

News snaps



CHANDPUR: Readers Forum of Prothom Alo, a leading national daily arranged a cultural programme here recently. — Star photo

Obscene view cards on open sale

NAOGAON, Jan 8: Obscene view-cards showing fully naked or half-naked photos of women and men are being sold almost openly in Naogaon town, reports APB.

These are available at stationery shops, bus stands, small retail shops in almost all areas of the town. People, specially parents and guardians are worried because most of the buyers are young students of both sexes. The cards, which normally are three inches long, can be kept hidden in their pockets. Since the prices are low, varying from Tk 2 to Tk 5, students can buy those by saving their tiffin money. The district administration has taken no step to stop printing or flow of these degenerating things from outside the country.

Seedlings distributed among farmers

HABIGANJ, Jan 8: Agriculture Extension Department (AED) distributed cash, fertiliser and seedlings among the farmers in Sadar thana in the current 'aman' and 'rab' season under its post-flood rehabilitation programme, reports UNB.

Official sources said, it distributed Tk 2.61 lakh in cash, 7,590 kg DAP fertiliser and seedlings free of cost among 675 poor and marginal farmers for transplanted 'aman' cultivation. Under Rehabilitation Programme-2, it also distributed cash, DAP and urea fertilisers, and seedlings of wheat, 'boro' paddy, maize and vegetables. Besides, under Rehabilitation Programme-4 and 6, wheat and hybrid maize seeds have been distributed among the poor and marginal farmers in the thana.

Schools in bad shape

PIROJPUR, Jan 8: Education in the secondary high schools in different areas of the district has been hampered due to various reasons, reports UNB.

In Mothbaria thana, a good number of secondary high school and madrasa buildings are in dilapidated condition. Students and teachers of different educational institutions including KM Latif Institution, Shapleja Model High School, Gulishakhali GK Union Secondary Schools are working under threat of collapse. Officials said the total number of high schools in the thana is 31 while there are nine Junior Secondary Schools and 47 madrasas. Most of the schools in the rural areas are in very bad shape and these educational institutions have no science laboratory, library, auditorium and other necessary education equipment. Many schools lack supply of pure water in the compounds causing serious problems for the teachers and students.

Tk 9.44cr loan disbursed

PIROJPUR, Jan 8: Local Krishi Bank disbursed agriculture loan over Tk 9.44 crore out of its total target of Tk 13.26 crore in the current fiscal, reports UNB.

The bank is distributing the loan among the farmers through its 21 branches, official sources said. Of the total amount, over Tk 1.28 crore has been sanctioned for 'Aus' cultivation, Tk 1.58 crore for 'Aman', Tk 3.77 crore for 'Boro', Tk 1.92 crore for potato and Tk 30 lakh for banana cultivation. Besides, Tk 53.20 lakh has been allocated for purchasing bullocks. Tk 2.30 crore for marginal farmers and Tk 1.92 crore for other purposes. Bank sources said the disbursement will be completed soon.

20 landless families rehabilitated

RANGPUR, Jan 8: A total of 20 landless distressed families have been rehabilitated in 'Asrayan Kendra', a shelter project on 80 decimal of lands at Ranchandpur village in Pirganj thana here, reports UNB.

Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner Khan Shahabuddin inaugurated the project on Monday. Later, the documents of the allotment were handed over to the rehabilitated families. The inaugural function was presided over by Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur Moazzem Hossain. Among others, officials and local leaders addressed the function.

Laksham Pourashava chairman sued

COMILLA, Jan 8: Anti-corruption Bureau here has filed three cases against Mostafa Kamal Khan, Chairman of Laksham Pourashava, on charge of embezzling about Tk 4.95 lakh collected as value added tax, reports UNB.

Official sources said the chairman grabbed the money collected as VAT from the contractors in connection with different development works of the pourashava. The amount includes Tk 3.18 lakh in 1993-94, Tk 54,586 in 1994-95 and Tk 1.23 lakh in 1995-96. Under the existing rules, the VAT collected from the contractors should be deposited with the official account, but this was not allegedly done properly. After the investigation, the Bureau officials filed the cases against the chairman.

