

News snaps

New stone discovered

BANDARBAN, Feb 13: A rare type of stone, similar to diamond, was discovered at Bakichhara in Sadar thana here, reports UNB.

A source of the district administration said two natives Sukkur Ali and Mongthol Marma informed the matter immediately after they found the stone. District Administration brought the matter to the knowledge of Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB). Deputy Director of GSB Nehal Uddin visited the spot and collected soil and a few pieces of the rare stone as sample on February 1. He told that after testing the stone and the soil it would be easy for them to identify whether it is diamond or any other metal. With the spread of the news, a huge number of curious people are gathering at Bakichhara to see the rare stone.

Training programme for landless

TANGAIL, Feb 13: A week-long training programme for landless women on maintenance of rural road and tree plantation concluded on Thursday in BRDP auditorium here, reports BSS.

Twenty-five landless women participated in the training programme. The rural development project-14 (RDP-14), Tangail organised the training. Engineer Mohammad Shawkat Hossain conducted the programme.

Annual drama festival

MANIKGANJ, Feb 13: Annual drama festival of Gaoitri Smriti Theatre, a group theatre organisation of the district, was held on Sunday at Jhika in Harirampur upazila, reports BSS.

A discussion on the group theatre activities was held on the occasion. Dr Selim al-Deen, a noted playwright and president of Bangladesh Gram Theatre, attended the function as the chief guest. Presided over by Shamim Hazari, the function was addressed, among others, by Humayun Kabir Hiru, Engineer Nuruddin Ahmed, Aftabuddin Biswas, Ranjan Shaha, Talib Hossain, M Ali Kadar, and Principal Selimuzzaman Khan. A play, written by Selim al-Deen, was staged on the occasion.

Plan to reconstruct roads

MADARIPUR, Feb 13: The pourasava authorities here have taken up a programme to reconstruct and renovate 10 roads under its town infrastructure development programme-2, reports UNB.

According to officials, the project was taken at a cost of Tk 40.65 lakh. Asian Development Bank will provide the fund. The roads which will be repaired included Kazi Mastan road, Shahid Bachchu road, Ghanpara road, TB Clinic road, main road of the town, Kulpaddi road, Charnuguria road and Amin Hawladar road. After completion of the project, the internal road communication of the municipality will be improved to a great extent. Officials said almost all the 35 roads of the pourasava were badly damaged in the last year's devastating flood. The extent of infrastructure damage in the flooding has been estimated at about Tk 20 crore.

Fodder crisis in Iswardi

ISWARDI, Feb 13: A serious fodder crisis has been prevailing here since the last devastating floods, reports APB.

Many of the farmers have sold out their cattle at throw-away prices because of the crisis. Cattle in 71 unions and five municipalities in Pabna district are estimated at about 9.29 lakh. Farmers in different areas say, they sowed *khesari* seeds for fodder, but the yield was not good as seeds got damaged in wet soil after the floods. District Agricultural Extension Department said the target for *khesari* cultivation was 37.50 thousand acres, but the cultivation was less because of high price of the seed.

Special agri-loan disbursed

MEHERPUR, Feb 13: Kirishi Bank, Meherpur region, disbursed Tk 1,500,000 as special agriculture loan out of the total target of Taka 2,500,000 in two thanas of the district till January 31st, in the current fiscal year, reports BSS.

According to bank sources, over 2250 farmers received the loan through 10 branches of the bank in Meherpur region. The loan was given to buy seeds, seedlings, fertilisers, insecticides and other agri-inputs. The Kirishi Bank, so far, realised outstanding loan amounting to Tk 42.10.000 in the current fiscal year from the farmers.

Attack on Shamsur Rahman protested

JHALAKATHI, Feb 13: The Ark Shahitay Parishad and Sampriti Juba Parishad, both local cultural organisations, jointly brought out a procession and held a rally in the town protesting the attack on poet Shamsur Rahman, reports APB.

Chanting various slogans, they paraded the main streets of the town and later held a rally in front of the local press club. The rally was addressed, among others, by Bahauddin Golap, Abubakar Siddik, Maniklal Ghosh, Mamunur Rashid, Mainul Islam Sagar, Kamal Hossen Sardar, Mahmud Hasan, Saful Islam Saikat.

Boro farming progressing

CHUADANGA, Feb 13: The cultivation of Boro paddy of the current season in all the four thanas here is in full-swing, reports BSS.

