

News snaps

Bumper 'Aman' output expected

NOAKHALI, Dec 21: Farmers of the four thanas are expecting bumper 'aman' production this season though the crops in two thanas of the district were destroyed by the recent devastating flood, reports UNB.

The long lasting devastating natural calamity damaged the crops of Benaganj and Chakhtil thanas completely. But production in Sadar, Senbagh, Companyganj and Hatia thanas has brought smile in the face of growers. Food deficit is unlikely in the affected two thanas as the overall production in the district is satisfactory, said Agriculture Extension Department. AED sources said, 57,000 hectares of land were brought under cultivation in Sadar thana for farming of local and high yielding variety of the crop, 48,176 hectares in Hatia thana, 22,378 hectares in Companyganj thana, 9,150 hectares in Senbagh thana, 463 hectares in Chakhtil thana and 600 hectares in Begumganj thana during the season. Of the total, paddy plants were totally damaged in 1063 hectares of land in Begumganj and Chakhtil thanas because of the disaster. The cultivators, however, are optimistic to see the bumper production in four thanas. The harvesting will continue till the end of the current month.

V-Day observed

THAKURGAON, Dec 21: Victory Day was observed on December 16 throughout the district with pomp and gaiety, reports BSS.

The day started with 21-gun salute. District administration, political parties, different socio-cultural organisations observed the day through various programmes. Floral wreaths were placed at the Shahid minars and mazars of the martyrs. National flag was hoisted atop all offices, shops and houses. Music, paintings, drama, recitation and sports competitions were held. Special prayers were offered at mosques, temples and churches. Reception was accorded to injured freedom fighters. Special diets were given in the hospitals, jail and orphanages. In the evening a discussion meeting on independence and attainment of self-reliance in all spheres of life was held at Thakurgaon Poura Milonayatan.

Three trucks seized: 3 arrested

MANIKGANJ, Dec 21: Detective branch of police, Manikganj seized three trucks loaded with 30 tonnes of sugar and arrested three persons on Wednesday, reports BSS.

Police sources said, acting on a tip-off detective branch police raided the sugar loaded trucks near Jagir on Dhaka-Aricha highway at about 7 pm on Wednesday. The arrested persons were identified as Rezaul Alam, Anwar Hossain and Guddu Mia. All the arrested are the residents of Kushiha who were the driver and helpers of the seized trucks.

No Nabanna festival in Sherpur

SHERPUR, Dec 21: Peasantry of the district could not celebrate the 'Nabanna Festival' this year owing to massive damages of crops caused by the last devastating flood and cyclonic storm, reports UNB.

Though the festival is usually observed at the first week of the Bengali month of Aghrayana with the harvesting of new crops, but it was not observed in the month this year. Mohammad Iliasuddin and Minhajuddin Minal, Chairman of Charkkhamari and Nasamonpur unions said with a heavy heart that the people of the rural areas with much enthusiasm used to distribute 'pitthas' (cakes) and other delicious foods among their neighbours and arrange various programmes like dance, song, jatra and jagan to celebrate the harvesting of new crops. But this year, they could not arrange any programme due to massive damages of crops caused by the flood and another disaster caused by the depression in the Bay of Bengal and subsequent continuous heavy downpour in November. Besides, crops on about 20,000 hectares of land were affected due to widespread pest-attack, they added.

342 uplift schemes to be implemented

PIROJPUR, Dec 21: The District Relief Department will implement 342 schemes in six thanas and two pourashavas in the district under its Test Relief programme in the current fiscal year, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, a total of 537 metric tons of wheat were allocated to implement the programme. official sources said. Of the schemes, some 62 schemes will be implemented in Bhandaria while 40 in Kauhali, 45 in Mathbaria, 77 in Nazipur, 44 in Swarupkati and 68 in Sadar thanas and five in Pirojpur and two in Mathbaria pourashavas. The schemes included construction and reconstruction of roads, bridges, culverts, educational institutions, mosques and temples and other service-oriented organisations.

Loan for flood affected farmers

CHUADANGA, Dec 21: The Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB), Chuadanga region has been implementing a massive loan disbursement programme in Chuadanga district under the post-flood agriculture rehabilitation programme, reports BSS.