Timbers seized

HABIGANJ, Jan 8: Special team of the Forest Department here in separa raids seized huge quantity of teak timbers worth about Tk 3 lakh in the last month, reports UNB.

According to the official sources, some 261.65 ft timbers valued at Tk 2.50 lakh, furniture of Tk 40,000 and two trucks loaded with timbers were recovered from different areas of Chunarughat, Madhabpur and Bahubal thanas and Dhaka-Sylhet highway during the period. Another report from Sylhet says, BDR jawans recovered Indian wall-clocks worth about Tk one lakh from frontier Sakia area in Jakiganj thana on Sunday. Acting on a tip-off, BDR seized the smuggled goods while being brought into the country. The goods were deposited with the local Customs office. Another report from Comilla adds, police arrested 10 people along with huge Indian smuggled sarees from a truck on Dhaka-Chittagong highway on December 31.

3,000 acres of land remain fallow

SHERPUR, Jan 8: At least 3,000 acres of land remained fallow in different areas of the district this year because poor farmers could not bring these under cultivation due to high input cost, reports APB.

Prices of fertiliser, seeds, draft animals and the rate of electricity for irrigation is beyond their reach, some of the farmers said. The number of deep tubewells is also inadequate. Farmers irrigate their lands with the help of shallow tubewells and power pumps but the cost of running diesel-driven pumps have also gone up in recent days. Pump owners usually charge Tk 1,500 to Tk 2,000 for irrigating one acre of land, which is too high for marginal farmers.

10 uplift projects undertaken

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 8: Facilities Department undertook 10 development projects in the district in the 1997-98 fiscal year, reports BSS.

According to official sources, the projects included construction and reconstruction of various educational institutions of the district. The institutions are Gurudoyal Government College, Muktiyoddha College, Haji Zafar College, Mithamoin Degree College, Kishoreganj Government Boys' School, Kishoreganj Girls' High School, Bajitpur RN Girls' High School, Hossainpur Pilot High School, Saguli Shaheed Gurustan Senior Madrasa and SV Government Girls' High School. A total of Taka 2,37,73,000 was allocated for the implementation of the development activities.

Chandpur press Club EC poll held

CHANDPUR, Jan 8: Election of the Executive Committee of Chandpur Press Club was held recently, reports APB.

Quamuzzaman Choudhury of Bangladesh Observer and Prof Ahsanuzzaman of Radio Bangladesh were re-elected president and general secretary respectively for the 1999-2000 term. Other office bearers are: Shankar Chandra Dey of BNS and Golem Kibria Jibon of Ittefaq and BTV — vice-presidents; Delwar Ahmed of The Independent and APB — joint secretary; Alhaj M A Masud Bhuiyan editor of Rupashi Chandpur — treasurer; Shah Md Maksud of Sangbad — literary and sports secretary and Partanath Chakrabarty — office secretary. The election was conducted by a three member election commission led by Prof Mohammad Hossain Khan, Chairman of Political Science Department of Chandpur University College.

Chandpur hospital ailing

From Shirin Akhter

CHANDPUR, Jan 8: Chandpur Sadar Modernised Hospital is beset with manifold problems.

Shortage of doctors, medicines, beds, equipments, nurses and other staffers has been hampering proper treatment of large number of patients.

The 50-bed hospital is unable to render proper treatment to the increasing number of patients. The existing number of beds can only meet 20 per cent requirement of the patients seeking admission in the hospital.

This is the only hospital in the district headquarters having a population of more than twenty lakh. There is one bed for about forty thousand people which is impossible to meet minimum requirement of pa-

tients. Most of the bed sheets have become unfit for use and those are rarely being replaced.

Most of the patients who come from remote villages return home without proper treatment for want of accommodation.

