

News snaps

Fighting over Eid sweets; Man killed

JHENIDAH, Apr 2: A man was killed and seven others were wounded in fighting over Eid sweets at a village in Shaikupa thana on Tuesday, reports UNB. Police said Abdus Sattar of village Fulchhari Kazipara was injured critically being hit by a stone as two rival groups of villagers encountered with country weapons like clubs, spears and machetes. Sattar succumbed to his injuries on way to hospital. The injured were released after first aid. The body was handed over to family members after autopsy.

Two killed in bus accident

NARSINGDI, Apr 2: Two people were killed and 50 others injured in a bus accident on Narsingdi-Kaliganj road near Batpara here on Sunday, reports UNB. Witnesses said Mahmudur Rahman, 35, of Ulukandi village in Banchhampur thana and his nine-year-old daughter died on the spot when the overloaded minibus carrying them plunged into a ditch after losing its control. The injured were admitted to the sadar hospital and different private clinics in Ghorasal. Police seized the bus but the driver fled the scene. The bodies were taken to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Jute farming on 1,82,000 hectares

RANGPUR, Apr 2: A total of 1,82,000 hectares of land will be brought under jute cultivation in 16 districts of the country's northern region during the current season, reports UNB. The districts are Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Bogra, Joypurhat, Pabna, Sirajganj, Natore, Naogaon, Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj. Agriculture officials said of the total land, some 71,000 hectares will be brought under local variety cultivation while 1,11,000 hectares under Tossa variety. The production target has been fixed at 17,53,000 bales of raw jute in all these districts.

RAKUB to disburse agri-loan

RAJSHAHI, Apr 2: Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (RAKUB) has fixed a target to disburse Taka 330 crore among the farmers in Rajshahi division for boosting agricultural production during the current fiscal year, reports BSS. Bank source told that the bank has so far disbursed about Taka two hundred crore among one lakh ninety thousand farmers through 299 bank branches during the last nine months. The bank disbursed Taka 140 crore. During the same period which was Taka sixty crore more than that of the last financial year. Meanwhile, the bank has recovered Taka 120 crore from ninety thousand five hundred seventy-four farmers.

Allocation for repairing edn instts

JHENIDAH, Apr 2: A total of Tk 25.5 lakh has been allocated for reconstruction and repair of six government colleges and five government schools in Jhenidah and Magura districts in the current fiscal year, reports APB. Of the amount, Tk 15 lakh will be spent for repair of Jhenidah KC College, Jhenidah Nurun Nahar College, Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Lalon Shah College, M H College and Shaikupa College. The rest Tk 9.5 lakh will be spent for repair of Jhenidah High School, Jhenidah Girls' High School, Hari-nakunda Girls' High School, Magura High School and Magura Girls' High School. The educational institutions will be repaired under the Facilities Department of the Ministry of Education, official sources said.

World TB Day observed

NARSINGDI, Apr 2: The World Tuberculosis (TB) Day was observed in Narsingdi district with a renewed pledge to eradicate the disease, reports BSS. To mark the day Narsingdi District Health Department brought out a colourful procession in the town. The largely participated procession was brought out from Civil Surgeon's office which paraded the main roads. After the procession a discussion meeting was held at the Civil Surgeon's office premises. Presided over by Dr Z M Johirul Islam, Civil Surgeon, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Dr Balyath Hossain, Chinu Bala Ray, Dr Mohammad Ali and Dr Nur Nabi.

Programme to eradicate illiteracy

MEHERPUR, Apr 2: The district administration has chalked out a programme to eradicate illiteracy and to give the light of education to the adults including men and women of two thanas of Meherpur district, reports BSS. The administration launched the Total Literacy Movement (TLM) programme under the banner of 'Jagrotta Meherpur' through setting up of 1200 mass literacy centres experimentally more than four months ago. Every centre is being conducted by a trained teacher who is getting an honorarium of Tk 500 per month. The district administration has distributed books, slates, black boards, chalk-dusters, hurricanes and money for buying kerosene.

