

News snaps

Shortage of physicians

JAMALPUR, Aug 29: A total of 23 posts of physicians and specialists have been lying vacant in the district, hampering the treatment facilities, reports UNB.

There are a general hospital and 30 thana health complexes and union health sub-centres in the district. At present, six health complexes of 31 beds and 25 health sub-centres are providing medicare facilities to the rural people. Meanwhile, work is on to raise the beds in the district general hospital from 100 to 250. The vacant posts include the post of Deputy Civil Surgeon in the Civil Surgeon's office and posts of eye specialists in the general hospital. Besides, one post of physician is lying vacant in Melandah, three in Madarganj, four in Bakshiganj, two each in Sarishabari and in Dewanganj thana for a long time. Nine posts of physicians in the union sub-centres have also fallen vacant.

Housewife strangled to death

JESSORE, Aug 29: A housewife was allegedly strangled to death by her husband at a village in the district on Wednesday night, reports UNB.

Police said the victim Zainur Begum, 30, of Karim Ali village in Jhikargaon thana was beaten up mercilessly by her drug addicted husband Amirul Islam as she failed to give him money for purchasing wine. Later the cruel husband hanged her with the ceiling of his house and fled the scene. On information, police sent the body to Jessore general hospital for autopsy. A case was filed with the police. Meanwhile, Kotwali police rescued an adducted teenage school student on Friday after four days of her abduction from Narail. Sheuli Rani, 15, the daughter of Nirmal Chandra of Jessore town was abducted by some armed miscreants on August 25 while she came out of her house to respond to the call of nature at dead of night. The victim is now under safe custody of police.

Valuables worth Tk 8 lakh looted

NOAKHALI, Aug 29: A devastating fire has charred a tailoring cum poultry-feed shop and a cement shop in sadar thana here, reports UNB.

The fire suspected to be originated from short circuit on August 22 night destroyed valuables worth over Tk 8 lakh as the fire fighters reached the spot late. Witnesses said the fire fighters started extinguishing the blaze after 50 minutes of the incident.

'Aus' paddy harvesting progressing

CHUADANGA, Aug 29: The harvesting of 'Aus' paddy of the current season in all the four thanas of Chuadanga district are now in full swing and expected to be completed within the next 10 to 15 days, reports BSS.

According to an official source, during this season a total of 24,000 tonnes of 'Aus' paddy is expected to be produced in the district of which 4,000 tonnes will be produced in Chuadanga sadar thana, 12,000 tonnes in Alamdanga thana, 7,000 tonnes in Damurhata thana and 1,000 tonnes in Jibannagar thana. During the current season a total of 15,700 hectares was brought under 'Aus' paddy cultivation in all the four thanas of the district.

Call for massive afforestation

JESSORE, Aug 29: Forest and Environment Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury called for massive plantation of trees of different species to help save the environment from pollution and create opportunities for poverty alleviation, reports BSS.

She was inaugurating a week-long 'Brikhka Mela' at the Jessore town hall ground jointly organised by the Jessore district administration and Forest Department. Sajeda Chowdhury said that the mela would help encourage people to go for more plantation and know necessary information about planting and raising of saplings. The minister called upon all sections of the society to come forward to contribute their mite to turn this campaign into a social movement.

Dacoities in 3 night coaches

JHENIDAH, Aug 29: Dacoities were committed on three night coaches at Barobazar Voter gate under Jhenidah and Rajbari, on Dhaka-Khulna highway on August 21, reports BSS.

According to victim passengers, the dacoits boarded the night coaches in the guise of passengers and forcibly took control of the coaches at three different places — Barobazar, Voter gate and Rajbari. The dacoits beat the passengers and robbed their money and belongings.

Implementation body formed

THAKURGAON, Aug 29: An implementation committee was formed in a meeting held at Thakurgaon Press Club recently to set up Bangabandhu Science and Technology University at Thakurgaon and upgradation of Dinajpur Haji Md Danesh Agriculture College to a full-fledge agriculture university, reports BSS.

Three MPs of the district Sree Ramesh Chandra Sen, Dabirul Islam, Imdadul Haque and a retired agriculture scientist Dr Yasin Ali were made advisers of the committee. Advocate FA Mohammad Hossain and Principal Syed Merajul Hossain were elected convenor and member secretary. In the meeting it was demanded that Dinajpur Haji Md Danesh Agriculture College should be declared as a full-fledged agriculture university for regional agricultural development.

