Ahmed, Moazzem Hossain, Dhanu Mia participated.

Dacoity bid foiled
FARIDUPUR, July 30: Police foiled a dacoity bid and arrested two alleged bus dacoits on Saturday night from a Dhaka-bound passenger coach from Meherpur, reports BSS.

According to Kotawli police source, a group of inter-district bus dacoits, numbering about six, were travelling in the coach in disguise of passenger. When the coach reached at a place, 12 miles from here, the dacoits overpowered the driver and took control of the coach at dagger point. At this stage the passengers raised hue and cry which attracted the attention of highway patrol-police, who started chasing the running coach on Khulna-Dhaka highway. The dacoits, smelling danger, stopped the coach at east Gangabardi, five miles from here, and fled away.

MOULVIBAZAR, July 30: The Forest Department has termed the losses of forest resources due to Magurchhara gas field explosion as irreparable.

A survey conducted by the Forest Department shows the preliminary loss of forest resources to be Taka 176 crore 97 lakh 48 thousand.

The local forest officials sent a letter to their higher authorities at Dhaka and enclosed a preliminary statement of losses of forest resources at Lawachhera-Magurchhara reserve forest. The forest officials in their letter requested to their authorities to make a claim of compensation to the Occidental Company who is the contractor of gas exploration at Magurchhara gas well.

According to the forest official sources, in their preliminary statement they explained that Magurchhara gas explosion took place on June-14 last. After the explosion, entire area of the gas field was burnt. Two Assistant Conservators and a Ranger of the Forest Department inspected the Lawachhera-Magurchhara reserve forest located at the exploded gas field area and conducted the survey on June-16 and 17.

The whole area is a reserve forest under the Forest Department. There was a Segun timber garden which was created in the years from 1944 to 1950, a bamboo garden which was created during the years 1993-94 and 1994-95 and also a strip plantation which was created in 1994. All these Segun and bamboo gardens and strip plantation were extensively damaged by the fire.

During the survey, the whole reserve forest area was divided into three categories on the basis of extent of damage. In the statement variety of organism, type of soil, effects on the environment, losses suffered by the beneficiaries, losses suffered by the forest villages and distance of different damaged plots from the exploded gas field were closely considered during preparation of statement.

The categories mentioned in the statements are — massive affected areas, affected areas and probable affected areas.

