

## News snaps

### 5,000 illegal arms recovered

CHUDANGA, Feb 5: Some 5,000 illegal firearms and a huge quantity of ammunition were recovered in raids by police in different areas of the district in the last 15 years, reports APB.

Police sources told that most of these arms, which included automatic pistols, rifles and revolvers, were smuggled in from across the border. Most of these firearms were recovered from the members of outlawed parties. There are half a dozen outlawed extremist political parties in the district now, they said. A large number of the outlaws were also arrested during the period, police said. The highest number of 1,416 firearms were recovered in 1986, followed by 153 in 1996 and 504 in 1991, they said.

### BNP candidates sweep bar assoc poll

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 5: Pro-BNP candidates swept the annual elections to the Sirajganj District Bar Association, bagging 15 out of 17 posts including those of the president and the general secretary, reports APB.

The newly elected President of the Bar Association Advocate Mobarak Ali polled 124 votes defeating his AL-backed contender Advocate Abdur Rahim, who got 119 votes. Advocate Rafiq Sarkar, who is also a member of the Human Rights Enforcement Society in Kamarkhanda thana, was elected general secretary with 129 votes. His Awami League-backed contender Advocate Shah Alam David polled only 111 votes, out of total 244 valid votes counted. Awami League backed contestants Advocate Rajab Ali Sarkar and Advocate Moazzam Hossain have been elected councilors of the new Executive Committee.

### Telecom system in pitiable condition

MADARIPUR, Feb 5: Telecommunication system in the town continues to be in a pitiable condition, reports APB.

Local subscribers can hardly make a telephone call outside the district. Although installation of another 200 new lines has been completed, no new connection is being given due to lack of decision by 'higher authorities', local T&T officials said. The government, as a result, is losing revenue of at least one lakh taka every month, sources in the local T&T office said. The local NWD system has become almost inoperable. There are only eight incoming and outgoing channels, most of which remain out of order. The worst sufferers are local journalists.

### Hunting of guest birds continuing

PANCHAGARH, Feb 5: Hunting of guest birds in violation of a government ban has been continuing in the five thanas of Panchagarh district, reports APB.

Birds locally known as Balhash, Chakha, Manikjora, Gangkabutar, Narundi, Cheema, Grover, Karali, Pankauri, Sarali, Kora, Chamahash, Penash and Banbak usually fly into Panchagarh and neighbouring districts from colder regions in Siberia, China and the Himalayas during the winter. Bird hunters, especially those residing in the urban areas, are hunting the guest birds, local people alleged. Most of the hunters happen to be highly placed government officials and so nobody dares to challenge them, they said. These guest birds are found in Karatoya, Mahananda, Tangon, Bhera and Gabur rivers as well as in numerous canals, beels, haors and jungles.

### Nine Sampans looted

JHALAKATI, Feb 5: Pirates took away about one lakh taka in cash and valuables from nine engine-driven sampans at Phulatala in Barisal district in broad daylight on Sunday last, reports APB.

The sampans were going to Jhalakathi with unrefined salt and other goods from Chokoria in Cox's Bazar, police said. The pirates, numbering about 15 came in an engine boat and swooped on the sampans firing blank shots. They got on board the boats one after another, beat the boatmen and looted money and all the goods except salt. When some local journalists inquired about the incident, the boatmen said that hundreds of people saw the incident from both banks of the river, but none came forward to help them. The boats laden with salt reached Jhalakathi on Sunday afternoon.

### Five fishing boats looted

NOAKHALI, Feb 5: In a series of swoops, pirates looted valuables, including nets, spare parts and fish, from five fishing boats in the river Meghna on Monday, reports UNB.

Fishermen alleged that masked robbers attacked a fishing boat in Ramgati thana of Laxmipur district on Monday and looted its engine and nets, tying up the fisherman. On the same day, 20-25 pirates swooped on three fishing boats in Charpatia area and made off with nets and spare parts worth about Tk three lakh. At Charbatia in-between Sadar and Hatia thanas, pirates looted fish and nets worth about Tk 1.5 lakh from a fishing boat. Accusing police of inaction, fishermen associations of the two districts have urged the higher authorities to take effective measures to check piracy in the river.