Four killed by lightning

NAOGAON, Aug 29: Four persons were killed by lightning in three separate incidents at Rampur, Palipara and Noapara villages under Sapahar thana in Naogaon district last week, reports BSS.

Local people said two persons Abdul Karim, 22, and Fulu Chandra Barman, 30, were struck by thunderbolt at their homes and died on the spot.

Need for children's edn stressed

KHULNA, Aug 29: Khulna Divisional Commissioner Abul Kashem stressing the need for development of human resources through imparting basis education to our children said education is our backbone for building a happy and prosperous society, reports BSS.

The divisional commissioner was speaking as the chief guest at a concluding function at the Government Girls School at Boyra recently held in connection with the observance of the divisional level National Education Week-98. He said the students should be given proper guidance so that they can participate in the various educational programmes which will help develop their mental faculties.

Girl killed in road accident

MYMENSINGH, Aug 29: A girl was killed in a road accident at Mallikpur in Iswarganj thana on Monday, reports UNB.

Police said Mahbuba, 6, a class one student at Mallikpur Primary School, was critically injured when a bus knocked her down while she was returning from her school at about 1 pm. She was brought to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where she succumbed to her injuries. Her father Abu Saleh filed a case with Iswarganj thana in this connection.

Drugs recovered

JESSORE, Aug 29: The Department of Narcotics Control here has seized drugs worth Tk 3.25 lakh and arrested 108 people from January to June this year, reports UNB.

Officials said they have seized 25 grams of heroin, 1,033 bottles of Phensidyl, 18 kg hemp, 140 green plants of hemp, 1.772 litres of country-made liquor and a huge quantity of rectified spirit and Indian wine. The department has filed 103 cases with the police. The sources, however, said the recovery of drugs are being hampered due to manpower shortage and lack of necessary logistic support.

Low cost latrines installed

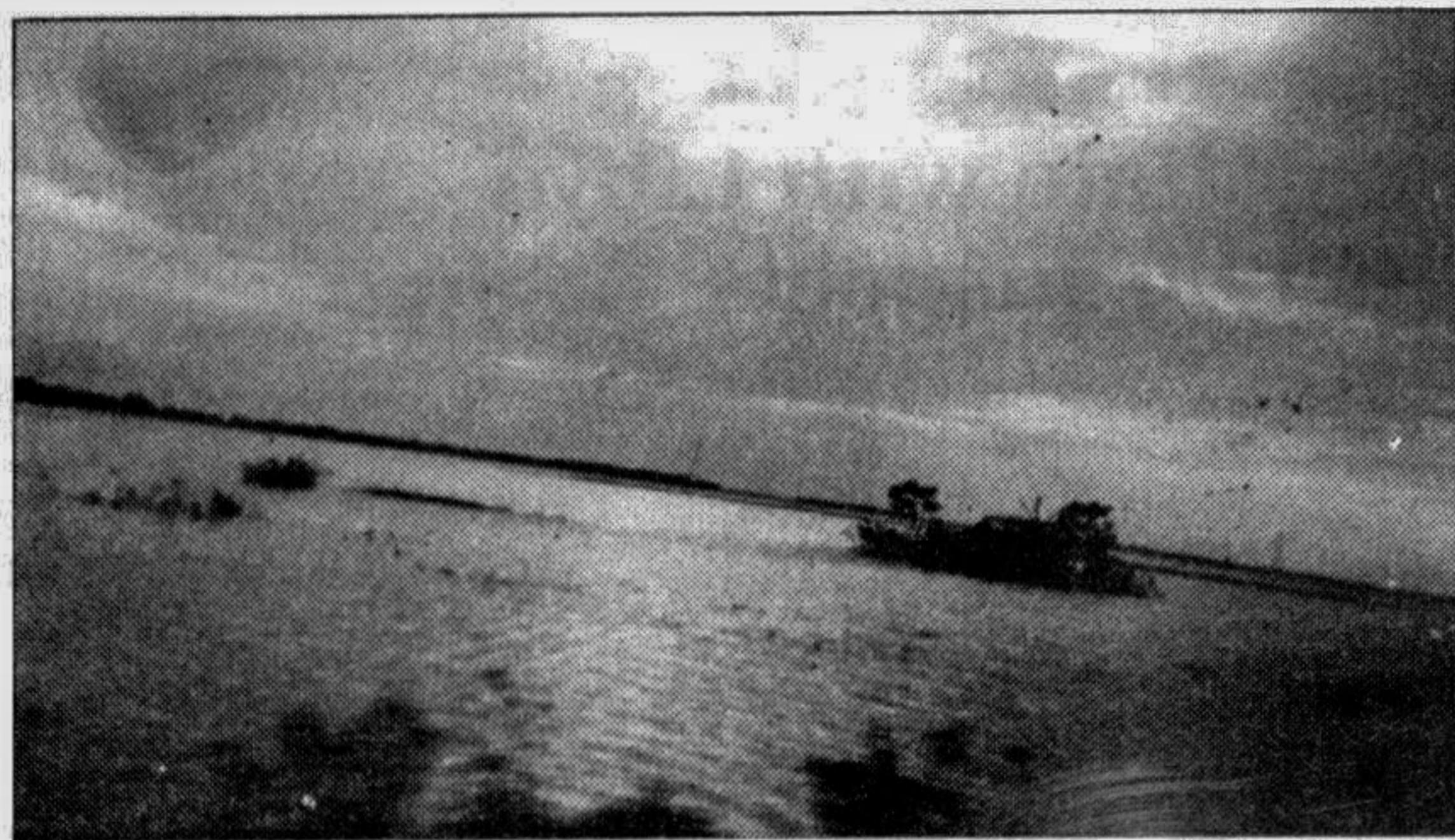
BARISAL, Aug 29: A total of 58,000 sets of low cost latrines were installed at a cost of Tk 2.35 crore in 11 southern districts by the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) in 1997-98 fiscal year, reports BSS.

