

News snaps

Rivals clash leaves 8 injured
SYLHET, Mar 5: A clash between two rival groups of people at Barahat village in Golapganj thana on Tuesday left at least eight people injured, three critically, reports UNB.
Police said the clash took place when a man prevented his rivals from cutting earth from his land. Three of the injured, Liton, Moti Mia and Saleh Ahmed — were admitted to Sylhet Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Lalon festival in Kushtia
KUSHTIA, Mar 5: Lalon festival began here on March 2 at the premises of Lalon Academy, reports BSS.
Thousands of followers and admirers of the great baul Lalon Shah assembled at the venue to pay due respect to the great mystic. A discussion was held at the Lalon Academy on this occasion. Abdus Salam, Deputy Commissioner, Kushtia presided over the meeting.

10 kg silver seized
SATHKIRA, Mar 5: The BDR *jauans* of 9 Battalion seized 10 kg silver from Hizli Chandpur village in Kaliganj thana and arrested one person in this connection on Sunday, reports BSS.
The BDR *jauans* of Shokpur BOP of Sathkira in a raid recovered and seized 10 kg silver, from the possession of one Gourango Mondal of village Narikeli in Debhata thana at Hizli Chandpur village in Kaliganj thana. The BDR arrested Gourango Mondal. The seized silver was deposited to the Boshantapur Customs authorities.

Uplift works progressing
CHANDPUR, Mar 5: Chandpur District Council has undertaken a comprehensive schemes to implement 45 development projects at a cost of Tk one crore thirty-five lakh in the current financial year, reports BSS.
According to official sources, the projects include construction and reconstruction of roads, bridges, culverts, bus passengers sheds and union parishad offices. Besides some educational institutions will be repaired under the projects. About 60 per cent work of these projects have already been completed.

Reception to college principal
BARISAL, Mar 5: A warm reception was accorded to Prof Md Hanif, Principal, Islamia College, Barisal, for receiving national level award as best head of the educational institution of Barisal division last year, reports BSS.
Presided over by Deputy Commissioner M Alauddin, the function was attended by the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Education Sirajuddin Ahmed as the chief guest. Prof Gollam Kibria Manu and Prof Mahsin-ul-Islam Habul jointly organised the function on behalf of the teachers, students and other employees of Islamia College on Sunday.

Books distributed
NARSINGDI, Mar 5: Free distribution of new books among students of 761 primary schools in six thanas of Narsingdi district has been completed recently, reports BSS.
The books were distributed among students reading in government, private and community and NGO run institutions. According to official sources, 41,650 sets of new books were distributed to the student of class one, 41,084 sets to class two, 39,221 sets to class three, 37,056 sets to class four and 23,542 sets to class five. The books covered 65 per cent for the students of class one, 67 per cent both class two and 70 per cent for class three, four and class five.

Two with arms arrested
RAJSHAHI, Mar 5: Two persons were arrested along with arms from the city's Kadamtala area on March 2, police said, reports APB.
Acting on a tip-off, police led by OC of Boalia thana Abdus Sattar raided a house and arrested Sirajul Islam Buddhu and Azhar Intiaz Duke and recovered two country-made pistols and eight bullets. They hailed from Chapainawabganj.

10,000 suffering from lethargism
ISAWARDI, Mar 5: At least 10,000 people are suffering from lethargism in 16 northern districts and the number is increasing alarmingly, according to health officials here, reports APB.
The number is increasing as it is not curable and there is no step by the government to take preventive measures, they said. The main cause of the disease is over-consumption of Khesari dal (lentil), produced in plenty in the districts, they said. It becomes the staple food for poor families during bad days. People of all ages are being attacked. Creating public awareness is the most effective way to prevent its spread, they observed.

Luxury bus operation resumes
COX'S BAZAR, Mar 5: Operation of luxury buses on the Cox's Bazar-Chittagong highway resumed yesterday after a suspension for 12 days, reports APB.
Plying of luxury buses belonging to three companies were stopped on February 18 following protests by some local socio-political organisations for raising fare. The services resumed after talks between the bus owners and leaders of those organisations in presence of the Chittagong Divisional Commissioner.