### Export-import thru' Satmasjid falls

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Feb 5: Export-import through Sonamasjid lane port is marking a gradual fall for lack of a warehouse, reports UNB.

"Both exporters and importers have lost their interest to use the land port for lack of warehouse facilities," said an exporter. He said a huge quantity of goods, including exportables, are damaged in the port every year as those have to be piled up under open sky in absence of a warehouse. Meanwhile, some importers and exporters have built godowns in the area on their own initiatives in order to protect their goods. During the last year's devastating flood, the importers and exporters had suffered colossal loss as a huge quantity of goods damaged by the prolonged flooding. Officials said construction of a government warehouse has become essential for smooth holding of goods in the port.

### IRRI-Boro farming hampered

SYLHET, Feb 5: Cultivation of IRRI-Boro on about 4,000 acres of land in Kanaighat thana is being hampered during the current season due to lack of irrigation, reports UNB.

Local farmers said they used to irrigate their lands in 138 mouzas of nine unions using water of different rivers, canals and beels. But this year almost all the water bodies dried up making it impossible for them to irrigate the croplands. The farmers complained that many pumps provided by the government for irrigation are not being used for unknown reasons.

### Prospect of 'Rabi' farming bright

MANIKGANJ, Feb 5: Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) and three commercial banks will disburse Taka 22,30,31,000 as agricultural loan in Manikganj district in the current fiscal year, reports BSS.

According to an official source, BKB will disburse 1350 crore, Sonali Bank Taka 6.10 crore, Agrani Bank Taka 2.24 crore and Janata Bank Taka 46 lakh. The distribution of loan is in full swing and more than Taka 17 crore has already been disbursed. Crops of several crores of taka were damaged by this year's devastating flood and the farmers have been striving to recoup loss of last year's natural calamity. Agriculture Extension Department officers and farmers said, prospect of this year's 'Rabi' crops is bright in Manikganj district.

### Fire at UK citizen's house in Sylhet

SYLHET, Feb 5: Valuables, including foreign currencies and two British passports, were gutted in a fire in East Shahi Mosque area of the town on Monday, reports UNB.

The fire originated from an electric short circuit in a tinshed house of a Bangladeshi-born British citizen, burnt down property worth about Tk four lakh, firebrigade sources said. On information, firefighters rushed to the spot and put out the flame with the help of local people.

### 26 uplift projects being implemented

TANGAIL, Feb 5: Tangail Zilla Parishad is implementing 26 development projects in the district in the current fiscal year at a cost of Taka 55.76 lakh, reports BSS.

Official sources said, under this programme construction of roads, culverts, boundary walls of graveyard and educational institutions and repairing and reconstruction of Union Parishad Bhaban will be done. The work will be completed by May this year.