According to an official source, in the current season a total of 21,800 hectares will be brought under Boro cultivation, of which 4,500 hectares will be brought under cultivation on Chuadanga sadar thana, 6,500 hectares on Alamdanga thana, 6,800 hectares on Damurhuda thana and 4,000 hectares on Jibannagar thana. So far, 70 per cent of the target of cultivation has been completed and the rest is expected to be completed by the current month.

Meeting deferred

KHAGRACHHARI, Feb 13: A meeting of the Task Force on making list of internal refugees in Chittagong Hill Tracts, scheduled to be held on Tuesday, has been deferred, reports UNB.

The meeting, apparently rescheduled in the wake of 48-hour countrywide hartal called by allied opposition, is likely to be held at Bandarban on February 28. Some one lakh applications have been submitted by both tribal and non-tribal families, mostly from Rangamati and Khagrachhari districts, for rehabilitation as internal refugees. The Task Force was learnt to have fallen in trouble to deal with a huge number of applications as PCJSS raised objection regarding rehabilitation of Bengali settlers as internal refugees. PCJSS alleged that the Task Force has included the affected Bengali settlers in the rehabilitation list. But they said only tribesmen were supposed to be identified as internal refugees as per the CHT peace treaty.

23,972 mt of paddy produced

RANGAMATI, Feb 13: A total of 23,972 metric tons of Aman paddy were produced 10,450 hectare of land in 10 thanas here, reports BSS.

According to the Agricultural Extension Directorate, Rangamati, the target for Aman paddy was set at 25,325 metric tons from 10,450 hectares of land. Shortfall was 1,553 metric tons. Among this, 23,160 metric tons of paddy were local variety (HYV) and 812 metric tons were local variety. The thana-wise production of paddy was Sadar 1,713 tons, Naniarchar-2,161 tons, Kaokhali-3,705 tons, Barkal-1,405 tons, Zurachari-994 tons, Langadu-1,474 tons, Baghaichhari-6,228 tons, Kaptai-3538 tons, Razsthal-2,480 tons and Belachari-274 tons. The highest producer of paddy was Baghaichhari thana.

Advocacy meeting on leprosy

RANGAMATI, Feb 13: District level advocacy meeting on leprosy was held at Civil Surgeon's conference room here recently in connection with the National Leprosy Eradication Programme, reports BSS.

The meeting was presided over by Civil Surgeon, Rangamati, Dr Upriya Barua. Rangamati Zila Parishad Chairman Ching Kue Roza attended the meeting as the chief guest. The chief guest said that the government had taken a programme to eradicate leprosy from the country by the year 2000. He urged all to lend cooperation to the government officials to make the programme a success. Among others, Press Club Secretary Shakawat Hussain Rubel, Kaokhali Thana Health and Family Planning Officer Dr Nazrul Islam, Health Education Officer Moniruddin Ahmed and Narangiri Government High School Headmaster Mohammad Alaudin spoke on the occasion.

Training on management development

COMILLA, Feb 13: A 12-day training course on management development has begun on Sunday at the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) here, reports BSS.

Dr Mohammad Solaiman, Additional Director General of BARD presided over the inaugural session. Mr Kasem, Joint Director, BARD and Jasim Uddin Ahmed, Course Director, among others, spoke on the occasion. Twenty managerial personnel have been participating in the training.

Memory of Mir Mosarraf Hossain being lost into oblivion

From Fokhrun Nesa



KUSHTIA: Mir Mosarraf Hossain's memory is about to be lost in oblivion due to lack of proper preservation. At present there is only a museum and a library at Lahinipara, three miles off Kushtia town.

Calcutta. Earlier, he studied at Kirsnanagar Collegiate School. He worked as manager of Gaznavi Estate in Tangail district where he spent a few years. He was a proud father of five sons and daughters. He breathed his last on December 19, 1911 at village Pangsa. Mosarraf Hossain is still

remembered for his memorable book 'Bishad Sindhu' which is treated as a masterpiece to all. During his early life, he used to write in Gram Barta Prakashika of Kandal Harinath Mozumdar and Sangbad Provakar of poet Iswar Gupta. He came closer with them and exchanged ideas. He also published a monthly magazine in memory of his first wife. Later he published a weekly paper 'Hitakari'.