According to an official source, during the last five months of the current financial year BKB has disbursed Taka five crore and 44 lakh among 5,061 persons of the four thanas of Chuadanga district through its 10 branches. BKB has taken up a programme to disburse Taka 10.68 crores during the current financial year as agri-loan in Chuadanga district. The regional manager of BKB, Chuadanga region Md Atiar Rahman told that during the last five months 51 per cent of the total loan disbursement target has been achieved.

Boy dies in road accident

CHUADANGA, Dec 21: An eleven-year-old boy died in a road accident recently near water tank No-1 at Chuadanga Court Para, reports BSS.

The accident occurred when the boy was passing through the main road, a truck hit him from behind. They boy died on the spot. The driver fled away leaving the truck near district jail being chased by local people. Police seized the truck.

Target of immunization exceeds

RAJSHAHI, Dec 21: This year the target of immunization has exceeded on the fifth National Immunization Day (NID) in Rajshahi city with active support and participation of the people, reports UNB.

Officials involved in the programme said the target of feeding vitamin A capsule was also very successful during the day. EPI sources said NID was observed this year on December 14 throughout the country and the target of immunization against Polio in the city corporation area here was 55,463 children. But the sources said with the active and enthusiastic cooperation of the people from all walks of life, more children than that of the target could be brought under the programme on the day. They said the number of children brought under Polio vaccination was 62,888 and the achievement against the target was 113.39 per cent.

Smuggled goods flood markets

COMILLA, Dec 21: Smuggled goods have virtually flooded markets in the district as some of the border points have turned into veritable gateways for those, reports APB.

Most of these smuggled goods from India eventually find their way to neighbouring districts as well as maritime and river ports of the country. These smuggled goods are sent to Dhaka, Chittagong and north-western districts of the country through rail, road and waterway. Local people say that nearly 80 per cent of the goods including fruits and vegetables put on sale in local markets are of Indian origin. Also smuggled are lakhs of taka worth of Phensidyl, they said. Unabated smuggling of Indian goods is badly affecting local manufacturing industries, specially the traditional khadi products. A large number of weavers have already been thrown out of employment.

Pabna farmers need bank loan

ISWARDI, Dec 21: Flood affected farmers outside the flood protection embankments in Iswardi, Pabna Sadar and Shujanagar areas can not begin cultivation due to lack of bank loan and high prices of seeds, reports APB.

Farmers said Musur seeds are sold at Tk 1,200 per maund, Motor at Tk 700, Mustard at Tk 1000, Khesari at Tk 450, garlic at Tk 2,000 and wheat seeds at Tk 500. They alleged that bank loans are not available even after months of filing application.

Farmers' training course concludes

MEHERPUR, Dec 21: A three-day farmer's training course on the use of appropriate technology for the cultivation of winter vegetables and fruits concluded here at the Baradi Agriculture Research Centre on December 14, reports BSS.

Agriculture Extension Department organised the training. Chairman of Pirojpur Union Parishad of the district inaugurated the course, participated by 150 farmers. The participants were given practical training on how to increase the production of winter vegetables and fruits by applying modern technology and high yielding varieties of seeds.

92 small schemes under TR programme

MEHERPUR, Dec 21: A total of 92 small schemes under the Test Relief (TR) programme has been taken up in two thanas and one pourashava in the district in the current winter season by the administration, reports BSS.

According to official sources, the government has allocated 253 tonnes of wheat for the execution of these schemes. The schemes included repair and renovation of different kutchas roads and roads-cum-embankments, earthwork in different educational and religious institutions and repairing of culverts. The work of the schemes will start soon.

National

Highway, rly robberies on rise in N-districts

NATORE, Dec 21: Highway and railway robberies have been increased alarmingly in the northern districts including Natore in recent days creating panic among the travelling people, reports UNB.

A gang of dacoits looted a Dhaka-bound coach coming from Chapalnawabganj near Puthiya on Natore-Rajshahi highway on December 11. The armed robbers numbering five held hostage the driver and looted cash and kind from the passengers.

In another incident, two robbers identified as Rajib and Mongla were caught red-handed by the local people at Peerbagh in Rangpur district while they were preparing to commit a dacoity in a Dhaka-bound bus on November 30.

On the same day, local people caught red-handed seven miscreants from the same area

when they tried to hijack a microbus. They were later handed over to the police.