### BRDB loan disbursed

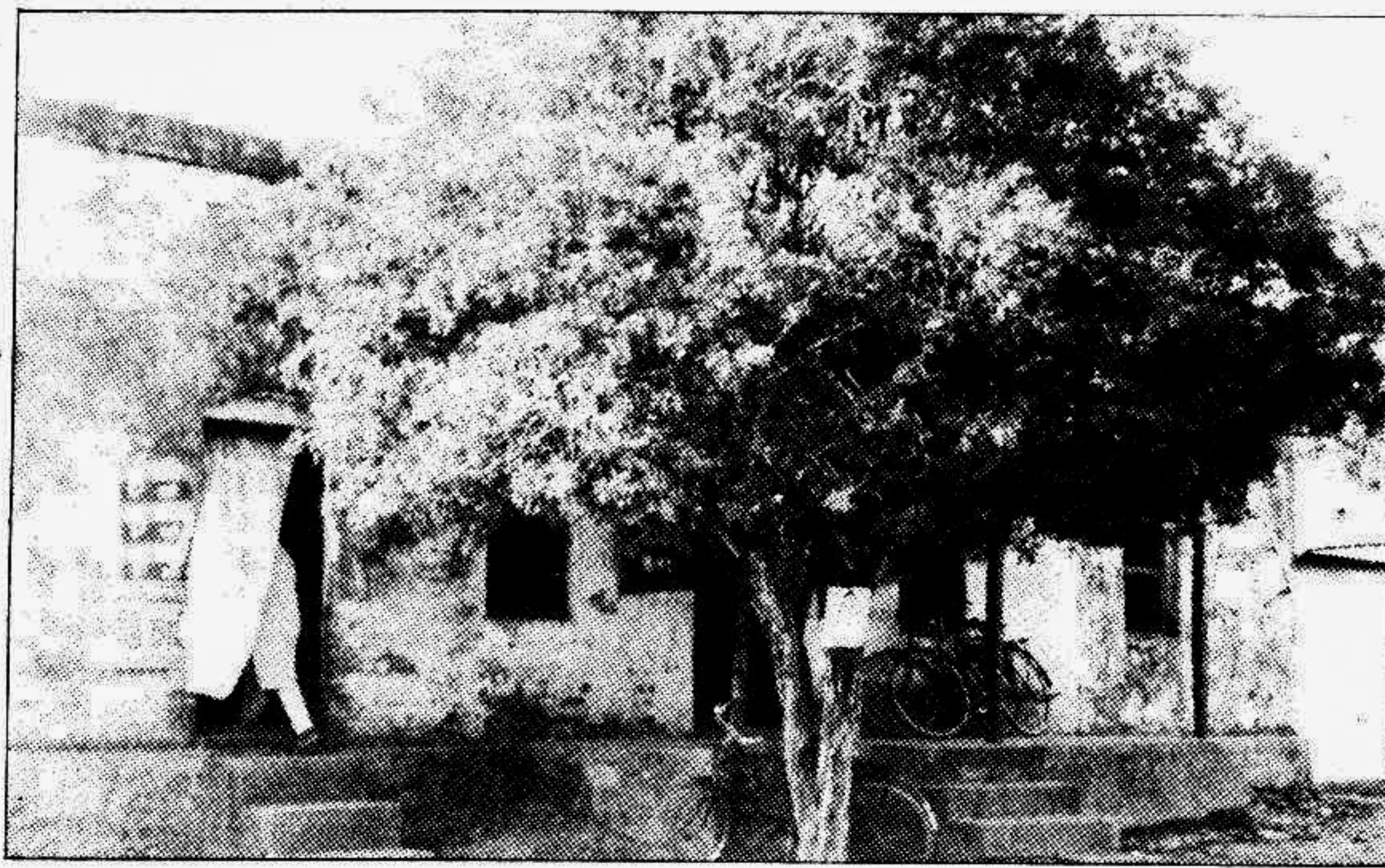
CHHAGALNAIYA (Feni), Feb 5: Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) has distributed a total of Taka 2,65,33,273 as loan through 102 co-operative bodies among the farmers and landless men and women in Chhagalnaiya thana during the last six months of the current financial year, reports BSS.

According to BRDB sources, the loan was disbursed among 6,624 members of 102 cooperative bodies under Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme. The loan was sanctioned to provide financial assistance for cattle purchasing, poultry farming, small business, cattle rearing and vegetables cultivation. BRDB has so far recovered an arrear of Tk. 2,41,11,868 which is about 90 per cent of the total arrear.

### Aid for distressed people

PATUAKHALI, Feb 5: The Bauphal thana administration has launched a programme to distribute Tk. 63,000 to 630 distressed people in 126 wards in the thana, reports APB.

Abul Kalam Azad, TNO of the thana, told that a list with five persons from each ward has been prepared and each person will get Tk 100. Steps have been taken to ensure proper distribution of money.