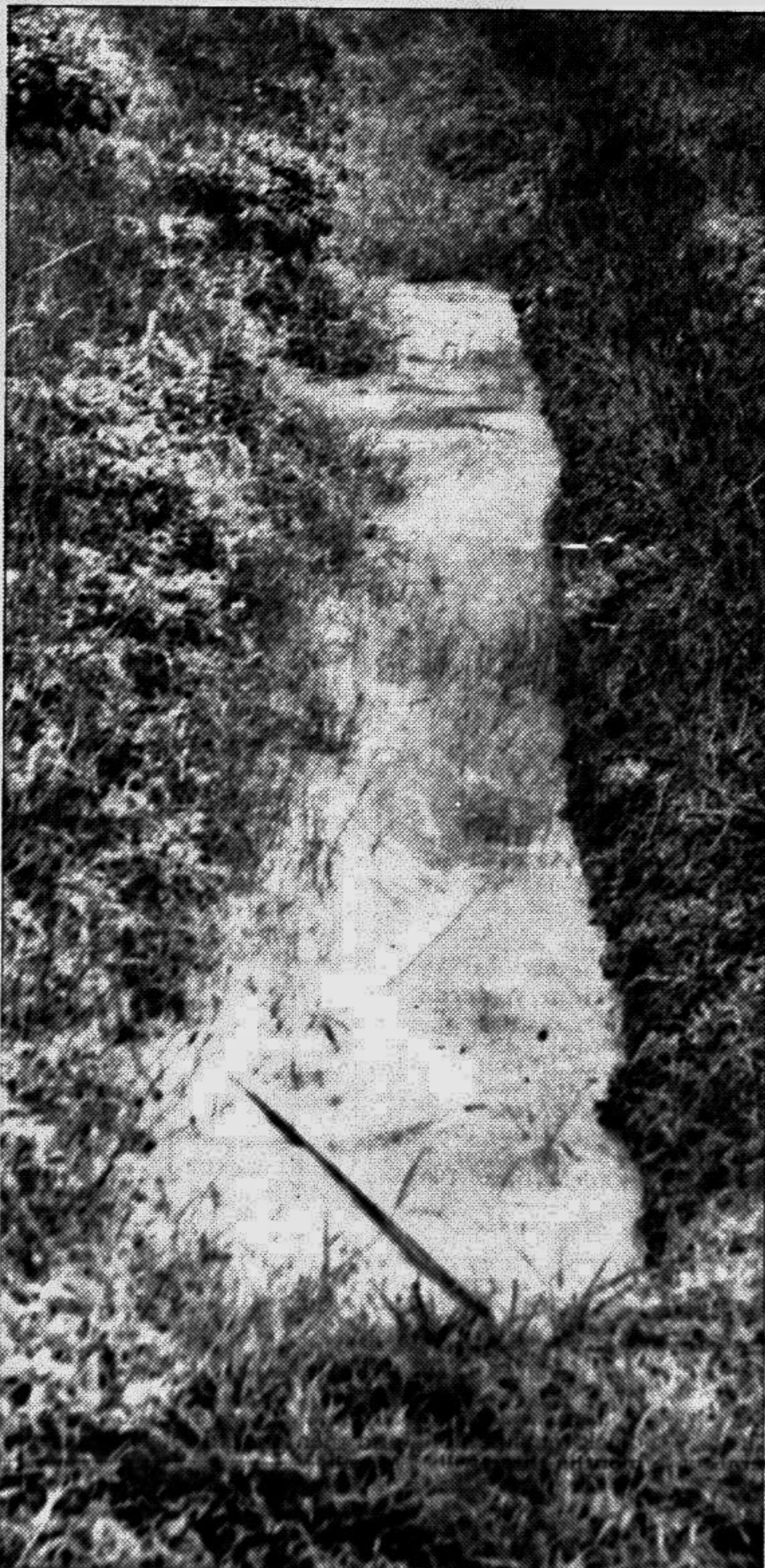
Varieties of organism and creatures of different species and their shelters in the reserve forest were also damaged. This type of loss will be impossible to recover within next 50 years, the statement added.

However, the estimated loss according to the above mentioned categories are as follows: Massively Affected Areas: A total of 39 hectares (or 96 acres) of Reserve Forest area has been marked under this category. All the plants in this area were completely damaged. Even organic level of soil was also extensively damaged by the gas fire. Forest officials explained in the statements that further plantation in this area would not be possible within next 50 years. There was a Segun garden which was planted in the years from 1944 to 1950. It has been estimated that price of only Segun timbers in this area is not less than Taka 12 crore 28 lakh

50 thousand. Estimated price of damaged others wood is Taka 6 lakh 24 thousand.

Affected Areas: It was marked as second category according to the rate of losses.

A total of 45 hectares (or 111.15 acres) of Reserve Forest area are under this category. At least 50 per cent of forest re-



SRIMANGAL: Wastages from Magurchhara gas field falling into rivers through various channels. The picture was taken from Fulbari Tea Estate.

sources were completely damaged by the fire incident. Losses of damaged timbers in this area are estimated at Taka 6 crore 80 lakh 40 thousand. Besides, estimated losses of other woods are Taka 7 lakh 20 thousand.

Probable Affected Areas: Probable affected areas are where forest resources were

burnt by five of Magurchhara gas field.