A daring dacoity was committed in 434 down local train. The thugs took away money and other valuables worth Tk 5 lakh from the passengers.

According to the passengers, 14 dwelling houses gutted in Rangpur

RANGPUR, Dec 21: A devastating fire that broke out on Thursday night at Paglapir area in Kotwali thana gutted 14 dwelling houses, reports UNB.

According to witnesses, the fire originating from a cowshed engulfed the adjacent areas and charred the dwellings and valuables. The extent of damage was estimated at Tk 10 lakh.

the law breakers numbering 15 to 20 entered into the compartment of the train at about 10 pm when it left Chirir Bazar station and after the dacoity they jumped down from the speeding train near the Bhanga railway bridge.

The train had no on duty police on the day, the passengers alleged.

Another train dacoity was committed on the same day and at the same time at Shahjadpur village adjacent to Jamtali railway station on Sirajganj-Ishwardi route.

A gang of armed robbers numbering 15 to 16 swooped on the passengers when the train left Sirajganj station for Ishwardi. The terrorists beat the passengers and took away money and other valuables worth Tk 2.5 lakh.

At least 15 passengers were wounded in the attack.



MYMENSINGH: A colourful march past by the school children at Mymensingh Stadium on the Victory Day. — Star photo

Cultivation of Kataribhog declining gradually

PANCHAGARH, Dec 21: Cultivation of Kataribhog, the finest variety of rice, is declining day by day due to its low yield and requirement of special soil condition, reports APB.

This variety of rice is rarely available in the market now.

Kataribhog is very sensitive to weather and soil conditions. In Bangladesh, it can be grown only in some areas of Dinajpur. These are Karimullapur, Khanpur, Fasilahat, Bara Baul and Chhoto Baul under Dinajpur sadar thana, Bistupur.

Talpur, Kaugan, Mukundapur, West Baul, Virail and Durgadanga under Chirirbandar thana and in some high land in Kaharol thana.

Kataribhog needs high, sandy and loamy soil. Although the soil in the northern parts of Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts is sandy and loamy, the quality of the rice produced there is not as fine as those produced in other areas.

Kataribhog grown in Fadi-lahat and Baul areas of Dinajpur have the finest flavour and

taste. The variety is so sensitive that use of chemical fertiliser causes a marked deterioration of the quality and flavour.

There is a saying that when zamindar Pran Nath sought an audience with emperor Aurangzeb, he took with him some Kataribhog rice and chira along with diamonds, gold coins, Muslin from Dhaka and silk from Rajshahi as gifts.

This pleased the emperor so much that he conferred the title of rajah on Pran Nath.

Corruption charge against Forest Deptt official

KHULNA, Dec 21: Allegation of misappropriation of forest resources worth Tk 20 lakh was made against an official of Forest Department here, reports UNB.

According to the allegation Deputy Ranger of Kashiabad Forest Station in connivance with some other officials grabbed the money depriving the government from the revenue.

He allegedly supplies more than one pass for collecting timber and other forest materials and irregularities were

detected in the books maintained at the station in this regard.

Official sources said the authorities have already seized some documents of the misappropriation and investigation in this matter would start soon.