MAGURA: Dilapidated condition of Sripur thana Sub-register's office which may collapse at any moment. — Star photo

### Four new petroleum depots soon

## Steps to solve fuel crisis in N-region

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Feb 5: Work on setting up of four new petroleum depots in Natore, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Baghabari is progressing.

The depots of 34,000 metric tons capacity would cost Taka 30 crore, concerned sources said.

The Parbatipur railhead depot, built about one and a half year ago, is also likely to start functioning within the month of March. The functioning of the newly built Parbatipur petroleum depot would ensure proper supply of fuel in the northern part of Bangladesh during the current irrigation season.

There are six petroleum depots in the northern region at present. Of them, Baghabari depot which has a capacity of 15,462 metric tons of diesel, is bigger than others. The other depots are Padma oil depot in Natore, Meghna oil railhead depot at Hariana of Rajshahi, Padma and Meghna oil railhead depots in Rangpur and two floating depots at Chilmari and Balashi ghats. The parbatipur railhead depot of 5,000 metric tons of capacity was constructed at the end of 1997 by Padma Oil company. The depot is going to be started in the last week of February, ensuring adequate supply of fuel for irrigation machines in this region.

Four more new petroleum depots are going to be constructed in this region at a cost

of Taka 30 crore. In Natore, a 3,000 metric tons capacity depot would be set up at a cost of Taka six crore while, 5,000 metric tons capacity petroleum depot in Hariana of Rajshahi would cost Taka seven crore, 3,000 metric tons capacity depot in Rangpur costs Taka six crore and the 23,000 metric tons capacity proposed Baghabari petroleum depot would cost around Taka 11 crore.

After implementation of these projects, the long persisted fuel crisis of this region would be considerably alleviated. Production at the agriculture sector would also boost up with setting up of the petroleum depots.

### In Gaibandha

## Inferior quality seeds, pesticides, fertilisers flood markets

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Feb 5: Farmers of the northern districts are being cheated with inferior quality of pesticides, fertilisers and seeds supplied by dishonest traders.

Using such agricultural inputs which have been smuggled from India, the farmers are being deprived of adequate crops. It also creates a serious health hazard.

Smugglers in boarder belt areas are bringing banned Indian pesticides like Iodine, Diano, Axen-50, Helaki and Gas-50. They are involved in marketing such pesticides at lower price. Sometimes, they tear off the original label and refill in local bottles inscribed with valid labels of pesticides. Innocent farmers are pur-

chasing those fake pesticides at the rate of local market price. According to the agricultural experts, the Indian government banned such pesticides due to existence of high level of poisonous element. Those pesticides although work well, but the reaction of such pesticides remain on human body for years together. Moreover poisonous elements also affect adversely on the fertility of lands. The agriculture department, however, expressed grave concern over the random use of banned Indian pesticides.

Though the government declared a ban on importing Indian SSP fertiliser, but such fertilisers are still available in the remote village markets. During IRRI-Boro farming huge

Indian SSP are smuggled into the Bangladesh territory. Ultimately those are reaching the remote corners of the northern areas. Considering the low cost, farmers are compelled to procure SSP fertiliser instead of local TSP. On the other hand, many fertiliser dealers contaminate TSP fertilisers with SSP and sell them at an exorbitant rate.

On the other hand, the dealers have introduced imported DAP from foreign countries which is yet to become familiar among the farmers due to its high price. Moreover, date expired and inferior quality of seeds of different crops have flooded the local markets through smuggling.

## Work on laying of gas pipeline in Sirajganj progressing fast

PABNA, Feb 5: Work on laying a 42-km gas pipeline in Sirajganj town is going on in full swing and is expected to be completed by the end of this month, reports APB.

About 20-km of pipeline has already been laid and if the work goes on smoothly, most of the households in the municipal area will begin using gas before the end of March, official sources told.

Sirajganj will be the first beneficiary of the gas pipeline across the Jamuna Bridge. The gas will also be used as fuel for the 71 megawatt and the 130 megawatt barge-mounted power plants at Baghabari, likely to be completed by next January.