The only ambulance of the hospital remains out of order most of the time. In emergency cases the people are compelled to hire vehicles at high rate. Though it is a 50-bed hospital, about two hundred patients are usually admitted in the hospital. Most of the patients are staying on the floor and corridor of the hospital. The water supply is almost absent and if it is supplied it is very irregular. The outdoor patients visit the hospital during office timings, but they can not meet the doctors on the plea that the doctors

are visiting wards or some times doctors remain busy in meetings.

Dogs, cats are found moving freely in different floors of the hospital. Some patients complained that both indoor and outdoor patients are provided with only prescription. The poor indoor patients are to purchase medicines from outside at a high rate.

It is alleged, doctors, nurses and other staffers are insufficient. There is no children's ward in the hospital. The post of medicine consultant has not yet been created in the hospital.

The patients further complained, most of the doctors remained busy with their private practice. The people of the district have urged the government to immediately turn the hospital into a 200-bed hospital.

Irregularities in distribution of foodgrains under VGF cards

BARGUNA, Jan 8: The distressed people of Bamna union in Bamna thana here complained of irregularities in the distribution of foodgrains under VGF cards, report UNB.

They said less than 16 kg of foodgrains were distributed among each VGF card holders of Bamna union in Bamna thana of the district on December 31.

Chairman of the union Abul Kalam Rana, Project Implementation Officer Abdul Berek and Thana Cooperatives Officer Ali Hossain were present during the distribution at the local godown, they said adding the

distribution started at 1 pm and continued till 5 pm.

The recipients said they could not understand the trick in the weight, but later found it out and went to the district administration to lodge their protest. But, they said, the administration did not pay any heed to it.

Talking to the local journalists, poor people said each of them had been deprived of about 4 to 5 kg of foodgrains.

Besides, they also alleged nepotism in preparation of the list for VGF cards. They said men and supporters of the

Committee members were included in the list depriving the genuine distressed people.

UP Chairman Abul Kalam said no cardholder was provided with less than the fixed quantity of foodgrains, but he admitted that all the needy people could not be given the cards due to various reasons. He promised to help all of the deprived poor families in the list.

Thana Nirbahi Officer, however, said he did not receive any complaint about VGF card irregularities or the distribution of foodgrains under the programme.



SYLHET: Raihanul Abedin, Managing Director, Sylhet Gas Fields Ltd started the drilling of well number 5 at the Rashidpur Gas field in Habiganj district on January 5. Representatives from Oil and Natural Gas Corporation of India, Petrobangla and others attended there. — Star photo by Iqbal Siddique

Malaria, diarrhoea spreading in Bandarban hill dist alarmingly

BANDARBAN, Jan 8: Outbreaks of malaria and diarrhoea are not uncommon in Bangladesh. But this time the two diseases are spreading in the hill district in an alarming proportion, reports UNB.

Official sources said 70 people died of malaria and the water-borne disease in eight months of the last year. They said during the period malaria infected some 10,042 people and of them 49 died while 12,398 people were attacked by diarrhoea and of them 21 died.

In last eight years, malaria affected 1.31 lakh people claiming 908 lives while diarrhoea attacked 68,644 people and of them 185 died.

But unofficial sources claimed that the death toll from the two diseases would be much

higher than the official one.

Doctors attributed the rapid spread of diarrhoea to acute scarcity of safe water and ignorance of the people to contain the water-borne disease.

Meanwhile, local people alleged that the steps taken by the government contain the outbreak of malaria are too inadequate as the disease has already taken an alarming turn.

They further alleged that diarrhoeal patients in remote areas of the hill district were being deprived of medical treatment even though 10 medical teams working there to contain the outbreak of the disease.

Another report from Joy-purhat adds: Diarrhoea broke out in an epidemic form in Panchibi than claiming three lives and attacking 711 people in last six days till Thursday. The deceased were identified

as Shahkar Rani, 10, of Atapur union and Razia Begum, 21, of Khadiza Sultana, 2, of Chanchra union.

BSS reports from Faridpur: Diarrhoea had broken out in Sadarpur, Bhangra and Nagarkanda thana of this district.

According to local sources, many people were attacked by diarrhoea.

The number of diarrhoea patients has increased in the thana health complexes of these areas.

