

News snaps

Cottage industries being ruined

SHERPUR, Feb 26: The traditional cane and bamboo-based cottage industries here are on the verge of extinction in absence of proper patronisation, reports UNB.

The products of these industries were very much popular all over the country. But presently these cottage industries are at moribund stage due to shortage of bamboo and cane, high prices of raw materials and lack of working capital. Thousands of workers involved in cottage industries are passing their days in great hardships. Many of them have already left their occupation. A large number of people of Sadar, Nalitabari, Jhenigati and Sribardi thanas are engaged in the age-old occupation. Female members of the family used to produce basket, chatai, cane chair, table, cradle and cap. The local elite urged the authorities concerned to take necessary measures to save the traditional cottage industries.

4 abducted students return home

KHAGRAJHARI, Feb 26: Four students, abducted by a group of tribal terrorists on Tuesday, returned to their homes unhurt on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Police confirmed the return of Suman Chakma, Shanti Bikash Chakma, Pulin Bihari Chakma and Gul Chakma. Parbatty Chhatram Jana Sanghat Samity (PCJSS) claimed that the opponents abducted the students for supporting the CHT peace accord at gunpoint. Meanwhile, PCJSS complained that the anti-peace accord group led by Prasit-Snachoy abducted another tribal man, Jagat Joyti Chakma, 20, son of Prafulla Kumar Chakma of Datcutta Mohanpara in Maichchhari union of Mohalchhari thana on Tuesday night. The Samity strongly protested and denounced the incident.

Old man dies in road accident

SYLHET, Feb 26: An old man died in a tragic road accident at Bani village in Kanaighat thana here, reports UNB.

Police said the victim Hormuj Ullah, 60, met the tragic end when he suddenly fell down on a roadside canal from the bus while going to attend a public meeting of former president H M Ershad here on February 14. Police arrested the driver and seized the bus. The body was handed over to the relatives after autopsy at the Osmari Medical College Hospital. Meanwhile, Manik Miah, 35, son of Rois Ali of Kona village in Jakiganj district died after excessive drinking of alcohol on the same day. His body was recovered from his bedroom by his relatives, police said.

Train passengers in miseries

SYLHET, Feb 26: The miseries of the low income group of people of the region have increased following the withdrawal of 'Shovon' class from the inter-city train plying between the district and Dhaka, reports UNB.

'Shovon' was the economic class in the inter-city trains Parabat, Joyntika and Upabon. A large number of passengers prefer to travel on train rather than bus as the train journey is comparatively comfortable and safe. Following the decision of the Railway Authority the poor passengers are forced to travel on buses with comparatively higher fare. As a result, the government is being deprived of huge revenue. The local leaders urged the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to restore the economic class again for the interest of the poorer section of the people in the region.

3 of a family killed in road accident

CHANDPUR, Feb 26: Three persons of a family died on the spot and two others were seriously injured when a bus rammed an autorickshaw from behind near Lunti on the Kochua-Kalipara road recently, reports APB.

Chandraban Banu, 90, her son Belayet Hossain Bhandari, 50, and his wife Razia Begum, 40, were killed on the spot. Autorickshaw driver Md Billal Hossain, 28, and a woman, Fazilatunnesa, 30, were rushed to Kacuha Health Complex in critical condition, police said. Police seized the bus, but the driver fled away.

Beauty parlours flourishing

PABNA, Feb 26: Beauty parlours are proliferating in Shalgaria, Shibrampur and Dialalpur areas in Pabna town, reports APB.

Many women and housewives have taken to this business as a source of extra income. About 15 of them have received training from professional beauticians in Dhaka. The business can be started with a capital of about Tk 50,000 only. A woman who pioneered the business in the town said she had to face problems at the beginning as it was not considered a respectable career. But it acceptable now. Women were rather shy about visiting beauty parlours and using their services, but business is picking up gradually. Their biggest clients, however, are brides, she said.

Madaripur Bar Assoc poll held

MADARIPUR, Feb 26: Election of Madaripur District Bar Association was held recently, reports APB.