Such a great man was not honoured befittingly as no monument was built near his grave to preserve his memory by the authorities concerned till now, opined the local elite.

—Star photo

99 murdered in Feni in 2 yrs

FENI, Feb 13: Some 99 murders including 32 owing to political rivalry were committed here during the last two and a half years, reports UNB.

According to police, press reports and local sources, the murders were committed in different parts of the district from July 1996 to December 1998.

Besides, other crimes including 300 robbery, 500 mugging and looting, 200 riot, 45 highway robbery, 500 burglary, 50 abduction, 35 rape were committed during the period.

The period was marked by political violence and rivalry that left about 200 people in five crippled.

Over 100 houses were gutted during the clashes between the rivals. Besides, about 300 families in Fulgazi and Daganbhuiyan thanas fled away their localities out of fear.

But the sources said cases were filed with the police much less than the incidents.

The first political murder since the present government came to office was reported from Laskarhat of Sadar thana. On December 3, 1996, a Juba League worker Abu Ahmed Nabi was shot dead by the rivals.

A total of six political murders were committed only in December that year. Of the victims, four were the activists of Awami League while the rest two were the supporters of BNP.

In 1997, the total number of political killing was 16, out of which nine victims belonged to Awami League while seven to BNP.

In 1998, six Awami League supporters and four BNP activists were killed.

The incidents of murder, violence and attacking each other have been going on in the district with no sign of improvement.

People of the district are passing their days in panic in the absence of security of life and property, they added.

Credit programme

RAJBARI, Feb 13: Four state-run banks have taken up schemes to disburse farm credit about Tk 25.72 crore among flood-hit farmers of the district in the current fiscal, reports UNB.

Officials said Sonali, Agrani, Janata and Krishi banks have already distributed Tk 16.85 crore among 16,520 farmers to cultivate Boro, wheat, potato, onion, lentil, sugarcane, vegetables and to purchase cattle.

They said the credit programme would continue till June this year.

Meanwhile, the banks have realised outstanding loan amounting to about Tk 8.19 crore.

Besides, the District Council has undertaken a number of development projects, involving Tk 47 lakh.

The projects, to be implemented in the current fiscal, include reconstruction of damaged roads, carpeting, construction of passenger sheds and renovation of dakbungalows.

Another report adds: Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) will implement a scheme to develop five roads in the current financial year.

Under RD-project-4, LGED will implement the scheme at a cost of Tk 85 lakh.

Works on the scheme include carpeting of Gabtali-Shayestapur, Pangsha-Langalbadh, Baghmara-Ahliadipur, Sonapur-Ghoramara and Pangsha-Jashar roads.

Patients cheated by 'brokers' at Faridpur Medical College Hospital

FARIDPUR, Feb 13: Patients coming to Faridpur Medical College Hospital for treatment are being cheated by 'brokers', allegedly engaged by some doctors, reports APB.

The brokers who take patients to go to private chambers of doctors and have their pathological tests done at laboratories run by them, patients allege.

Although outdoor patients start crowding the hospital from noon, no doctor is available after 2 pm on most of the days.

Only one doctor looks after all emergency and indoor patients from afternoon till about 9 next morning.

Sometimes doctors themselves advise the patients to have their blood, stool and urine tested at diagnostic centres owned by them.

Doctors are using some of

the cabins as their office chambers, leaving only two with four beds for patients.

The room beside the cabins is used as 'sick-room' for class VI employees. The sterilisation room is beside the 'sick-room'.

Although diarrhoea patients are to be kept in an isolated ward, there is no such arrangement.

Hospital sources told that mostly surgery patients come to this hospital, but the operation theatre is yet to be developed.

Although the hospital needs 10 anaesthetic machines, it has only six, of which three are out of order, the sources said.

Of 12 sucker machines, two are in workable condition. Of the two Ultrasonogram machines, only one is working.