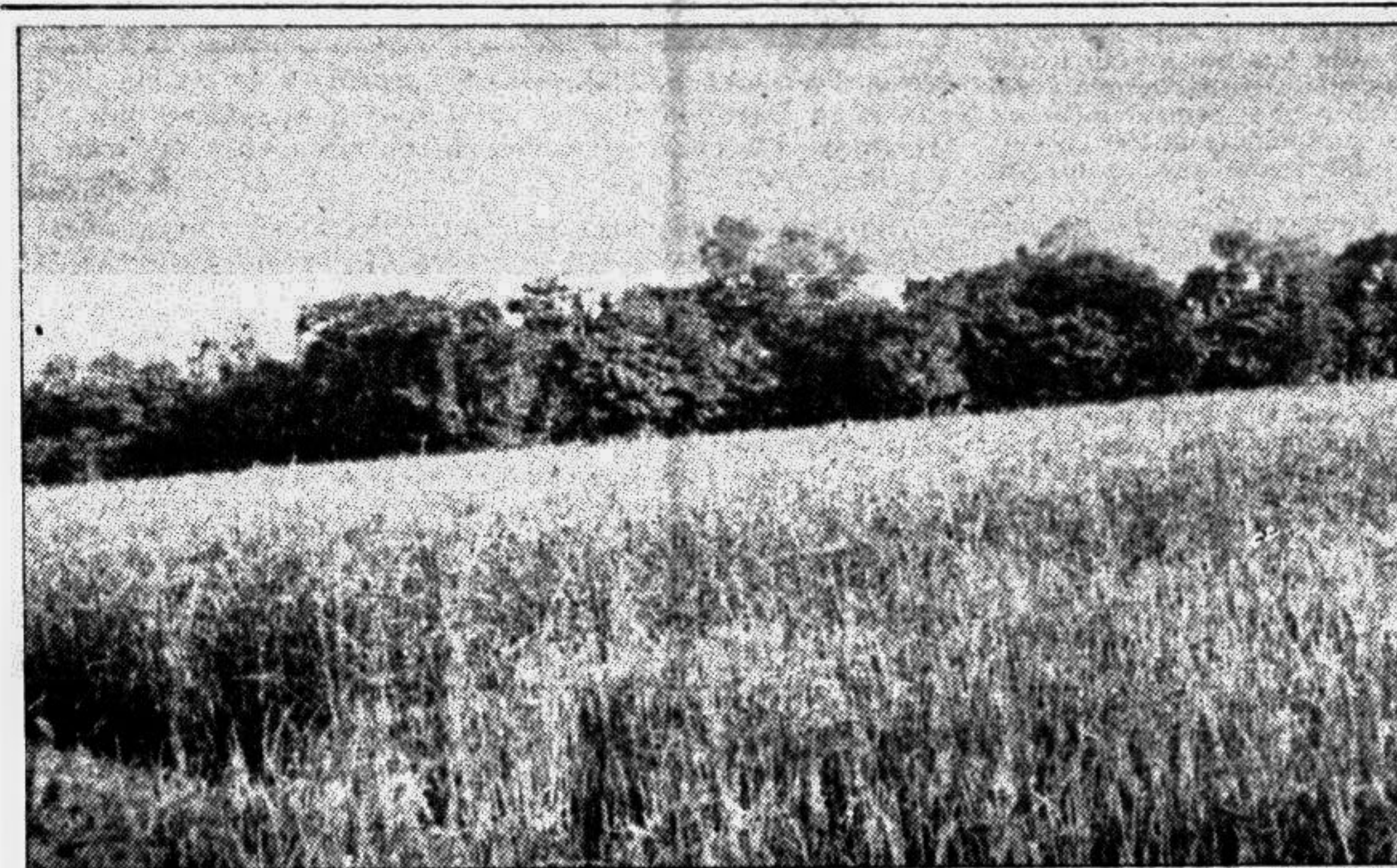
Another report from Sirajganj says: A criminal case was filed against the Chairman and four members of Udhunia Union Parishad in Ullapara thana of the district alleging widespread irregularities, corruption and misappropriation.

A villager of the union, Asadur Rahman, filed the case

accusing Chairman Jalaluddin Sarkar, members Abdul Mannan, Pramanik, Hachen Ali, Ahmed Ali and Mokbul Hossain here on Saturday, reports UNB.

The court asked the Anti-Corruption Bureau to investigate into the case.

The allegations include misappropriation of relief materials, seeds, fertilisers, foodgrains under VGF programme and distribution of different materials among the people of their own choice depriving the really affected and destitute people.



CHANDPUR: Bumper output of 'Aman' has been reported in Chandpur Irrigation Project area during the current season. — Star photo

Experimental farming of hybrid paddy, maize in Bandarban

BANDARBAN, Dec 21: The cultivation of hybrid paddy and maize is going on in the district on experimental basis during the current season, reports UNB.

Local farmers have started collecting hybrid seeds and preparing their seedbeds for the purpose. Agriculture officials said the productivity of hybrid seed is one and a half times higher than the high yielding variety (HYV) paddy.

But the experts said problem with the hybrid paddy is that its seeds are to be collected from

abroad every year as the locally produced seeds of this variety are not suitable for high productivity.