The worst affected villages of Sadarpur thana are Majkandi, Ramchandrapur, Nijgram, Purbakandi, Krishnapur and Dangi and Fulsuti of Nagarkanda thana.

Local people have urged the concerned authorities to take immediate measures to tackle the outbreak of the disease.

Several robberies committed in Feni within two days

FENI, Jan 8: Several robberies were committed and two people sustained serious injuries in the district on January 1 and 2, reports UNB.

Police and local people said five robbers were arrested while committing dacoity.

They said on the night of January 2, a group of robbers stormed the house of Shohag Miah of Kazirbagh village in Sadar thana and decamped with valuables worth Tk one lakh.

The villagers caught red handed five of the dacoits when they were fleeing. They were identified as Anjan Kumar Shaha, Noor Uddin, Rafiq, Mahuddin and Kabir.

On the same night, another

group of dacoits forcibly entered into the house of expatriate Nurul Islam and took away his valuables worth Tk 1.5 lakh.

A man just returned from abroad was abducted by a group of miscreants from Kolapara in Parshuram thana and left him beside the road after merciless beating.

The victim identified as Saleh Ahmed, was rushed to the hospital where his condition was stated to be critical.

Saleh was abducted when he refused to give Tk 50,000 toll to the miscreants, family sources said.

On January 1, a group of terrorists put up barricade at night on the road at Barahpur near

the Airbase area in Sadar thana and looted away Tk 20,000 cash from eight trucks.

In another incident on the same night, terrorists inflicted bullet wounds on truck owner Selim at Fatehpur when he was returning home on board a rickshaw. He was rushed to the Feni Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

In Chhagalnaiya thana, a group of terrorists attacked a religious establishment at Pathangarh village on the same night and looted away valuable worth Tk 12,000.

Local people said the overall law and order situation across the district has deteriorated in the recent weeks due to various reasons including lack of proper action against the offenders and the terrorists by the district administration.

They urged the authorities to take stringent measures to bring the situation under control.

Another report from Satkhira adds: The number of crimes including murder, hijacking, mugging, rape, gambling, smuggling and drug abuse has increased in the district during the recent months.

Local sources said during the last six months a total of 19 murders were committed, but case was filed with the police in connection with only one incident.

According to the source, the murders include six in the Sadar thana, five each in Kalaroad and Kaliganj and one each in Ashashuni, Shyamnagar and Tala thanas.

Madaripur Amir of Jamaat sued

MADARIPUR, Jan 8: A case was filed against the District Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami Dr Fariduddin Ahmed Khan and Secretary of the party's district unit Moulana Abdus Sobhan on charge of embezzling party fund, reports UNB.

Secretary of Jamaat Poura Committee and member of the district Majlish-e-Shura of the party Mohammad Solaiman Khan filed the case with the magistrate court on December 29 charging the two leaders of spending Tk 2,76,421 from the party fund without proper resolution.

The money was part of the fund of Anjuman-e-Khedmate Khalk, a social welfare organisation run by the Jamaat people.

When contacted, District Amir Dr Farid termed the allegations as false and fabricated. He said both the plaintiff and the witnesses of the case have been fired from Jamaat-e-Islami for anti-party activities.

Dr Farid also said the money has been spent according to the resolutions of the concerned committee and he was ready to show these papers even to the journalists.

Scarcity of wheat seeds

NETRAKONA, Jan 8: Farmers of the district are facing problems to cultivate wheat in the current season due to acute scarcity of the seeds, reports UNB.

Farmers said the scarcity cropped up from mid-November when untimely rainfall damaged the wheat plants extensively.

At least 60 per cent farmers of the district sowed wheat seeds before the rainfall.

Local Agriculture Extension Department said about 1,000 hectares of wheat plants were damaged by the downpour.

Admitting shortage of seeds in the local market, the local AED officials said the deadline for sowing wheat seed has already been over by December 15.

They said they were motivating the growers to cultivate pulse instead of wheat in their land to get better harvest.