Facilities Deptt completes 75 projects
BHERAMARA, Mar 5: The Facilities Department of the Ministry of Education has almost completed 75 project of the last financial year in six thanas of Kushtia district at a cost of Taka three crore, reports BSS.
The thanas are Kushtia sadar, Bheramara, Kumarkhali, Khoksha, Mirpur and Daulatpur. The projects included construction of primary school buildings, supply of steel almirahs and benches, reconstruction and repair of school buildings and development of six colleges. Sixty per cent work has already been completed and rest work is expected to be completed soon.

Cultural meet at Kumudini College
TANGAIL, Mar 5: Literary and cultural competition of Kumudini Government Women's College began here on Monday at its campus, reports BSS.
Dr. Salma Banu, principal of the college opened the competition. A total of 95 students of the college are taking part in recitation, songs, dance, debate and selected and extempore speech competitions. The programme concluded on March 4 through distribution of prize among the winners.

Agri-fair concludes
KISHOREGANJ, Mar 5: A five-day agriculture fair concluded on the premises of Agriculture Extension Directorate (AED) office here on March 3, reports BSS.
More than 75 varieties of vegetables and other crops produced through improved technologies were on display at the fair. Organised by the local AED, the fair was inaugurated by the Director, Field Service Kazi Tofazzal Hossain. The technologies and methods displayed in the fair included, pest control, pisciculture in paddy field, preservation of cowdung, improved methods of vegetable cultivation and integrated fishery and poultry farming. About 24 kinds of item of food prepared with potato were displayed in the fair.

Boro farming may fall short of target
RANGAMATI, Mar 5: The cultivation target of IRRI-Boro in the district may not be achieved this year due to various problems including severe cold wave and erratic power supply, reports UNB.
Most seedlings in the seedbeds in different thanas have already been damaged due to the cold-spread and foggy weather. Farmers in a bid to overcome the loss of Aman crops prepared their fields, but they mostly failed to transplant the seedlings because of load-shedding. Besides, they are not in a position to cultivate the targeted land due to price-hike of agri-inputs including fertiliser and bullocks.

Fund shortage
SUNAMGANJ, Mar 5: As construction work of the town protection embankment is being delayed due to fund crisis, different areas alongside the river Surma stand threatened by erosion, reports UNB.
Officials said a consulting agency had submitted a report called "Flood Damage Assessment" in 1998 to construct the embankment, showing an estimated cost of Tk 2.5 crore for implementing the project. When the project was approved by the government, they had sought Tk 1.2 crore from the concerned authorities. "But unfortunately we have not yet received any fund which was supposed to have been disbursed in the 1998-99 fiscal," said an official insisting anonymity. Local people urged the authorities concerned to immediately release necessary fund to implement the much-awaited project and thus save them from natural calamity.

Annual milad mahfil held
TANGAIL, Mar 5: Annual milad mahfil of Bindhabashini Government Girls High School was held at the school recently, reports BSS.
Students and teachers of the school attended the milad mahfil. Among others, educationist Begum Rahima Khatoun and Abdur Razzaque spoke on the life and work and ideals of great prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) in the mahfil.

TLM launched in Mymensingh

From Aminul Islam

MYMENSINGH, Mar 5: The district administration here has taken up a noble programme to remove illiteracy from the district.
The programme titled Total Literacy Movement (TLM) under the banner of "Jagrata Mymensingh" would spread the light of education to the adults including men, women, housewives, youths, old men and women of the district.
The administration has launched the TLM programme through setting up 95 mass literacy centres experimentally for the last six months here.
A survey conducted recently by the district administration reveals that some 28,85,568 people of all 12 thanas are deprived of education due to extreme poverty and other reasons.
The Ministry of Education

has sanctioned Taka nine crore 28 lakh for implementation of the TLM programme here successfully.
The TLM programme, a noble endeavour to eliminate the curse of illiteracy from the district would be implemented in three phases.
The first phase of the programme started on February 15. The programme would be conducted by setting up 29,916 mass literacy centres here in three phases.
Every Mass Literacy Centre would be conducted by a trained teacher who would get Taka 500 as remuneration per month. The teachers of the centres would be guided by a supervisor who would be appointed for every 15 centres. The authorities concerned will distribute necessary educational requirements like books, slates, black-