The officials said only 3.5 per cent land of the hill district is arable and the hybrid variety would be appropriate for achieving high productivity in the land of the region.

The Agriculture Department is running a motivation programme for the local farmers, the officials said adding that the cultivation of hybrid paddy will start in seven thanas in the next 'Boro' season.

Meanwhile, farmers of four thanas of the district cultivated hybrid maize last year. The productivity was very high and nine metric tons of crop was harvested from a government plot of three acres.

The productivity of HIV variety of maize was much less, said the sources adding that only 45 metric tons of maize were produced in eight plots with a land area of 24 acres.

Agriculture officials said maize would be cultivated in seven plots. Each plot will consist of nine acres of land.

Increasing arsenic contamination

NARAIL, Dec 21: Public health is being threatened in the town due to increasing arsenic contamination in the ground water, reports UNB.

Official sources said the water of three Pump Houses and nine hand tube-wells of the district town areas under 18-District Town Project financed by the Netherlands Government has been tested in the laboratory.

The pourashava authority has sealed one of the pump houses in Rupganj area.

According to a test report, more than 50 micro-gram arsenic was found in per liter water which is injurious to health while 10 mg arsenic contamination is tolerable limit.

The Chairman of Narail Pourashava has warned the local people about increasing arsenic contamination in tube-well water and supply water of a

pump houses in the area. He called upon the local people to take processed plant water supplied by the authority.

The 18-District Town Projects included Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Joypur, Panchagorh, Thakurgaon, Naogaon, Netrakona, Sherpur, Moulvibazar, Meherpur, Manikganj, Magura, Sariatpur, Narail, Satkhira, Jhalakathi, Bhola and Barguna.

Meanwhile, the arsenic contamination was found beyond the limit in Narail, Magura, Meherpur, Satkhira, Manikganj and Sherpur towns.

Local people urged the Public Health Engineering Department to come forward for extensive test of deep and shallow tube-wells including the hand driven tube-wells in urban and rural areas of the districts to detect the extent of contamination immediately.

Discussion on Shaheed Sirajuddin

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Dec 21: The 27th death anniversary of Shahid Sirajuddin Hossain, the then Executive Editor of The Daily Ittefaq and a great son of Magura district was observed here on December 10 in a befitting manner.

Milad mahfil, Quran khwani and a discussion meeting on his life and works were arranged at his Sharsuna village home situated in Shalikha thana. Another milad mahfil and discussion meeting were held at Shahid Sirajuddin Degree College at Khajura Bazar. Another discussion meeting was also arranged in Magura Press Club premises.

Advocate Dipak Roy Chowdhury, convenor of Magura Press Club presided over the discussion meeting, while local journalists took part there.

Essential commodities marketed without BSTI approval in N-dists

PANCHAGARH, Dec 21: Various essential commodities are marketed in the northern region of the country without the mandatory approval of the Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute (BSTI), reports APB.

As a result, consumers are deprived due to short weight of items and become vulnerable to diseases because of adulteration.

Moreover, problems arise as the metric system of weight has not yet been introduced in many markets in the interior regions.

The BSTI is responsible for quality control of commodities produced in the country.