The districts are: Barisal, Jhalakati, Bhola, Pirojpur, Patuakhali, Barguna, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Madaripur, Rajbari, and Shariatpur. Each set of latrine costs Tk 405, an official source said. Of the total, 8,000 sets in Barisal district, 2,800 sets in Jhalakati, 6,800 sets in Pirojpur, 5,200 sets each in Bhola and Gopalganj, 5,600 sets in Patuakhali, 4,000 sets each in Barguna and Madaripur, 7,200 sets in Faridpur, 6,000 sets in Shariatpur and 3,200 sets in Rajbari district.

Training on use of fertiliser

SATKHIRA, Aug 29: A three-day training course on the use of guatee urea fertiliser organised by the district agriculture extension department concluded recently at Satkhira Khamarbari here, reports BSS.

The training course was inaugurated by the Additional Director of Agriculture Extension Department (Khulna) Serajul Haque, Deputy Director, Agriculture, Manzur-e-Mohammad presided over the inaugural function.



SYLHET: Vast tracts of crop lands in a village of Fenchuganj thana remained under water for the last few weeks as flood waters are yet to recede. The farmers in general are worried enough as there is no chance of cultivating the lands soon.



A view of an inundated village in Fenchuganj thana.

—Star photo by Iqbal Siddiquee

Flood situation worsens again

T-'Aman' farming affected badly in Mymensingh

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Aug 29: The overall flood situation in the district deteriorated further due to incessant rainfall and onrush of hilly waters from across the border.

A total of 141 unions out of 146 unions have been submerged rendering thousands of people homeless and shelterless.

Standing crops specially jute fields have been totally damaged in the shoal areas. Due to fresh flood, newly transplanted 'Aman' paddy fields have been affected that will cause great harm to the farmers as T-'Aman' paddy is the main cultivation in the district specially for poor farmers.

While contacted with some farmers of the low-lying areas of Phulpur thana, they told this correspondent that they had nothing as their seed-beds have also damaged due to flood. Some farmers of the sadar thana also expressed their woes in the same tone.

The old Brahmaputra river at Mymensingh point was still flowing 38 cm above the danger mark. It is also feared by the concerned authority that the flood situation may deteriorate further.

As the water level of the old Brahmaputra river is still continuing to swell up many fresh areas have gone under water including the low-lying areas of Mymensingh Municipality.

Shambhuganj cross-dam has been threatened as the onrush of hilly water and incessant rainfall are continuing. Many families hit by fresh flood have taken shelter in different schools and high places including Shambhuganj cross-dam. Some victims are passing their days under the open sky without any relief materials.

Acute Scarcity of drinking water and food is prevailing in the flood-hit areas. Relief goods is very poor in the food-affected areas. Meanwhile, the flash flood

claimed three more lives in the district this week.

Two minor children of village Bororchar in the sadar thana drowned in flood water. They were identified as Amena Khatun, 5, and Phulu Begum, 4.

An oldman identified as Chirojibi Roy, 70, of village Bokanagar in Gourpur thana died due to flood related incident.