boards, chalks, dusters, hurricane, and fund for purchasing kerosene.
A separate office has been established as monitoring cell under the charge of a high official to carry out the daily activities of the TLM project.
Following the constitution of "Jagrata Mymensingh," a 33-member executive committee was formed comprising of educationist, political leaders, journalists, lawyers, officials and elite of the district to voluntarily motivate and supervise the programme.
The Deputy Commissioner and Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) are the Ex-officio president and Member Secretary of the executive committee.
Now MD Rafiqul Islam, Deputy Commissioner and Md Abdul Halim, ADC (General) are

conducting the programme as president and member secretary respectively.
At an 'exchange of views' function with the local journalists recently held at Mymensingh Circuit House, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) informed that a total number of 28,85,568 illiterate adult people here would be free from the curse of illiteracy by 2000 through TLM programme. He also told the journalists that the TLM programme also includes overall human development like life and livelihood, sanitation, food and nutrition, family planning, health care, income generating activities like agriculture, pisciculture, small trader and environment.
At the meeting, the DC sought cooperation of people of all walks of life to make the TLM programme a success.

Repression on women, children up in Rajshahi, Feni

Incidents of repression on women and children are occurring unabated in two districts namely Rajshahi and Feni, reports UNB.
In Rajshahi, some 316 cases of repression on women were filed with nine thanas and in four metropolitan thanas in the city last year, official sources said.
Of the total cases, 180 were related to rape incidents, they added.
In nine thanas, the number of cases was 286 while in the metropolitan areas 30 cases were lodged with the four thanas.
Apart from rape, the cases are related to various crimes including abduction, acid throwing and demand for dowry.
Medical tests of 180 victims were conducted at the Forensic Department of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital during the period. But, said the sources, only about 10 cases could be proved. The other cases could not be proved due to various reasons including delay in sending the 'alamat' for necessary test.
They said a number of cases were found false and were lodged to harass the opponents.
The highest number of rape cases was filed with Tanore thana, which is about 30 during the period, though the sources claimed that many of these cases were false.
Official sources said many abduction cases were related to love affairs between young boys and girls and the parents of the girls usually file cases saying that their daughters had been abducted.
The number of actual abduction and women trafficking is relatively low here despite the fact that it is nearer to the border, claimed the sources.
But they admitted that in some incidents, girl children were raped and two such incidents in Poba and Puthia thanas created much concern among the people.
In Feni district, incidents of such crimes are occurring unabated.
Only one accused was sentenced in the district to seven years of imprisonment and fined Tk 1,000 since the special court to deal with the cases of women and children repression was set up in 1995.
The convict was one of those accused in 80 cases filed with the court from its beginning till December 1998. Of the total, the judge so far disposed of only 16 cases. Only 42 cases were under trial.
Of the remaining cases, police submitted final report of only 20 cases while 12 were under investigation, said a court source.
The cases, filed with six thanas, include 18 rape cases and 62 for other types of repression.
Delayed submitting of chargesheet by the police was

identified as one of the main reasons for unnecessary delay in disposing of the cases.
The government enacted the law in 1995 under which provisions or tougher measures including capital punishment were included to reduce the high rate of violence against women and children.
But after four years, it seemed that law and the court set up under its provision failed to yield the desired result here as the number of incidents were continuing to rise, said the sources in the police and the court.
They said in many cases, he victims could not reach the court due to various reasons and some cases turned merely unnatural death cases for lack of proper witness.
Crimes including rape, abduction, murder, repression for dowry are common in rural as well as urban areas here and such incidents are increasing day by day.