A total of 106.21 acres of forest areas was brought under this category, where at least 30 per cent of forest resources were damaged. Losses of damaged timbers in this area are estimated at Taka 3 crore 25 lakh 8 thousand and estimated loss of

reas, where Plantation was made during the year 1993-94, at least 4,500 plants were completely damaged. Probable loss of these plants are estimated at Taka 5 crore 70 lakh.

The aforementioned statement also mentioned that one Abdul Halim had planted saplings on both sides of nearby Railway lines from Lawachhera to Magurchhara under contract with the Forest Department. His 1728 plants were completely damaged. The loss was estimated at Taka one crore 36 lakh.

It has also been stated that, forest villagers of Magurchhara and Lawachhera were engaged in plantation and cultivation activities on partnership basis with the Forest Department. Total areas of land for plantation and cultivation activities by the villagers in the Reserve Forest areas are 150 acres. Out of these areas, forest and agriculture resources on 50 acres of land were completely damaged. This area under the Reserve Forest is famous for Betel-leaf cultivation. Loss of Betel-leaf in the area is estimated at Taka One crore 94 lakh.

Six homes of the beneficiaries in the forest areas have been burnt to ashes and their trees of jack fruits, betel nut, coconut have also been damaged. Loss in this sector is estimated at Taka 10 lakh.

Besides this, a Headman of Magurchhara Khasia Pun Pun-Jee (Betel leaf gardens of Khasias) G Dison and Khasia community chief Suchiang Karadar in a written application to the administration claimed a compensation of Taka 2 crore 2 lakh 50 thousand for damage of their Betel leaf gardens.

However, at least 70 acres of tea plantation areas of the Fulbari Tea Garden which is adjacent to the Magurchhara Gas Well have been damaged by the fire. Fulbari Tea Garden authorities claimed that their loss due to Magurchhara fire stands at Taka 40 crore.

During the explosion in the gas well, gas supply to 12 different tea gardens was disrupted. As a result tea production has been stopped for want of gas supply in the factories of these 12 tea gardens. Due to this, 12 tea gardens suffered a production loss of Taka 45 crore.

The Forest Department has also estimated environmental loss at Taka 144 crore. They explained that during the calculation of this loss, they had considered some important points. The points are like this: Every year, each plant or trees supplying oxygen of Taka 5 thousand, fodder of Taka 400, and soil conservation and fertility of Taka 5 thousand.

To explain the losses on environment, it has been stated that this loss is irrecoverable. Lawachhera Reserve Forest was known as a dwelling place of varieties of organism and animals. But those have been completely damaged. The Occidental company should pay the compensation of forest resources and loss of environment.



RAJSHAHI: Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation Mijanur Rahman Minu inaugurating the tree plantation programme of the corporation recently by planting a sapling. — Star photo

Jhenidah Newsletter

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, July 30: One person was killed, 30 others injured in two separate road accidents in Jhenidah recently, according to police and local people.

Eyewitnesses said, Abdul Latif, 45, was killed on the spot when a numberless tempo met a head-on collision at about 4 pm near Tiordah in Jhenidah thana. Khorsheed Alam, another passenger of the tempo received severe injuries.

In another road accident near Mobarakganj Sugar Mills, at least 30 passengers received injuries. Of them three were rushed to Jessore General Hospital and 17 in Kaliganj Thana Health Complex. They were Abdur Rahim, 65, Jahura Begum, 50, Amareh Saha, 10, Joyanti Rani, 20, Pinjira, 28, Jobeda, 55, Amena, 58, Rasheda, 25, Sariful, 32, Maria Molli, 25, Sabdul, 36, Abdur Razaque, 60, Jahura, 55, Jabbar, 87, Subir, 45, Abu Tahir, 45, Tariq, 24 and Mantu Roy, 40.

sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

After thorough investigation police submitted chargesheet against Haziranessa's killer husband Abdul Aziz and two other accused persons.

After hearing the judge awarded life term to the killer husband and was fined Taka 1000, in default to suffer three months in jail. Two other accused were fined 10 years' RI each and were fined Taka 1000 each, in default to suffer three months' more imprisonment.