Most of the patients have to have their pathological tests done from diagnostic centres

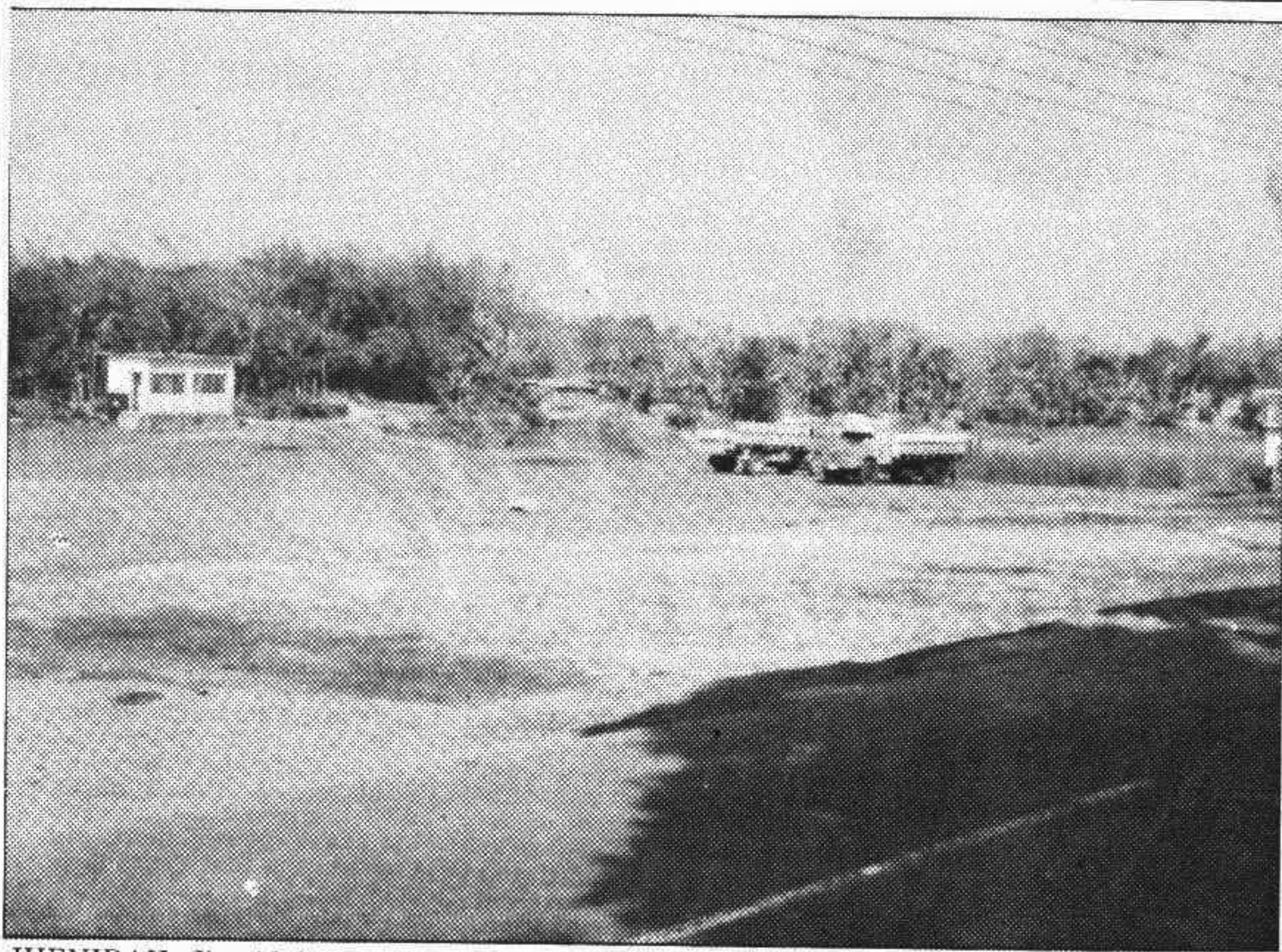
outside. Dental patients simply have to return disappointed, because of lack of doctors and treatment facilities.

The hospital lacks a doctors' dressing room and an adequately developed blood bank.

Administrative officials of the hospital allegedly remain away most of the time.

Although it was planned to be upgraded to a 500-bed hospital long ago, no step has yet been taken. Most of the sanctioned posts of doctors and other employees continue to remain vacant. The existing ones have also no residential quarters.

Although the hospital is named a 'medical college hospital' students complain that they are not given the minimum facility required for their academic pursuit.



JHENIDAH: Jhenidah truck terminal remains abandoned which was built after spending a huge amount of money. The trucks are usually parked on busy roads of the town creating frequent traffic jams.