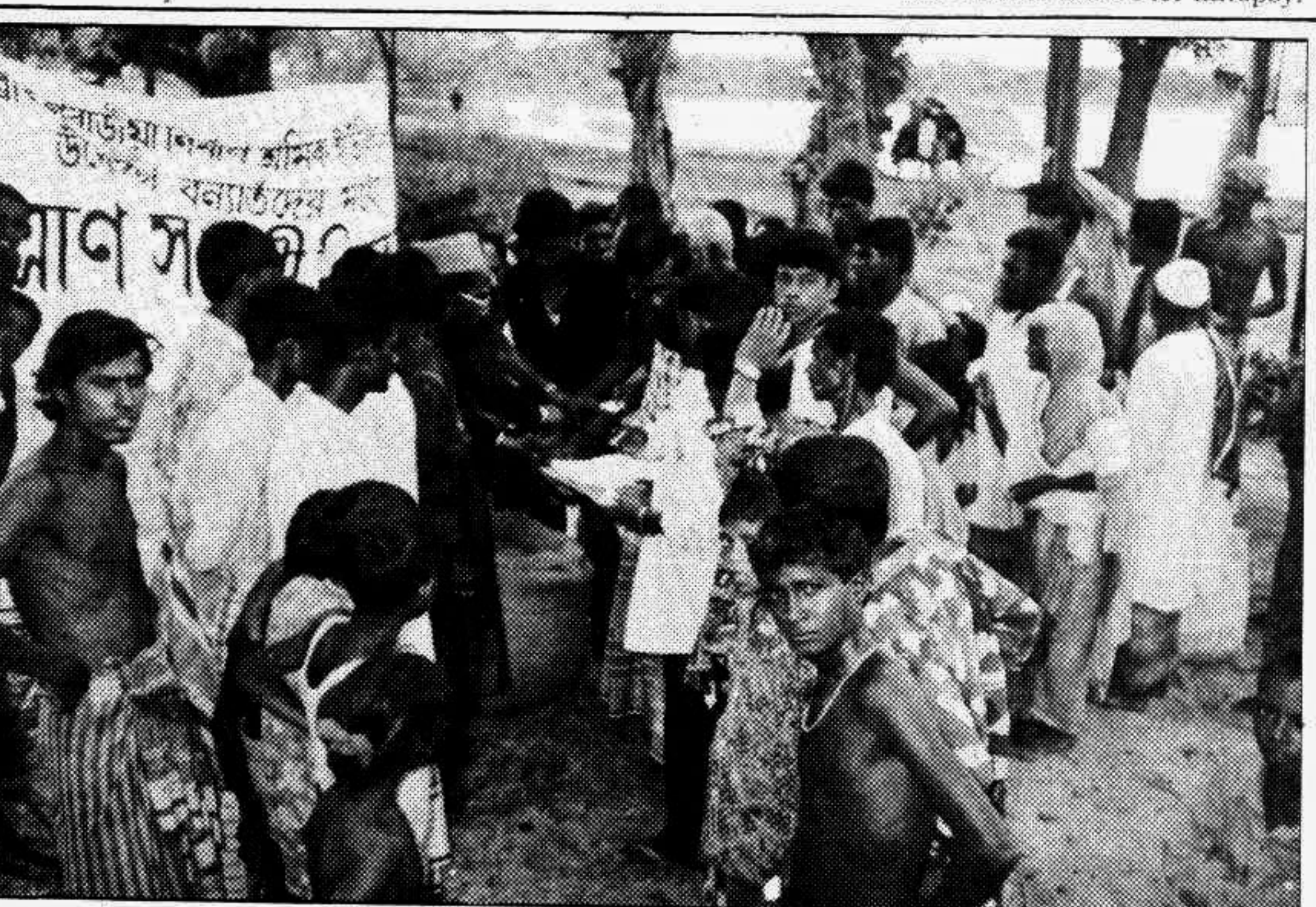
Potato growers deprived of fair price in Comilla