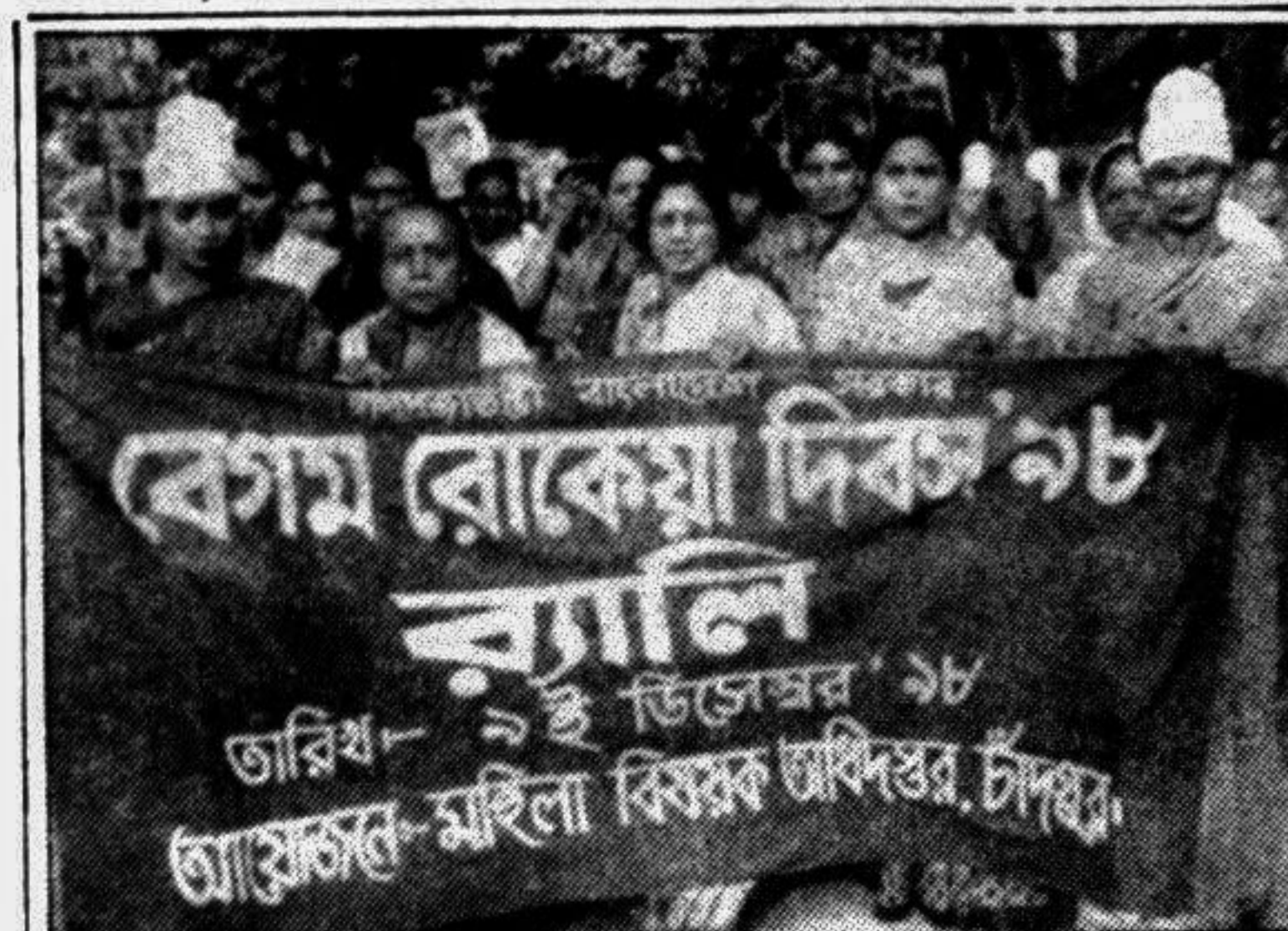
Fifteen hundred items, including edible oil, electrical appliances, biscuits, cement, matches, cosmetics, packet foods, jellies, pickles, cold drinks, fertiliser, sugar and

salt, have to be approved by DOTI and given fitness certificates before marketing.

Sources in the Rajshahi branch of the BSTI said they have no equipment for testing quality of goods and the office is under-staffed. Apart from the deputy director and the assistant director, there are only four inspectors and one super-

visors. This manpower is inadequate to cover 124 thanas of 16 districts, they said. Moreover the office has no vehicle.

The problem of quality control can be easily understood by the fact that the Rajshahi BSTI realised fines amounting to Tk 1,16,000 through mobiles courts in the last few months.



CHANDPUR: Rokeya Day was observed here befittingly recently. On the occasion a colourful rally was arranged. — Star photo



JHENIDAH: Two child artistes dancing in a Victory Day function here. — Star photo



AGRI-VARSITY (Mymensingh): Nepalese Ambassador Lok Bahadur Shrestha and his wife Cheri Shrestha called on Vice-Chancellor Prof Muhammad Hossain during his recent visit to the Agricultural University. — Star photo



JHENIDAH: A colourful rally was brought out in the town recently in observance of International Day of the Disabled. — Star photo



FARIDPUR: World Diabetes Day was observed here befittingly on November 14. Photo shows the local civil surgeon speaking at a discussion meeting which was arranged on the occasion. — Star photo