Land for the gas pipeline from Nalka to Baghabari has already been acquired and laying of the pipeline is expected to be completed by March this year.

Meanwhile, a new gas pipeline is being installed on the Jamuna Bridge for supply of gas as the pipeline constructed last year collapsed into the river few days after completion of work.

A 'valve station' will be set up in Kadda, seven km from the

western end of the bridge to regulate supply of gas to Sirajganj.

A contractor for the work has already been chosen after floating tender, but the work is yet to begin as land has not been acquired.

Not satisfied with being the first beneficiary of the gas pipe

line in northern Bangladesh, some quarters in Sirajganj have demanded that the main gas distribution centre for the northern region be set up in the town.

The energy ministry has set up a committee which has surveyed likely spots in the area. But no decision has been taken.

## Three die of dysentery in Madaripur dist

MADARIPUR, Feb 5: Three persons died of dysentery in the district in the last few days, reports APB.

Sources in the sadar hospital said there has been a rush of patients with dysentery and other intestinal diseases for about a week now but they can not be accommodated because of the limited number of beds in the hospital.

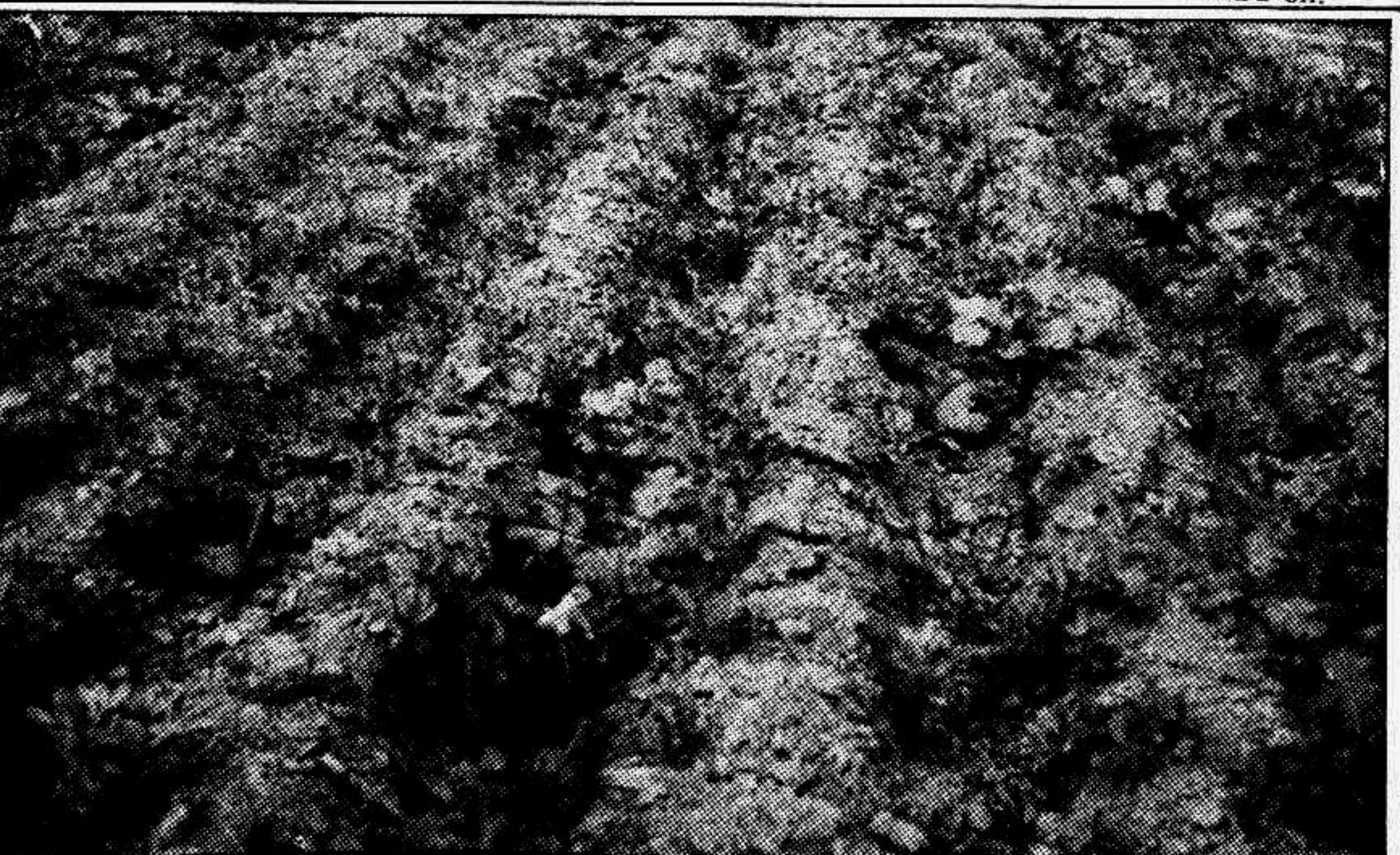
They said the intestinal diseases have broken out in different parts of the district mainly due to adulterated edible oil and impure water. Another cause is the great number of kutcha latrines in the district and indis-