Besides, AED has set up a target to produce additional 25,000 tons of foodgrains during the current wheat and 'Boro' season in the district to cover up the deficit caused by the last devastating deluge.

This year's target of 'Boro' cultivation has also been fixed on 1.75 lakh hectares of land which is 10,000 hectares more than the previous year.

Fishermen of Kishoreganj in miseries

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 8: Thousands of fishermen here have been facing manifold problems owing to lack of fund, scarcity of fishing materials like net, boat and price hike of inputs, reports UNB.

As many as 60,000 fishermen of Karimganj, Bajitpur, Kuliarchar, Itna, Bhairab, Nikli, Mitamoin, Austagram, Hossainpur and Tarail thanas, famous for fish production, have been facing serious problems due to gradual drying up of rivers, haors, ponds and canals.

The fishermen cannot buy the necessary fishing appliances due to financial stringency. Finding no other alternative, they are forced to take money from the local moneylenders at high rate of interest. Some of them alleged that they could not avail of the bank loan facilities due to complex procedures and demand for bribe.

Moreover, a section of people who are not fishermen by profession have established their total monopoly over it causing great concern among the genuine ones. As such many genuine fishermen have been forced to leave the profession.

The suffering fishermen community urged the authority concerned to provide them with financial assistance and lease out the *jalmahals* to the genuine fishermen so that they can carry out their age-old profession.

Tk 5cr allocated for construction of Magura Shishu Palli Complex

MAGURA, Jan 8: The government has allocated Tk five crore for the construction of Shishu Palli Complex in the district headquarters, reports UNB.

The construction works, expected to start in next February, include administrative building, children's hostel, school building and training centre.

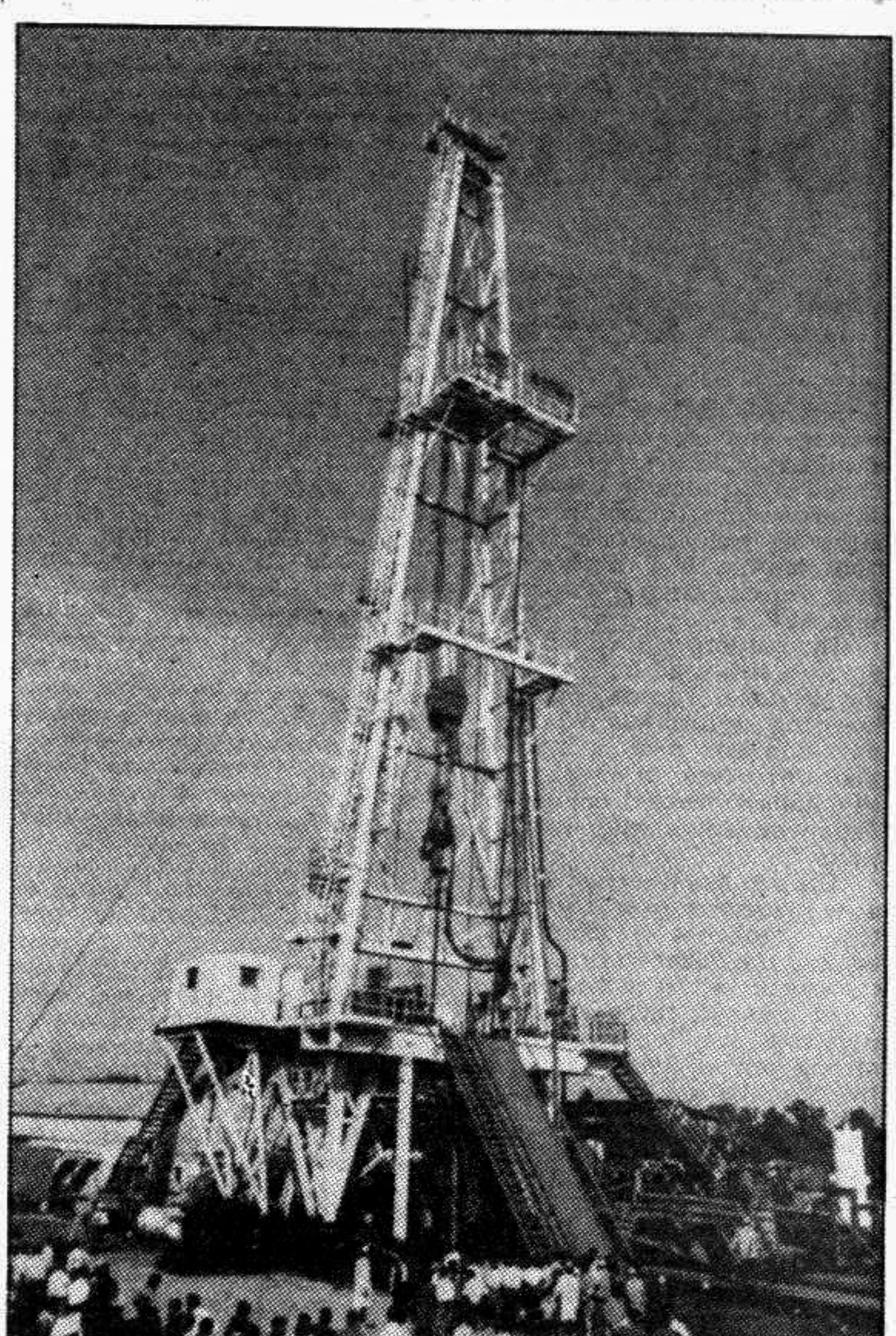
Official sources said Public Works Department would supervise the construction work, which is expected to be completed by December this year.