—Star photo

Goods worth crores of taka being smuggled thru' Rajshahi every yr

RAJSHAHI, Feb 13: Taking advantage of its geographical location, smugglers have made the frontier district as their safe route, smuggling goods worth crores of taka every year, reports UNB.

During the last year, the BDR jawans of Rajshahi Sector seized contrabands worth over Tk 60.13 crore while bootleggers brought into the country a huge quantity of goods dodging the sharp eyes of the border forces.

Of the haul, Indian goods worth Tk 11.73 crore were seized while being smuggled into Bangladesh and goods worth Tk 48.40 crore seized while smuggled into India.

Some 3121 cases were filed and 205 people arrested during the period.

The month-wise break-up of the seized goods in terms of value is: Tk 12.63 crore in January, Tk 20.78 crore in February, Tk 27.15 lakh in March, Tk 1.38 crore in April and Tk 59.73 lakh in June.

The break-up also included Tk 1.59 crore in July, Tk 2.65 crore in August, Tk 97.63 lakh in September, Tk 1.74 crore in October, Tk 3.16 crore in November and Tk 12.24 crore in December.

According to a competent

source at the DB office here, over 50 underworld figures have long been carrying out smuggling in the frontier district, involving several thousand

people in their illegal business.

"There is a strong network of smugglers in the area and they have links with their god-fathers' who always remain beyond the scene," said a BDR official on condition of anonymity.

The long arm of the law falls far short to crack down on them ... they become active whenever we try to take action against them," he said.

The routes they usually use for smuggling are Sonamasjid and Shibganj in Chapainawabganj and Godagari, Baidipur, Charchat and Yusufpur in Rajshahi.

Another source said gold weighing three to four kilograms and Chinese silk-yarns worth Tk 25-30 lakh are smuggled into India everyday from Bangladesh.

The other goods which are smuggled out of the country include, gas cylinder, sacks, foreign currencies and Bangladeshi taka, touchstones, readymade garments, oral contraceptive pills and electronics.

Indian goods which are smuggled into Bangladesh include sugar, salt, pulses, phenyl, liquor, heroin, spare parts, imitation items, paper and ink, medicine, fruits, bicycle and insecticides.

135 suicide incidents recorded in Narsingdi last year

NARSINGDI, Feb 13: Local police recorded 135 incidents of alleged suicide as cases of unnatural death in the district in 1998. Local people alleged, reports APB.

Police deliberately listed these as suicide cases because they did not want to investigate the deaths, it was alleged.

When asked, police sources however said that relatives of murdered persons deliberately registered murders as cases of suicide to escape retaliation by murderers.

Many also prefer not to report the incidents to police to avoid "defamation" of the family.

Most of the murders and suicides were due to family feuds, land disputes, unsuccessful love affairs and demands for dowry.

Golam Sarwar, Chairman of the Hainmana Union Parishad here while talking to this correspondent claimed police tended to register cases of suicide and murder as unnatural deaths.

One Shahidullah Bhuiyan, a social worker in the area told

that in most cases, murderers threaten the relatives of the victims with dire consequences if they file a case.

Another social worker, Mostafa Kamal Ahmed, said speedy autopsy of the bodies could help reduce such deaths.

According to police records, of the total 42 incidents of alleged suicide in Raipura thana, 30 took place in Sadar, 28 in Shibpur thana, 15 in Palash thana, 10 in Manohardi thana and 10 in Belabo thana during the year.

Among the dead, 25 in Raipura thana had allegedly committed suicide by taking poison and 12 by hanging themselves.

In the Sadar thana, 15 people allegedly committed suicide by taking poison and 11 hanged themselves.

It is gathered that of the total number of people who allegedly committed suicide, 73 were men and 63 women.

Most of them belonged to 16-35 age groups.

Winter vegetables farming now popular among Narsingdi farmers

NARSINGDI, Feb 13: Farmers there are now getting more interest in cultivating winter vegetables than other crops as those are more profitable, reports APB.

Cultivation of early varieties of high-yielding cauliflower, cabbage, potato, brinjal, radish, tomato, spinach, bean and pumpkin takes less time than other traditional crops and are more profitable, farmers said.