According to District Administration sources flood claimed 12 lives in the district. But according to unofficial sources the death figure is double the official figure.

UNB reports from Kishoreganj: The targets of 'aus' and jute production in the district may not be achieved in the current season due to the prolonged flood. Official sources said 'aus' on 6,535 hectares of land and jute on 1,071 hectares of land have been damaged so far due to the onslaught of the flood.

The target of 'aus' production was fixed at 43,560 mts by cultivating 31,000 hectares of land in 11 thanas of the district of which paddy on 2,310 hectares of land was damaged totally and 4,275 hectares partially.

Agriculture Extension Department said this year, a bumper jute production was also expected as 16,500 hectares land have been brought under its cultivation against its target of 16,000 hectares.

The target of jute production was fixed at 1.53 lakh bales. But sources said the flood has so far affected jute on 105 hectares of land totally and 966 hectares partially.

The poor and marginal farmers are worst affected as they have taken loans at high rate of interest from the local money-lenders for cultivation of the two crops.

More than half of the total 1,21,853 farmers of the district are marginal, the sources added.

Popularity of engine-driven boat

Boatmen of traditional country boats facing unemployment

JAMALPUR, Aug 29: The boatmen of the traditional country boats in the district have been facing unemployment due to increasing popularity of the engine-driven boat, reports UNB.

The suffering boatmen said due to lack of capital they cannot arrange engines for their boats.

Hundreds of poor boatmen have been involved in carrying passengers and goods in the remote rural areas as well as at the important business centres across the district. But, they said, they are now

facing stiff competition from the engine-driven boats due to its comparative advantage in speed and lower cost.

The boatmen, mainly depended on the ancestral profession for their livelihood, are being compelled to give up and search for other occupations for mere survival.

"No one likes to use my boat now-a-days," said a boatman of the traditional country boat. "My boat is too slow for carrying passenger or goods as everyone wants speed."

Nearly 1,000 engine-driven

boats have been plying in the rivers in seven thanas of the district, said the local people and the men involved in this business.

They said these boats, which add speed by setting irrigation pump machines, ply in the rivers Jamuna, Brahmaputra, Jhenai, Doshani and their tributaries and canals across the district.

But the engine-driven boat is not safe enough for carrying passengers or goods in the absence of proper control system in its direction and speed.

Pneumonia claims

89 lives in Kishoreganj

KISHOREGANJ, Aug 29: Pneumonia that broke out in alarming proportion in the district claimed 89 lives and affected 19,321 others during the last five months from January to May, official sources said, reports UNB.

But unofficial sources said 120 people died of the disease and affected about 32,000 others in 13 thanas of the district during the period.

Pneumonia, an acute respiratory infection, has turned acute in some thanas causing panic among the people.

Of the affected, official sources said, 80 per cent was children, 15 per cent women and five per cent male.

Centuries old Nidaria Mosque on verge of collapse

From Mozammel Haque

RANGPUR, Aug 29: The Mughals built a large number of mosques across the undivided India. Many of these mosques were damaged due to lack of maintenance. "Nidaria (beardless) Jam-e-Mosque" is one of these mosques, still standing in its poor condition for over two and a half centuries.

This historic mosque is situated at Kishamat Vagarbond mouja in Panchagram union under sadar thana in Lalmonirhat district. The actual location of the mosque is about two kilometres away from Rangpur-Kurigram highway in the eastern side.

According to the local people, the mosque was built in 1176 Hijri (Arabic calendar) and which was engraved in Persian on the wall of the mosque. Some elderly people told that the mosque was built by Md Masud Khan Subedar of Bengal at that time. He was a religious man. For some reason he didn't have beard.

Probably for that reason the mosque was named "Nidaria Jam-e-Mosque".

Senior people also said that the mosque is very close to the bank of renowned "Chak-Chaka Beel" that was constructed by the same person Subedar Khan to ensure water supply to the 'Musallis' and enhance beauty of the locality.

Some experts said that the front view of the mosque is almost similar to Babri Mosque of India.

The mosque is 34 feet long, 18 feet wide, three doors each 5 feet high and two windows on the North and South side. The walls are 4 feet thick made of lime and brick dusts. It has three domes. The fine works of the wall cabinet and some other parts inside the mosque carry the evidence of superb architectural skill of the people

of that time. It is interesting to note that there is a 15 feet long grave attached to this mosque and it was not known whose grave that was. This anonymity pulls lots of curious visitors.