COMILLA, Mar 5: Despite bumper production of potato this year, the growers are being deprived of fair price due to shortage of buyers in the local markets, reports UNB.
Many growers complained that they are forced to sell the production below cost of production in government patronisation. They said the middlemen are reaping the benefit.
The farmers grew various 'Rabi' crops during the current season to recoup their losses caused by the last year's flooding.
Per acre production of potato last year was on average 190 to 200 maunds while it was 250 to 270 during the current season, the growers said.
Harvesting of the crop has almost ended, but the market price went down incurring losses to the farmers.
They said the moneylenders and traders, taking advantage of the situation, are buying potato directly from the field at a throwaway price, as the farmers could not bear the high expenses of transportation of their goods to the large markets.
The price of potato was between Tk 145 and Tk 150 per maund last year, which is now being sold between Tk 115 and Tk 120 per maund this year, said the market sources.
They said the price was even less in the rural areas where the traders buy potato directly from the field.
The cost of transportation and preservation of potato was normally high and this year's production was well beyond the total capacity of the cold storage in the district, said the sources.
Another report from Sherpur said, the cultivation target of 'Boro' during the current season has crossed the target and the growers hoped that the production target would be crossed if there were no natural calamity.
District officials of the Agriculture Extension Department said the cultivation target of 'Boro' in Sherpur was 56,000 hectares of land, but the farmers brought under cultivation more lands in order to overcome the losses caused by the last flood.
They said the supply of day-labourers was abundant in the rural areas as the Food for Works (FFW) programme began late following the flood.
Besides, they got agriculture loan from the banks in due time, which helped them much in cultivating 'Boro' paddy during the current season.
Many small and marginal farmers also came up for Boro cultivation and in many fields the growers cultivated the paddy immediately after the harvest of mustard and potato.
But the sources said the production might be hampered due to the recurrent loadshedding in the district and a supply

shortage of pesticides in the local markets.
In Chapainawabganj, the officials hoped that production of IRRI-Boro would be bumper this year.
A report from the district said that the farmers, who incurred severe losses of their crops during the last year's flood laid special emphasis on the IRRI-Boro cultivation in order to recover it.
They said the cultivation target has already crossed, as the farmers did not face seed crisis like the previous season. The climatic condition was also favourable for the production of better seedlings.
The production target was fixed at 62,196 metric tons, but the officials predicted that it would easily be crossed if the climate remained in favour and no calamity occurred.

500 question papers for 850 examinees?

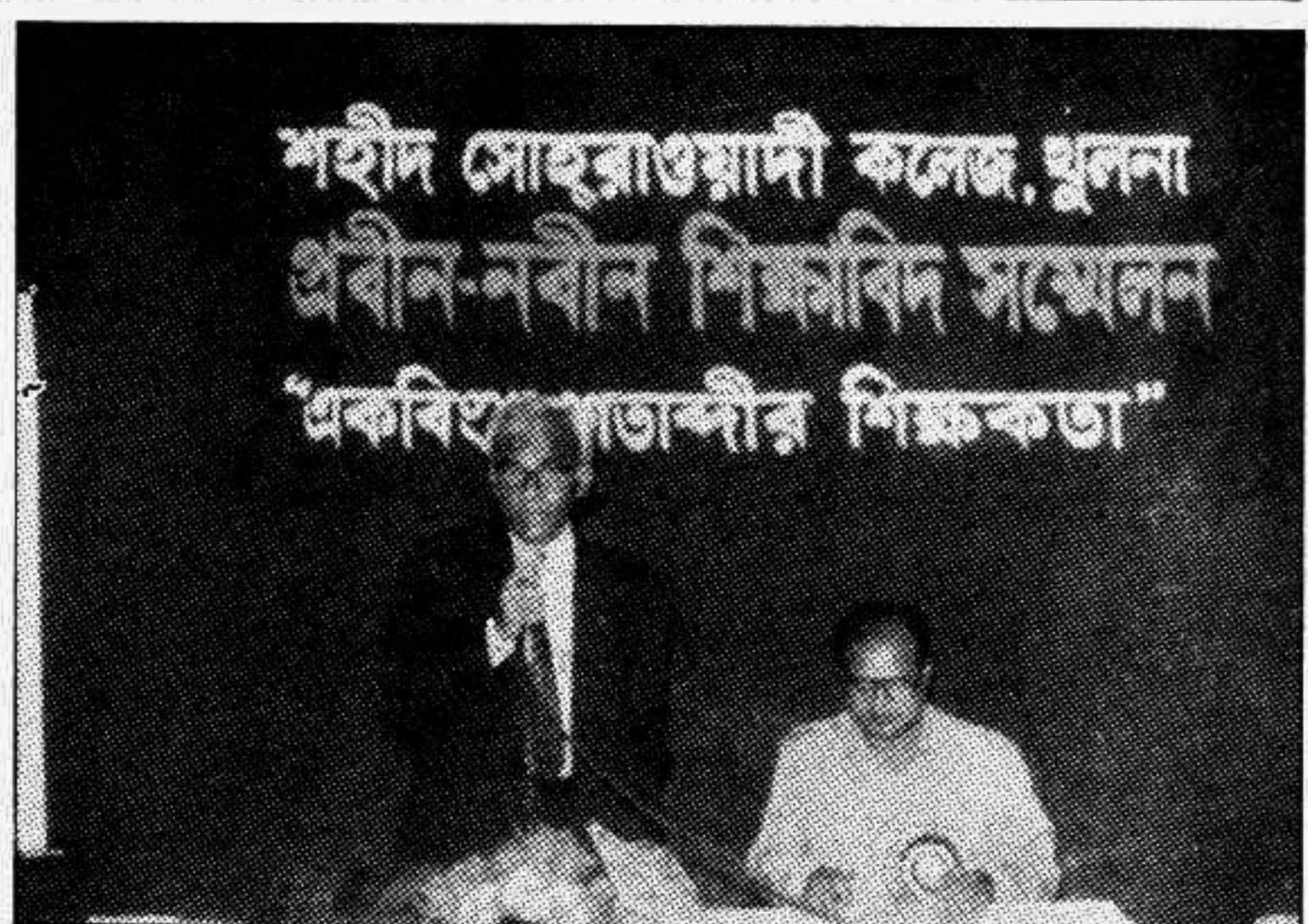
From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAHI, Mar 5: There were 850 examinees, but only 500 question papers were sent.
At last the authorities made 350 question papers by doing photo copies. This resulted in late by 15 minutes to begin the examination, TNO office said.
This happened on the first day of the SSC examination in Bagha on Thursday. A G D was registered with the Bagha thana. The TNO acknowledged the incident.
Meanwhile, the first day of the SSC examination under Rajshahi Education Board passed peacefully.
According to Rajshahi Education Board control room, the number of expelled examinees for adopting unfair means in the examination till filling of this report are as follows: 127 in Rajshahi, 107 in Nilphamari, 92 in Pabna, 178 in Thakurgaon, 80 in Panchagarh and 112 in Chapainawabganj districts.