Activist of outlawed party held

Kotchandpur thana police arrested an activist of an outlawed party and recovered 27 bullets on the night of July 16, according to police sources.

Police said, acting on a tip-off a contingent of police raided Barobazar area under Kaliganj thana and arrested Shipon. He was reportedly a member of a terrorist group namely Shariful Bahini.

College girl commits suicide

Mita, 17, a student of Mohatabuddin Degree College at Kaliganj thana of the district committed suicide taking insecticides recently, according to family sources.

Police said, Mita was reportedly criticised by her family members as she went to enjoy a cinema. When she returned home at about 10 pm her mother abused her.

An Unnatural Death (UD) case was lodged with Kaliganj thana in this connection.

Fake policeman arrested

Kaliganj thana police arrested a fake policeman from village Iswarba of the same thana recently, according to police sources.

Police said, Matar Rahman, member of 'Ansar' of village Rahman under Ramna thana in Patuakhali district had been serving at Jibannagar thana in Chuadanga district.

He alleged developed an illicit relationship with a female smuggler Aleya Begum, 25. He frequently introduced himself as a police personnel.

Alleged abductor arrested

Sailkupa thana police arrested Manirul Islam, 20, from village Shantidanga in Kushtia thana for his alleged involvement in abducting a girl named Shahinur Khatun alias Bithi recently, according to police sources.

Police said, Bithi, 13, a student of Class VIII was allegedly abducted by Manirul Islam. Then she was returning home. Later Bithi's father Abul Kalam Azad filed a case.

Police arrested Manirul following the case on July 6, 1997.

Meanwhile, Manirul's family sources claimed that Bithi left house with Manirul as love affairs developed between them and she was not abducted at all.

Girl killed in road mishap

Yasmin, 8, daughter of Abdur Qudus was crushed to death under the wheels of a truck on Jhenidah-Kaliganj highway near Laudia under Jhenidah thana recently, according to police sources.

Police said, when Yasmin was crossing the road at about 11 am a Jessore bound truck coming from Jhenidah (Jessore TA-955) crushed her on the spot and sped away.

A case was filed with Jhenidah thana in this connection.

TVs used for porno film display seized

Jhenidah police recovered eight televisions, 10 video cassette players (VCP) and 50 video cassettes from different places of the district on the night of July 23 last, according to police sources.

Police said, a contingent of police led by Nazrul Islam, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Jhenidah raided Bhatal bazar in Sailkupa thana. Chuadanga stand and Bijoypur areas in Jhenidah thana. They recovered the items, from there. These televisions were allegedly used for displaying porno films in the localities.

Jhenidah AED's demonstration plots

District Agriculture Extension Department (AED) of Jhenidah will establish 169 demonstration plots in six thanas of the district in the current season, according to AED sources.

Out of the total, 26 demonstration plots will be established in Sailkupa, 34 plots in Jhenidah sadar, 29 plots in Harinakundu, 23 plots in Kaliganj thana, 25 in Kotchandpur thana and 32 plots will be established in Moheshpur thana of the district.

Sufficient seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and other agriculture input will be supplied among the farmers to make the programme a success.

Killer husband gets life term

One person was awarded life imprisonment his two of his brothers were awarded ten years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for killing his wife at village Solemanpur in Moheshpur thana of the district.

The judgement was given by Seikh Saidul Haque, Additional Sessions Judge-2, Jhenidah, according to court sources.

The case, in brief, was that the accused husband Abdul Aziz and his two brothers killed Hasiranessa by beating her on the night of May 4, 1994. They allegedly buried the body in local Solemanpur baor. The next day her body was recovered and

10 hurt in Natore road mishap

From our Correspondent
NATOR, July 30: At least 10 persons including six were seriously injured in a road mishap on Natore-Bogra highway recently.