Subedar Md Masur Ali son of Md Masud Khan donated about 11 acres of land for the mosque. After the death of Subedar Md Masur Ali, his heirs did not take care of the mosque. Later on some local people named Durai-Bizar Khan, Tasku Sheikh, Duria Sheikh and others took advantage of the situation and took possession of the donated land. There are allegations, they are not doing any maintenance of the mosque for a long time. The mosque is not usable

as it is covered by jungles and bushes with cracks and holes on it.

Some destitutes loosing their homes due to erosion of the river Brahmaputra, took shelter in the compound of the mosque cutting jungle. They discovered the mosque as they were clearing the jungle. They have already started using the mosque and offer prayers despite the great risk of collapsing.

The mosque is too small to accommodate musallis. In 1997, the mosque was declared as an antique by a gazette notification of the government. Accordingly the officials of the Archaeological Department took over the administration of the

mosque. But it is a disgrace that only 280 acres of land shown as wakf while the rest 800 acres were taken by some influential crooks in the community.

It is sad and a shame that the centuries old "Nidaria Jam-e-Mosque is now on the verge of collapse without any maintenance work."

The people of that local area strongly demanded of the government to take immediate measures to save the mosque from destruction.

People further demanded to take action for restoration of the 800 acres of wakf land taken away by some local so called influential guys.



RANGPUR: Front view of "Nidaria Jam-e-Mosque".

—Star Photo

All steps will be taken to eliminate session jam from RU, says VC

From RU Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Aug 29: Prof Abdul Khaleque, Vice-Chancellor of Rajshahi University (RU) urged the students to join their hands in the movement to make the campus violence and session jam-free. According to him, joint efforts and initiatives of all quarters have made the campus terrorism-free. Now, every thing is going on smoothly. This trend should be maintained, he said.

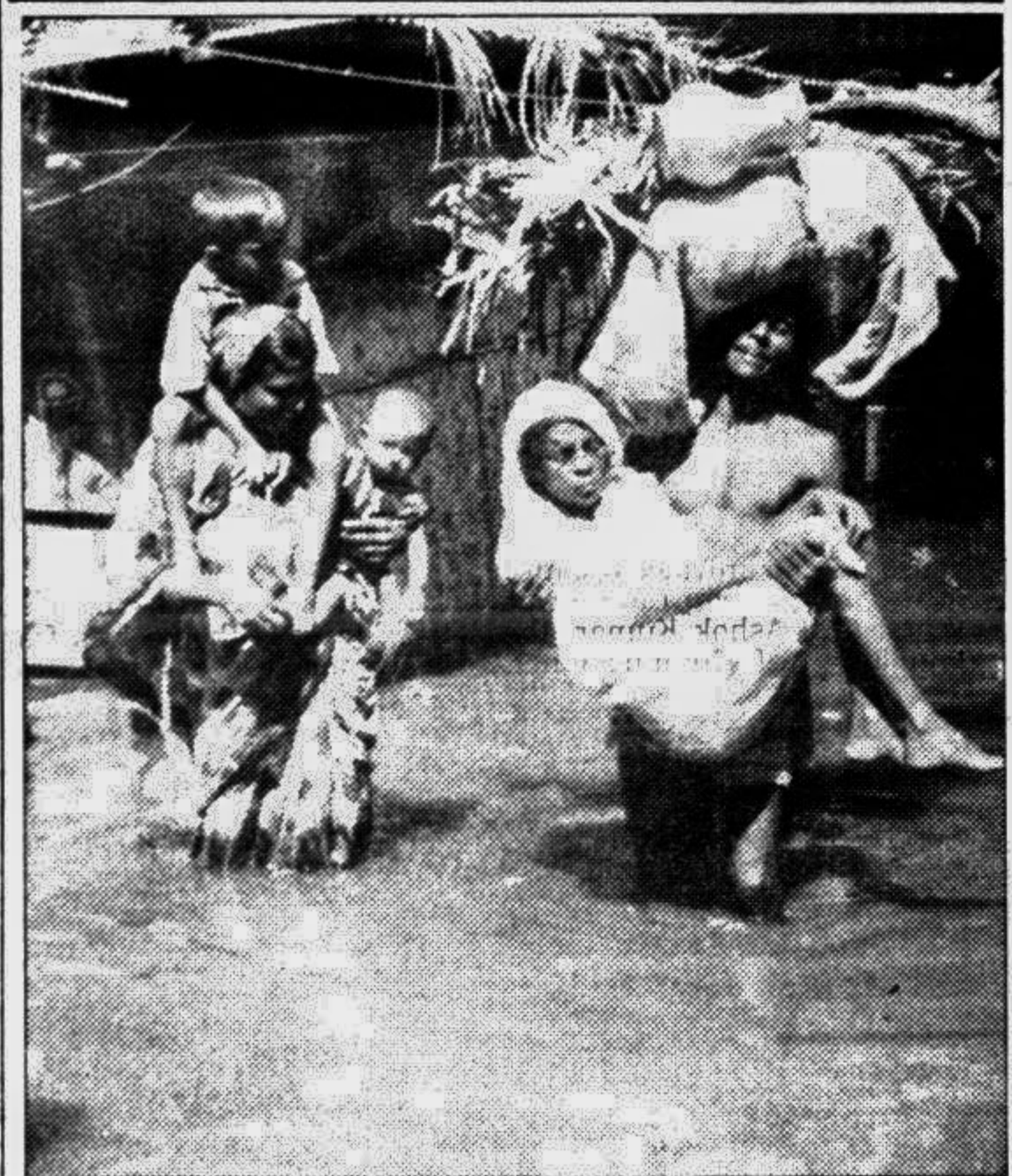
He was addressing a freshers' reception function who were admitted into the session 1997-98 and held at Kazi Nazrul Islam auditorium recently. The programme was arranged by the university authority.