BRAHMANBARIA: Relief goods being distributed among poor villagers here recently by the local Sramik Union. — Star photo

A den of smuggled goods in Naogaon town

NAOGAON, Mar 5: Nuniapatti, a residential area of the town, turned into a den of smuggled Indian goods and the vested quarters are doing brisk business before the nose of the district administration, reports UNB.
Indian contraband goods including liquor, cannabis, phenidyl syrup and other daily necessities are being sold unabated at the selling centres of the area, adjacent to the Kutcha Bazar of the town.
A source on condition of anonymity said smuggled goods are available at almost every house in the area and the people are regularly buying different articles from these houses.
Local people said in many houses the drawing rooms are being used as the showroom of the goods to the prospective buyers.
The smugglers bring in the goods through different points of the border and board these at their dens at Nuniapatti and sent some goods to other parts of the country and the rest to the houses around the area for direct sale.
There are wholesale traders of smuggled goods at Nuniapatti who supply these commodities to the businessmen across the country.
The godfathers of the smuggling rings have their own musclemen and terrorist groups. These groups keep themselves busy in protecting the illegal business in the area and across the network so that nobody could raise protest against the trading.
These armed groups also provide protection to the goods at the dens and during transportation throughout the year.
Those godfathers who control the smuggling business give only a percentage of their profit to the owners of the houses in Nuniapatti area for storing and selling Indian goods, said some houseowners on condition that they would not be named.
Meanwhile, local people alleged that police and other law enforcement agencies prefer to remain silent about the smuggling rings active in the area due to mysterious reasons.
They said police did not take any action against them even after the issue was raised at the monthly coordination meeting of the district administration and news items published in local newspapers.
They further alleged that due to the inaction of the authorities the goods have also flooded the local markets.