criminate defecation in open spaces, they said.

Another report from Natore says: Diarrhoea, dysentery and other intestinal diseases have spread in different areas of the district due to widespread adulteration of edible oil by some unscrupulous traders, health officials said.

A good number of patients have been admitted to the sadar, Baraigram and Bagati-para thana health complexes with such intestinal diseases.

The officials said that the mills mix oil extracted from til and tishi with mustard oil.



JHENIDAH: Farmers cultivating sunflower, pulse, Canadian oil seeds and sugarcane as part of inter crops cultivation programme here. This picture was taken from village Rayera in Sailkupa thana. — Star photo

## Seminar on Gender Relation, Development

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Feb 5: Speakers at a seminar at Sujanagar Thana Parishad Auditorium in Pabna under the auspice of Samata, a non-governmental organisation with Md Mokhelesur Rahman, Thana Nirbahi Officer, Santhia thana, as the chief guest and eminent educationist Prof Md Fazlul Haque, Principal, Satbaria College in the chair, Md Zainal Hossain, Thana Agriculture Officer, Md Habibur Rahman, Pabna correspondent of Daily Sangbad, Md Abdul Kader, Executive Director, Md Anjad Hossain, central coordinator and Zafunnahar Sheli, gender coordinator of Samata, among others, took part in the discussion.

The seminar on "Gender Relation and Development" was held at Sujanagar Thana Parishad Auditorium in Pabna under the auspice of Samata, a non-governmental organisation with Md Mokhelesur Rahman, Thana Nirbahi Officer, Santhia thana, as the chief guest and eminent educationist Prof Md Fazlul Haque, Principal, Satbaria College in the chair, Md Zainal Hossain, Thana Agriculture Officer, Md Habibur Rahman, Pabna correspondent of Daily Sangbad, Md Abdul Kader, Executive Director, Md Anjad Hossain, central coordinator and Zafunnahar Sheli, gender coordinator of Samata, among others, took part in the discussion.

## Gaibandha BCL's activities suspended for indefinite period

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Feb 5: At least seven persons received injuries and three business units were ransacked during a series of clashes and chasing between two rival factions of Gaibandha unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) within a span of four days.

The incident erupted first when a faction of BCL brought out procession which was intercepted by another faction. Both the factions chased and counterchased each other with deadly weapons. Similar clashes of BCL factions continued for the next three days when a tense situation prevailed in the town. Almost all the shops in DB and Station roads remained closed soon after dusk for four days.

Meanwhile, several cock-tails exploded at different locations. In an attack a confectionery shop, one shoe shop and a betel leaf-bidi shop were ransacked.

Later on riot police had been deployed to curb the untoward situation. Afterwards, in a meeting the district Awami League declared suspension of all activities of the local unit of BCL for an indefinite period.