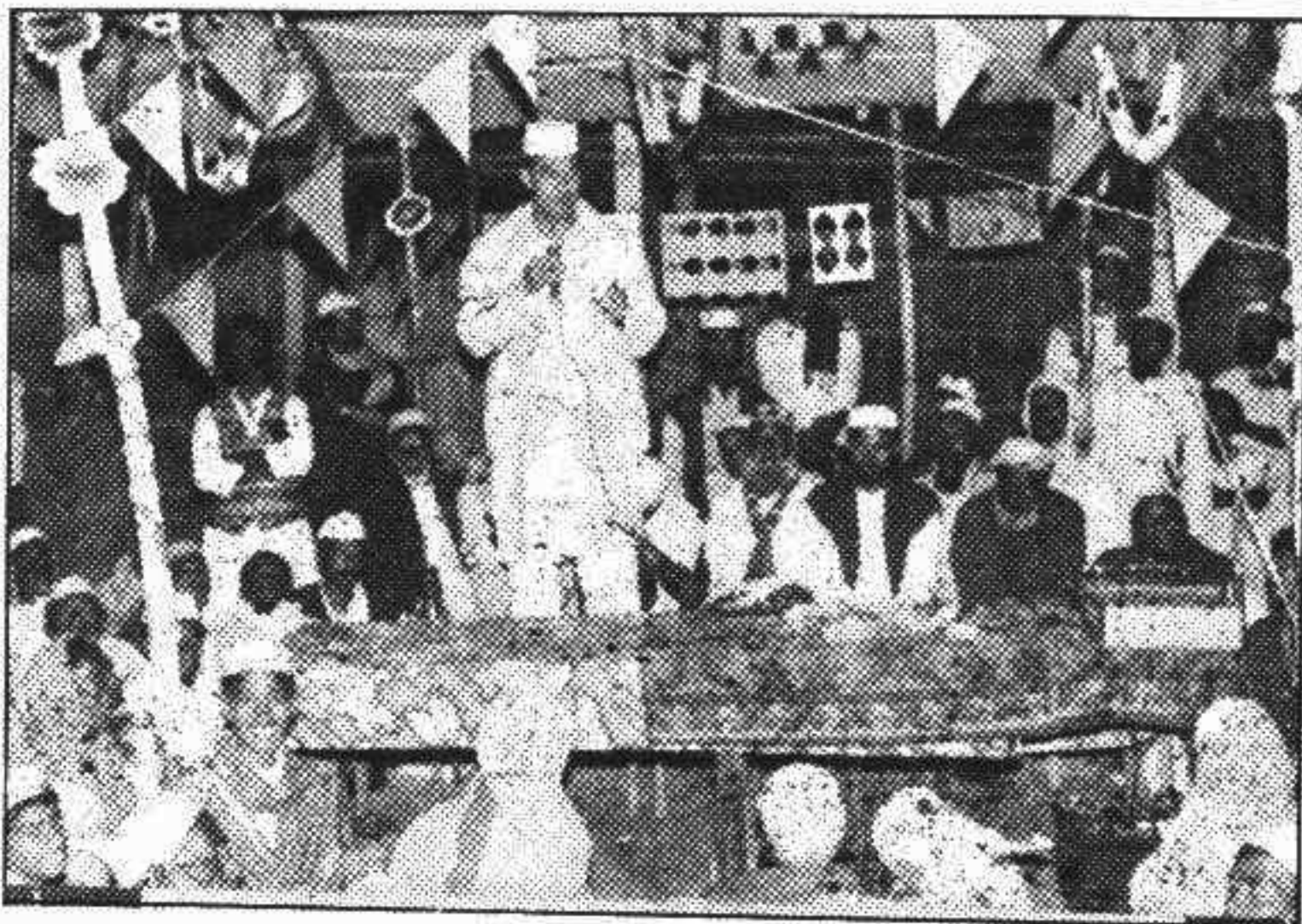
Farmers Aftab Hossain and Tara Miah said they planted tomato seedlings in October and harvested the crop in December. They could sell those at Tk 30 per kg since their tomatoes were the earliest in the market.

A careful farmer can earn as much as one lakh taka from one acre of land by cultivating early varieties of tomato, they said.

Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute has developed two early varieties of tomato, BARI Tomato-4 and BARI Tomato-5.

Some other vegetable seeds, including BARI Gourd-033, BARI Cabbage-Cool, BARI-Scam (string bean) and BARI-Brinjal have also become very popular with farmers.

BARI has also developed some virus resistant varieties of vegetable seeds.