On completion, the complex will house 200 destitute and orphan children and they will be provided with food, shelter, education and vocational training.

Another report said the construction of 200 low-cost sanitary latrines has begun in the municipal area at a cost of Tk 6.20 lakh.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) provided financial assistance to Ashabi, a non-government organisation, for constructing the latrines to help provide the poor families with improved sanitary system.

Executive Director of the NGO Nasirul Islam said the work is expected to be completed by June this year.



SYLHET: Drilling of new well named 'Rashidpur 5' has begun at Rashidpur gas field in Habiganj district on Tuesday afternoon. The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation of India which was given the contract of drilling brought the rig from India. — Star photo

Date expired seeds distributed Farmers of North Bengal frustrated

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 8: Frustration gripped the farmers in North Bengal including Sirajganj for fear of abnormal shortfall in production of wheat this year due to low quality of seed, reports UNB.

Farmers in the region complained that the wheat seeds, distributed among them by the government and different NGOs, did not germinate in most of the fields in the region.

Government had sanctioned seeds and fertilisers worth about lakhs of taka to boost the wheat production in the region and distributed these among the flood-hit farmers free of cost through Agriculture Extension offices to recoup the losses caused by the last prolonged deluge.

Different NGOs also distributed wheat seeds and fertilisers among the farmers to boost the production.

Criticism sparked off in the region following the distribution of wheat seeds even after the expiry of the time of cultivation.

Besides, there are massive allegations of corruption, irregularities and nepotism in process of the procurement and distribution of fertilisers and seeds.

Deputy Director of district AED Abdul Aziz told that there was no problem with the government seeds and germination problem occurred in case of the farmers who used seeds distributed by the NGOs.

He, however, declined to comment on the allegations of corruption, nepotism and irregularities.



CHANDPUR: Chandpur-Comilla road has been damaged very badly near Haziganj causing serious threat to traffic movement. — Star photo



AGRI-VARSITY (Mymensingh): Vice-Chancellor Prof Muhammad Hussain receiving donations in BAU Vice-Chancellor Relief Fund at his office recently. The fund has been opened in aid of the flood victims. — Star photo



FARIDPUR: Cheques being distributed under a project aimed at making helpless people self-reliant. Sheikh Altaf Hossain, Additional District Magistrate is seen distributing the cheques at a function held here recently. — Star photo.



JESSORE: Rights Jessore brought out a colourful procession here recently on the occasion of World Human Rights Day '98. — Star photo