A 13-member committee was elected with Md Mujibur Rahman as president and Sujit Chatterjee as general secretary. The other office-bearers are vice-presidents Gopal Chandra Sarkar and Md Badruzzaman, assistant secretaries S M Ruhul Amin, Md Habibur Rahman Khan (Badal) and Bimal Chandra Baroi, treasurer Md Moslem Ali Akbar and members A K M Foyzur Rahman Hiroo, Jalalur Rahman, Md Siddikur Rahman, Md Mahmudur Rahman and Abdul Jalil Matabbar.

Construction of schools completed

JESSORE, Feb 26: Construction of 84 non-government and 49 government primary schools here has been completed at a cost of Tk 6 crore under an Asian Development Bank (ADB) assistance, reports APB.

The new schools will enroll about 65,000 more students, official sources said. Of the registered non-government school, 27 have been constructed in Keshabpur thana, 15 in Monirampur, 10 in Bagharpura, nine in Chougachha, six in Sharsha, two in Abhaynagar, one in Jhikargacha and 14 in Sadar thana. Official sources said 20 of the new government primary schools have been constructed in Keshabpur thana, 11 in Abhaynagar, six in Chougachha, five in Jhikargacha, three in Sharsha and two in Monirampur thana.

Science Fair concludes

MAGURA, Feb 26: A three-day district-level science fair, organised as part of the 22nd National Science and Technology Week, ended here last week, reports UNB.

A total of 30 organisations, including various educational institutions and science clubs took part in the fair held at Magura Government College. Magura district Deputy Commissioner inaugurated the fair on February 16 and distributed prizes among the winners on the concluding day. Another report says: The annual conference and sports competition of police was held at the district Police Lines on February 16. More than 100 police personnel from four thanas took part in various events of the sports competition. DIG (Khulna Range) Mohammad Lutful Kabir opened the meet while Jahanara Kabir distributed prizes among the winners.

Road Transport Workers Union poll

SHERPUR, Feb 26: The biennial election of the district unit of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers' Union will be held on March 5, reports UNB.

A total of 33 candidates are contesting in the election for 10 executive posts of the union. Some 1,371 enlisted members of the union are expected to cast their votes in the election to be held at new bus terminal in the town.

Financial crisis of sharecroppers

MADARIPUR, Feb 26: Some 2,220 hectares of cropland out of 87,132 in the district remained uncultivated due to financial crisis of sharecroppers caused by price hike of agri-inputs and natural calamities, reports UNB.

According to Agriculture Extension Department, there are 83,028 sharecroppers out of 1.10 lakh farmers in Sadar, Kalkini, Rajbir and Shibchar thanas, and they cultivate nearly 95 per cent of cropland. Most of the sharecroppers, who have no land of their own, are leading the life in untold miseries, and those who have got some lands cannot cultivate those for lack of bank loan. They alleged that the land owners are reluctant to lease out lands to those who insist on agreement as per the 1984 Land Reform Ordinance. The land owners usually change sharecroppers after every two or three years and forcibly take half of the crops violating the ordinance, they further alleged.

Wheat allocated under FWP

MAGURA, Feb 26: About 1,261 tonnes of wheat have been allocated for implementation of 316 projects in the district under Food for Work Programme (FWP) during the current dry season, reports APB.

An official of the District Relief and Rehabilitation Department told this correspondent that 448 tonnes have been allocated for 127 projects in the Sadar thana, 267 tonnes for 468 projects in Sripur thana, 298 tonnes for 64 projects in Mymensingh thana and 248 tonnes for 57 projects in Shalikha thana. The projects include construction and repair of dams, roads and culverts, earth-filling, and development of school and madrasahs. Work on the projects is going on and is expected to be completed by June this year.



RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY: Vice-Chancellor Prof Abdul Khaleque, Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof Sayeedur Rahman along with other high officials of the university placing wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar here in the early hours of Shaheed Day on February 21.