DAUDKANDI: Veteran freedom fighter Maj Gen (Retd) Subid Ali Bhuiyan speaking at an Islamic conference on Thursday as the chief guest at Chosai Dhariban SB Dakhil Madrassa ground here. Al-haj Abdul Kader Mollah presided over the conference, while it was addressed by Maolana Abdul Mannan, Maolana Ruhul Amin, Abdul Mannan Master, Dr Abdur Razzak Mojumder and Shafiqul Islam Master.

4.24 lakh saplings to be grown in greater Comilla this season

COMILLA, Feb 13: In an effort to retrieve from the losses caused to the forest resources by the last year's flooding, the Forest Department has taken up a programme to grow over 4.24 lakh saplings in greater Comilla, reports UNB.

Nurseries in 21 thanas and another six big nurseries in 26 thanas of greater Comilla will cooperate with the Forest Department in implementing the ambitious plan, official sources said.

Despite the government's all-out efforts, a large number of saplings under Comilla Forest Department died last year, they said.

About 4.60 lakh saplings died in government nurseries alone during the period.

Another report adds: Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) has allocated farm loan about Tk 52 lakh for three thanas for potato cultivation in 1998-99 fiscal.

Meanwhile, a total of Tk 43.60 lakh has been distributed among 586 members of 45 associations in Chandina, Daudkandi and Homna thanas.

BRDB has also sanctioned loan about Tk 3.8 crore for 11 thanas of the district for Boro cultivation in the current fiscal.

The board will distribute the loan among 1,500 members of 151 associations.

Of the amount, Tk 34 lakh each has been earmarked for Laksham and Choudhagram, Tk 35 lakh for Barura, Tk 25 lakh each for Debidwar and Muradnagar, Tk 50 lakh for Homna, Tk 30 lakh for Brahmanpara and Tk 13 lakh for Langakot thana.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Krishi Bank through its 33 branches has disbursed farm credit about Tk 51.27 crore among 62,107 farmers in last seven months of the current fiscal.

The loan has been allocated under post-flood rehabilitation programme and poverty alleviation, poultry and pisciculture projects.

The bank has also distributed farm loan about Tk 4 crore among landless people as running capital.

Harvesting of paddy

2 killed, property worth Tk 20 cr damaged in clashes in 2 dists

NOAKHALI, Feb 13: Two people were killed and property worth Tk 20 crore were damaged in clashes over harvesting of paddy in shoal lands of Noakhali and Laxmipur districts during the last Aman season, reports UNB.

According to a local NGO, Poor Development Programme, 24 clashes took place in shoal lands that left two people killed and 374 other injured.

Over 15,000 maunds of paddy were looted, some 217 dwelling houses set afire, 11 people were kidnapped and two women gang raped, said the NGO quoting its own survey.

Besides, 545 domestic animals, including 247 cows and 14 buffaloes were also looted by the rivals.

Police arrested 129 people and recovered 300 various types of arms during the season.

The shoals include, Bagya, Amanullah, Jabbar, Hazrat, Sagar, Meherdan, Sahab Ali, Bata and Baya of Noakhali, Gazaria, Pata, Boya, Srijoni, Krishnapur, Abdullah, Sebej, Urrichar, Kalakopa, Afzal, Lita, Basu, Bedma and Poragacha of Ramgati thana, Bangshi Charpata, Ababil, Megha of Raipura thana and Bhuta, Ubhul, Shamsuddin and Damonimohan of Sadar thana of Laxmipur district.

The most violent incidents

took place at Char Gazaria in Ramgati thana of Laxmipur district. Eight clashes occurred in the shoal that claimed two lives.

Police had to use tear gas shells and fire blank shots to bring the situation under control. Some 5,000 maunds of paddy were looted and 217 houses were set on fire alone in shoal during the clashes.

BNP activist beaten in Jessore

JESSORE, Feb 13: A group of armed terrorists beat mercilessly a young man and left him in front of his house maimed and unconscious on Thursday afternoon, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the terrorists broke both hands and legs of Monir Hossain, 35, with iron hammer, in village Badurgacha, Kaliganj. None dared to resist the terrorists who were carrying fire arms.

Monir is a BNP activist. He was punished allegedly by the ruling party activists for taking part in pro-hartal demonstration.

He was rushed to Jessore General Hospital.