According to police sources, a Rajshahi-bound truck (Pabna TA-02-0029 coming from Bogra turned turtle near Haguria bridge under sadar thana as the driver failed the control over the truck. The wheels of the truck punctured at that time.

Six injured persons were admitted at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital with critical condition.

The seriously injured identified as: Udel, fahainta, 20, Bachehu, 28, Shaifur, 38, Abdul Maleque, 43, Fazlur Rahman, 41, and Shamsul Islam, 35.

A case was filed with the sadar thana in this connection. The driver and the helper of the truck managed to the flee. However, the truck was seized by police.

Acute scarcity of fish in Chandpur

From Our Correspondent
CHANDPUR, July 30: Acute scarcity of fish has been prevailing in the district.

It has been learnt that the only fish available in the market is hilsa. But hilsa is being sold at a very high price now. A large size hilsa fish is being sold between Tk 150 to Tk 200. The fish production in the district has fallen sharply due to fishing of fries during the dry season.

About 20,000 fishermen have become jobless and passing their days in great hardship now due to scarcity of fish, the 12-mile long water body of the river Dakatia within Chandpur Irrigation Project have been leased out by the Water Development Board (WDB). It has aroused great resentment among the fishermen. The fishermen had demanded not to lease the waterbody of the river Dakatia.

Dahagram-Angorpota: Touch of development yet to reach

From Mozammel Huq

RANGPUR, July 30: About 95 per cent inhabitants of Dahagram and Angorpota enclaves are dependent on agriculture. Most of them are daily wage earners. Rest of the residents are land owners.

This was revealed in a survey conducted by a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) recently.

The total population of the two enclaves are 15,000. No development works were done by the government since handing over of Tin-Bigha corridor to Bangladesh by India on June 26, 1992. The two enclaves remained in siege by Indians for over 50 years.

Most of the day labourers are compelled to sell labour at much cheaper price. The cultivable land in the enclaves are not fertile. No modern method of cultivation has been adopted till now. Modern method of ploughing, irrigation, usage of fertilizers, insecticides and applying technical know-how are not followed in these enclaves. These are the bottlenecks for the development of agriculture and progress. As a result the hopes and aspirations of the people of the two enclaves to attain a better and modern life style have been shattered.

There is a small bazar inside the enclaves which sits twice a week. The agriculturists are compelled to sell their agricultural produce at much cheaper price due to lack of rich buyers. On many occasions they have to take goods back home. The Patgram thana headquarters is 10 kilometers off from the enclaves. For long distance, sellers from the enclaves hardly able to go to the thana headquarters markets to sell their agriculture produce.

Gate of the corridor is opened by the Border Security Force (BSF) personnel six times a day from 7-30 am to 6-30 pm. It remains open for one hour each time with one hour interval. This system followed by BSF of India creates much hindrance to the people of the enclaves.

They hardly can go to a long distance for work because they have to return before last closing of the corridor gate at 6-30 pm.

Five years have already passed after landing over of the corridor in 1992, but the government did not take up any concrete programme to change the socio-economic life of the people. No development works were done here by Bangladesh Government till now.

On June 26 last the people of Dahagram and Angorpota enclaves celebrated the fifth anniversary of handing over of Tin-Bigha corridor on June 26 amidst simple ceremonial function.

The programmes included hoisting of national flag, victory rally, discussion meeting, sports and cultural functions. Prizes were distributed among the winners following these meets.

Speakers at the discussion meeting demanded of the government to mitigate the sufferings of the corridor people. They called upon the government to make arrangement with the Indian government for keeping open the corridor gate for 24 hours so that the people can move freely like citizens of an independent country. They also urged the government to take up development programmes for modern agriculture and overall uplift of the enclaves immediately.



KHULNA: The principal of local Shahid Suhrawardy College, Md Mazharul Hannan addressing recently at the publication ceremony function of a book titled: Hossain Shahid Suhrawardy authored by Sirajuddin Ahmed.