## Bomb recovered

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Feb 5: Gaibandha Police recovered a powerful bomb from a roadside ditch near Jheneshahar Primary School on Gaibandha-Palashbari highway recently.

Police said the powerful bomb was lying abandoned into the roadside ditch.

At about 7-30 am on the day a white coloured micro bus stopped near a tea-stall and dropped a polythene wrapped thing and swiftly fled away.

In the meanwhile a huge-gathering thronged there to see the thing. Later on being informed police rushed to the spot and identified the thing as an explosive.

On contact with the army personnel of Lalpur Cantonment, an explosive expert visited the spot and declared the equipment as a powerful country made bomb which is still alive.

'It may damage a vehicle', said Captain Zulfiqar of Rangpur Cantonment.

The recovered bomb was taken to Gaibandha police line.

## Workshop on electoral law reforms

CHANDPUR, Feb 5: A day-long workshop on electoral law reforms was held at Chandpur Press Club recently, reports APB.

First of its kind here, the workshop was jointly organised by the Chandpur district unit of the FEWA (Fair Election Monitoring) Alliance and the Study and Research Group of the Manobik Shahajja Sangstha.

FEMA's Chandpur unit president Quamruzzaman Chowdhury, who is also president of the Chandpur Press Club, presided over the workshop.

The discussants laid emphasis on disposal of court cases relating to elections in 6 months, inclusion of the 'floating population' and Bangladesh citizens working abroad in the voters' list and transparency of the electoral process.

They said, whatever steps are necessary to restore confidence of the people in elections should be taken without delay to consolidate democracy.

The workshop had 4 sessions and was addressed by, among others, Md Hossain Khan, Bilquis Aziz, Shahin Sultana and Masuda Khatun, all college teachers. Several lawyers, journalists and a local BNP leader, Safuddin Ahmed, also spoke on the occasion.

Three MPs of the district, Ramesh Chandra Sen, Dabirul Islam and Imdadul Haque were made advisors of the committee.

Among the audience were local political leaders, members of the business community and people from other walks of life.

## Jubo Dal leaders threaten Jhalakati journalist

JHALAKATI, Feb 5: A local journalist has been threatened with dire consequences by some local leaders of Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal for sending a news on intra-party rivalry, reports APB.

The journalist, Shyamol Chandra Sarker alias Pallab Tushar, had dispatched the report for the Daily Prime, published from Dhaka. The report was published recently under the headline: Internal feud in Jhalakati Jubo Dal has reached a crescendo.

The news item was prepared on the bases of written statements by some leaders including the Organising Secretary of the district Jubo Dal.

After publication of the news, some top leaders of the district Jubo Dal went to the

house of Shyamol Sarker on the night of January 27 and threatened him and members of his family with dire consequences for heaving sent such a news, Sarker alleged.

A General Diary was made with Jhalakati thana in this connection on January 30.

Jhalakati Press Club and the Journalists Association have termed the incident a threat to freedom of press.

Local journalists have called upon the local administration to ensure security to the journalist and members of his family and to take legal action against the persons responsible.

Meanwhile, various socio-cultural organisation have condemned the incident and called for punishment of the persons responsible.

## Arsenic detected in water of Sherpur dist

SHERPUR, Feb 5: Intolerable level of arsenic has been detected in underground water in different parts of the district, including the municipality area, raising fears among the people, reports UNB.

Public Health Engineering Department has already sealed one deep and three shallow tubewells in the pourasava area after detection of arsenic contamination in their waters above the permissible level.

Official sources said arsenic contamination was first detected in underground waters of the district at the end of 1997.

The presence of arsenic above permissible level in the district's underground water was detected at that time after a laboratory test under the Eighteen-Town Water Improvement Project assisted by a laboratory of Holland.

Later, the water samples had been sent to the laboratory of that country for further confirmation.

However, both the laboratory tests have confirmed that the underground waters of the municipality under 100 to 400 feet are containing intolerable arsenic.