KHULNA: Md Mazharul Hannan, General Secretary of Bangladesh Principals' Council presenting his key-note speech recently on "Teaching Profession in the 21st Century" at a teachers' conference at Shahid Suhrawardy College here. — Star photo



RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY: The Councillor of Indian High Commission in Dhaka Devnath Shah (2nd from left) called on Vice-Chancellor Prof Abdul Khaleque (L), Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Sayeedur Rahman Khan (R) and Murolihdharan of the Indian High Commission at Rajshahi were also present. — Star photo

In greater Mymensingh dist 20,000 acres of land of wakf estates grabbed by influentials

MYMENSINGH, Mar 5: Some 20,000 acres of land of wakf estates in greater Mymensingh district have been grabbed by people, resulting in government's loss of huge revenue every year, reports APB.
The lands have been grabbed due to flaws in the Wakf Act, non-registration of lands with the wakf administration and alleged corruption by a section of officials.
There are some 35,000 acres of land under 6500 wakf estates in Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur and Tangail districts. These lands were donated to educational and religious institutions, philanthropic organisations and graveyards by landlords between 1880 and 1947.
Of those, lands registered with the wakf administration are 820 acres under 27 estates in Mymensingh, 260 acres under 31 estates in Jamalpur, 64 acres under 62 estates in Sherpur and 4409 acres under 670 estates in Tangail.
The rest of the lands are not registered with the wakf administration.
As per the provisions of the wakf Act, registration of such land with the wakf administration is not compulsory.
This gives the caretakers or heirs the scope to sell land or vested quarters to grab, and no scope to the wakf administration to interfere.
Some of the big wakf estates whose lands have been grabbed are Nawab Khoda Box Wakf Estate in Tangail, Abbas Ali Wakf Estate at Phoolpour in Mymensingh, Wazed Ali Wakf Estate at Korotia in Tangail, Anwar Uddin Wakf Estate at Bhuluka and Azim Uddin Wakf Estate at Ghatail in Tangail.
A Wakf office was opened here in 1948 to oversee the Wakf lands, where only an inspector and a peon are working now.
It may be recalled, a national conference of motawallins (caretakers) of Wakf estates in Dhaka in 1995 had called for immediate amendment to the Wakf Act, proper survey and registration of Wakf lands and steps for eviction of the illegal occupants.
But no step has been taken in this regard so far.

26,600 hectares earmarked for Boro farming in Thakurgaon

THAKURGAON, Mar 5: Extensive plantation of 'Boro' is going on in Thakurgaon district, reports BSS.
The farmers here are cultivating 'Boro' in a large scale to compensate the loss to 'Aman' caused by flood and pest attack.
Directorate of Agriculture Extension sources said, this year in Thakurgaon district 26,600 hectares were earmarked for Boro cultivation. But reports from Haripur, Pirganj, Ranisankail, Balladangi and Thakurgaon sadar thanas state that the extensive plantation in those thanas will exceed the target.
About 2,000 tonnes of seeds were required here for Boro cultivation this year. Due to moderate winter, the germination of seeds was better. So the seedlings were also good. Many farmers are doing business of seedlings. In Bhulli, Gareya, Khochabari and in some other hats here Boro seedlings are being sold at Taka 70 to 80 per bag.
It is further learnt that this year the farmers are also cultivating High Yielding Varieties (HYV) on about 70 to 80 per cent land. The rest 20 to 30 per cent land is being cultivated by local varieties. The yield of HYV is generally about three tonnes per acre. But in this area the yield is about 2.5 tonnes per acre.
Another source of DAE said that in 16 districts of the northern region of the country 9,95,135 hectares were earmarked for Boro cultivation from which 24,13,808 tonnes of rice are expected. If the weather remains favourable and if there is no crisis of diesel, power and fertiliser more production is expected.

Training course on disaster management

From A Correspondent
DINAJPUR, Mar 5: Two five-day training courses, on Disaster Management for government of Bangladesh officials and NGO executives were arranged, one each at CARITAS regional office, Rajshahi and DPAB, Dinaipur, in February last by PRIP Trust, DPIS Project. Sponsored by GOB Disaster Management Bureau, the course was participatory and attended by around 25 officials from government and non-sector.