— Star photo

Water level falls sharply

River routes threatened in southern region

BARISAL, Feb 26: The river routes in the country's southern region have seriously been threatened with the sharp fall of the water levels in many rivers and emergence of shoals at many points, reports UNB.

Competent sources expressed fear that plying of river vessels in these routes might come to a halt any time.

Shoals emerged at many points on the routes from Barisal to Dhaka, Chittagong, Bholia, Patuakhali and Barguna, making the movement of river vessels including passenger (tidal mouth) of Maulavir Hat.

From the very beginning of the dry season this year, the motor launches of Barisal-Dhaka route are plying in an alternative route via Maulavir Hat avoiding Muladi.

The new route takes about 150 to 180 minutes more to reach the destination, said Abdul Bashar Khan, master of a motor launch. "The alternative route

is not out of threat as the depth of river at many points is too shallow to ply a heavy vessel like passenger launch," he said.

The most vulnerable points on this route are Baushia crossing, Badarpur and the estuary (tidal mouth) of Maulavir Hat.

The sources said plying of water vessels on Barisal-Bhola route is continuing with many obstacles due to the same problem.

They said the launches sometimes have to wait for hours together for the high tide to cross these points.

On the route to Chittagong from Barisal, three points have become vulnerable making the plying of launches and steamers hazardous. The points are Shayestabad, a channel near Daulatkhan and Syedpur.

The ships and launches ply-

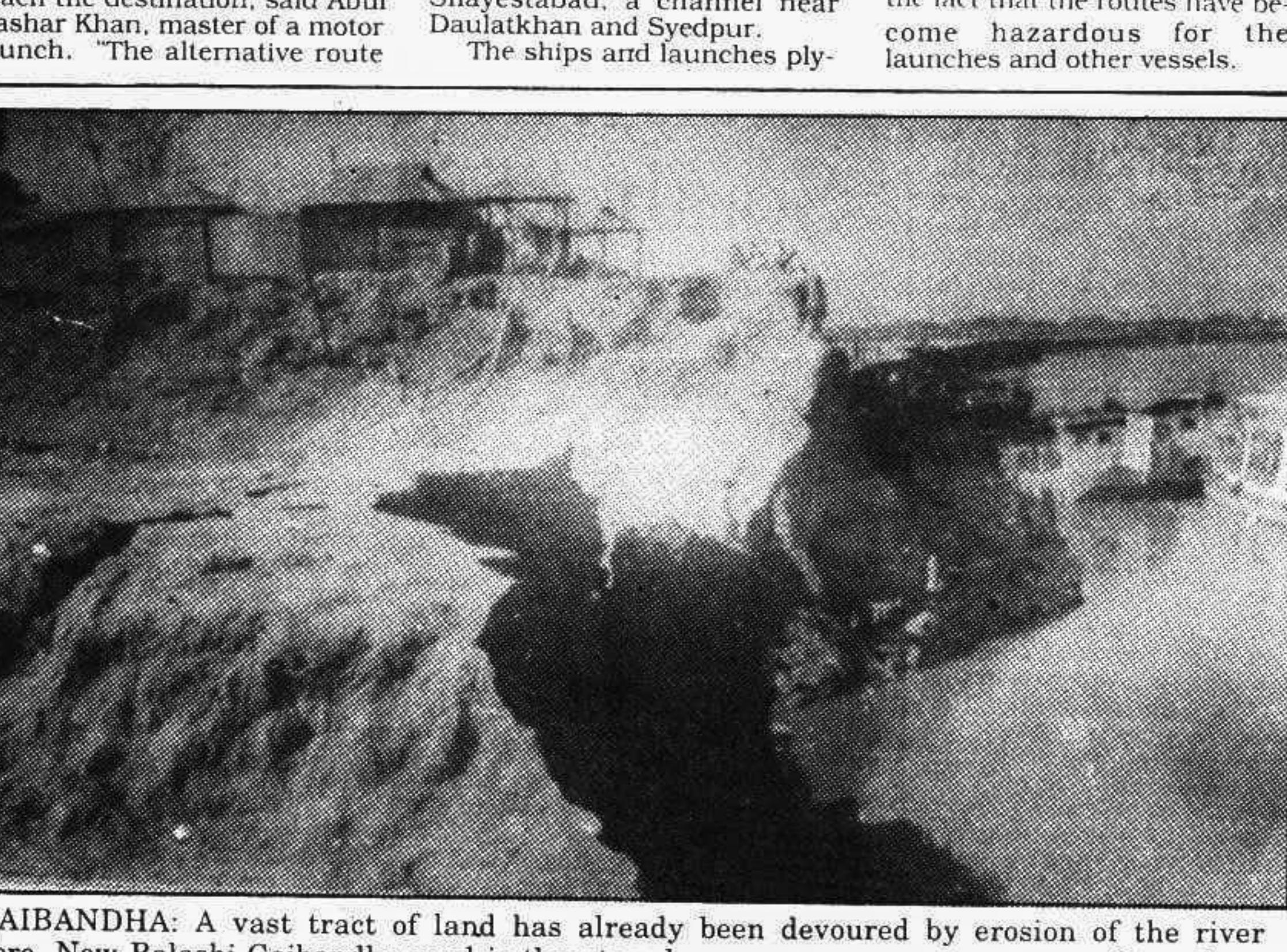
ing on this route always move according to the tidal cycle and a passenger vessel is to wait for at least five hours for the high tide if it arrives at these points untimely, said Abdul Quasem, master of another launch.