Under the project two technicians — Shahna Afrin Nipa and Kanij Fatema Popy — had been asked to test waters of the pourasava area to detect ar-

senic. When contacted, they said that they have found intolerable level of arsenic in the underground water of Mollapara, Shibottoty, Kosba Kachapara, Mirganj, Namapara, Kaliganj, Tatalpur Nohata, Gouripur and Kanadapara areas.

According to an NGO, arsenic was also detected in a tubewell water at Bhayadanga village in Sreebardi thana in December last year.

## Kuriana UP chairman arrested

From Our Correspondent

BARISAL, Feb 5: Police arrested Haribar Biswas, 45, Chairman, Kuriana Union Parishad (UP) in Swarupkathi thana of Pijpur district recently.

According to police, he has been arrested for alleged involvement with an underground party of that area.

Biswas was said to be a regional leader of that underground party, it has been alleged. He was arrested from Pijpur town. Later, he was detained under Section 54, police said.



JHENIDAH: Primary scholarship examination was held recently here peacefully. The picture was taken from an examination centre at Sailkupa Degree College. — Star photo

## Death rate of pregnant women comes down

COMILLA, Feb 5: The death rate of pregnant women and newborn babies have come down considerably due to successful implementation of government's vaccination programmes, reports APB.

The vaccination programmes exceeded in 1997 and 1998, according to sources in the civil surgeon's office.

A survey carried out by them revealed that the death rate of babies was 35 in 1000 and that of pregnant mothers 2.64 in 1000 in the district in 1997.

The national average death rate of babies was 140 per 1000 in that year.

The death rates have fallen in the district considerably due to timely vaccination, they said.

The targets for BCG vaccines exceeded by 24 per cent, DPT by 20 per cent, polio vaccines by 23 per cent and measles vaccinations by 19 per cent last year.

The target for providing Vitamin A capsules to 6,49,627 babies also exceeded by 13.68 per cent.

The target for giving TT vaccines to pregnant women also exceeded by 2 per cent in the year.

The second round of the vac-

cination programme began on the second of this month.

In 1997 also the targets for polio shots and Vitamin A capsules exceeded.

People have become conscious of the need for vaccinating pregnant women and newborn infants. Pregnant women and mothers turn up to get themselves and their babies vaccinated on their own.

## 1,616 FFs found bonafide in Narayanganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 5: The local command council of Muktiyoddha Sangsad published a list of 1,616 real freedom fighters (FFs) of the district after scrutiny and investigation.

The list was published after proper investigation and scrutiny, an official of the sangsad told The Daily Star.

Earlier, a total of 2,498 persons claimed themselves as 'bonafide' freedom fighters, but 882 persons were found "to be fake" freedom fighters after investigation.

## Upgradation of Haji Danesh Agri College into varsity demanded

THAKURGAON, Feb 5: A meeting of a cross-section of people of Thakurgaon town was held recently at the local press club to place demands for the establishment of Bangabandhu Science and Technology University at Thakurgaon and upgradation of Dinajpur Haji Md Danesh Agriculture College into a full-fledged agriculture university, reports BSS.

An implementation committee has already been formed with Advocate FA, Mohammad Hossain as convener and Principal Syed Merajul Hossain as member-secretary.

Three MPs of the district, Ramesh Chandra Sen, Dabirul Islam and Imdadul Haque were made advisors of the committee.

In the meeting it was resolved that as there are no

highest seats of learning at Thakurgaon and for the construction of the university 50 acres of barren non-paddy growing high land, situated in the middle greater Dinajpur district is available, so the university should be established at Thakurgaon.

The meeting also opined that there are many higher educational institutions at Dinajpur and as Taka 40 crore has already been spent to construct Haji Danesh Agriculture College, so with minimum investment Haji Danesh Agriculture College could be upgraded as a full-fledged agriculture university.

Regarding the demands a memorandum has been sent to the Prime Minister and ministers for kind consideration.