The VC declared all steps will be taken to eliminate session jam during the session 1997-98.

Regarding residential problem, he said a new hall after the

name of Bangabandhu will be built soon for male students. Construction works of TSSC complex will be started soon, he added. The VC announced that two new buildings, one for Arts another for Science faculty would also be made in near future. He informed that the government would run special development programmes in four universities including Rajshahi. RU authority is also cordial to solve the transport problem of the students, he declared.

The function, chaired by the VC, was addressed, among others, by RU Pro-VC Prof Sayeedur Rahman Khan, Treasurer Prof Abdul Fazal Haque, Acting Registrar Prof M Yunus, Prof Mizan Uddin, Prof Mokhlesur Rahman, Prof Jalal Uddin and M Rafiqul Islam.



CHANDPUR: A housewife shifting toward safer places with two children in her lap and shoulder, while her husband carrying his old mother in his lap and goods on his head.

—Star photo

Tk 388 cr programme to create forest along coastal areas

PABNA, Aug 29: Government has taken up a programme to create forest along the coastal areas and the char lands to reduce the effects of tidal surge and the process of desertification, reports UNB.

At least 7,800 hectares of land in 52 districts will be brought under the six-year programme which began from last year.

Asian Development Bank will provide Tk 388 crore in the Char Afforestation programme, said the official sources.

A number of local NGOs will be included in the implementation process by involving them in planting saplings and giving the responsibility of maintenance.

The programme will also help maintain ecological balance and reduce the damages caused by various natural calamities like flood and drought, they added.

Besides, the project will also facilitate socio-economic uplift of the people in the project areas.

Forest officials here said all

the 16 districts of the northern region have been brought under the programme. At least 650 saplings will be planted in each hectare of land.

They said 1,400 hectares of land have been brought under the programme in the district and in Sirajganj.

Forest Department has already invited applications from the NGOs interested in the programme.

First class 1st

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Aug 29: Mehe Zubunessa Rahman Chowdhury (Tumpa) stood first in MS in Agricultural Production Economics final examination of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) held in the January-June semester of 1998, according to a recent notification of the BAU Examination Section.

Kishoreganj JCD president held

KISHOREGANJ, Aug 29: Police arrested a JCD leader from Gohata railway station here reports UNB.

President of Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal district unit Abu Ishaq M Abdullah Rabbani was arrested from Egaro Sindhu train by a special team of police.

Police said Rabbani is one of the five accused in a criminal case filed by the railway police on October 5, 1997 for putting up barricade on the railway track during an opposition hartal.

JCD, the student wing of the opposition BNP, brought out a procession in the town protesting Rabbani's arrest.

They also held a rally demanding his immediate release and withdrawal of the case filed against Rabbani.

64 local, foreign NGOs keen to work in CHT

RANGAMATI, Aug 29: Chairman of Rangamati Hill District Local Government Council, Ching Kow Roaza said here on Sunday that signing of peace treaty has created a lot of avenues to improve socio-economic condition of the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), reports BSS.

He said at least 64 non-government organisations (NGOs), both local and foreign, have already approached the authorities to carry out welfare oriented activities in the area. Besides, all the government agencies have geared up their activities to bring about a socio-economic change in the hill tracts, he added.