The sources said plying of water vessels on Barisal-Bhola route is continuing with many obstacles due to the same problem.

At many points of the route, the required depth of five feet in the river is absent, said the sources.

The situation on the other routes is same due to the fall of water level in the rivers with the advent of the dry season.

When contacted, BIWTA sources here said the authorities have not taken any measure as yet to ensure smooth plying of river vessels despite the fact that the routes have become hazardous to the launches and other vessels.



GAIBANDHA: A vast tract of land has already been devoured by erosion of the river here. Now Balashi-Gaibandha road is threatened.

— Star photo

Ideal villages in Natore are no longer ideal

PABNA, Feb 26: Ideal villages in the district, set up under Swarnirvar Ideal Village Project, are no longer ideal, reports UNB.

Insufficient facilities and growing terrorism in the ideal villages have brought shame on the authorities.

The number of families in the ideal villages, scattered across the district, has now come down to 748 from 3,001.

The ambitious project, aiming to rehabilitate landless and destitute families, was undertaken by the previous government.

After assuming power, the present Awami League government has taken up another project, Ashrayan, for the same purpose, but the fate of the new project also hangs in the balance.

District administration sources said there are 23 ideal villages under the Swarnirvar Ideal Village Project in eight thanas.

The thana-wise breakup of the families now residing in the villages are no longer ideal, reports UNB.

Insufficient facilities and growing terrorism in the ideal villages have brought shame on the authorities.

The number of families in the ideal villages, scattered across the district, has now come down to 748 from 3,001.

While visiting the villages, the correspondent found that the villagers were not getting the facilities as committed by the government.

"The government has failed to follow up its pledges in action," bemoaned a villager.

As per the project profile, the villagers were supposed to have provided with mass education centres, pure drinking water, Mother and Child Health (MCH) and small credit facilities.

"No government official or organisation now feels the necessity to visit the villages to see our miseries," said another resident at Sadirajpur village.

He said four deep tubewells had been installed in the village for supplying safe drinking water, but unfortunately three of them remained inoperative for long.

Firefighters brought the blaze under control.

The DC of Rangamati, Shah Alam, SP Mokhlesur Rahman visited the spot.

Local people said, the house was set on fire four times in the past in a sequel to political rivalry.

As of December 1998, only 748 families were found residing in those villages, officials

said.

Later, 69 more families deserted the villages for various reasons, local sources said. Of them, 38 families out of 47 in Sadirajpur village and seven out of 91 in Isamati in Sadar thana, 12 out of 27 in Kadoa, 12 out of 38 in Newgi Banagram in Sujanagar thanas left the villages and settled somewhere else.

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