School bldg handed over

CHUADANGA, Apr 2: The newly constructed two-storied building of Chuadanga Court Para Jhinku Government Primary School was formally handed over to the school authority at a simple ceremony on March 22, reports BSS. The building was constructed by the Facilities Department of the Ministry of Education at a total cost of Taka 13 lakh 84 thousand. The building was handed over to the school authority by the local Assistant Engineer of the Facilities Department. Members of the school managing committee, teachers of the school and officials of the local Facilities Department were present at the handing over function.

Fire service week concludes

CHUADANGA, Apr 2: The Fire Service and Civil Defence Week concluded in Chuadanga recently, reports BSS. In observance of the week the local Fire Service and Civil Defence Department arranged a five-day long programme. The week was formally opened at a discussion meeting held here at the office premises of the local Fire Service and Civil Defence Department. The Deputy Commissioner of Chuadanga M R Choudhury was present at the opening ceremony as the chief guest. Solaiman Hoque Joarder presided over the function. The Assistant Deputy Director of local Fire Service was also present on the occasion. The other programmes of the week included demonstration of the fire fighting instruments, rescue operations, mass awareness meetings, poster, distribution of leaflets and to hold meeting in educational institutions, industrial units and business centres about fire fighting.

Farmers rally on IPM

NETRAKONA, Apr 2: A farmers rally on 'Integrated Pest Management (IPM)' was held at Chalissha Bazaar, about 5 kms west from here on March 20 last under the auspices of Netrakona District Agriculture Extension Department, reports BSS. Director General of Agriculture Extension Department M Enamul Haque attended the rally as the chief guest while Chairman of Chalissha Union Parishad Mohammed Alauddin was in the chair. The rally was addressed, among others, by Additional Director of Agriculture Extension Department, My-mensingh region M Fazlul Haque, Project Co-ordinator of Netrakona Integrated Agriculture Production and Water Management Project AFM Ruhul Amin, Deputy Director of Netrakona District Agriculture Extension Department Lutfur Rahman and Thana Agriculture Officer of Netrakona sadar thana Golam Mustafa.

621 villages electrified

CHANDPUR, Apr 2: Six hundred twenty-one villages in seven thanas of Chandpur district have, so far, been electrified by Chandpur Palli Bidyut Samity, reports BSS. According to samity office sources, 51,340 residents, 10,189 commercial, 1,014 industrial units, 1,035 pumps, and 1,163 institutions have given electric connection. Four electric sub-stations were also constructed. The thanas directly benefited by rural electrification are Chandpur, Hajigonj, Matlab, Kachua, Shaharasti, Faridgonj and Haimchar. Besides 2,037 km electric lines have already been installed.

Agri-loan for farmers

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Apr 2: Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) Chapainawabganj district office has disbursed Tk 1123.78 crore as agriculture loan among 10,388 farmers of 11 centres of the district during six months of the current fiscal year, reports BSS. According to an official source, the loan was disbursed for cultivation of Aus, Aman, Boro, mustard, wheat, potato, banana maize and vegetables, pisciculture, purchasing of oxen, cow-flattening and setting up of dairy and poultry farms. Meanwhile, BKB realised Taka 481.65 crore as outstanding crop loan from the farmers.

Workshop for Kishoreganj newsmen

KISHOREGANJ, Apr 2: A four-day training workshop for the local journalists concluded at Bhaibrab Press Club on March 23, reports BSS. Mass Line Media and Bhaibrab Press Club jointly organised the workshop. Prof Arefin Siddique, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, was the chief guest at the certificate giving ceremony on the concluding day. In his address, Prof Arefin Siddique said the journalists are the soldiers of truth.



COX'S BAZAR: A new road along Cox's Bazar-Teknaf sea beach is now under construction for the recreation of tourists from home and abroad. — Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Loadshedding in dists makes life miserable

By Staff Correspondent

Continuous loadshedding has made life miserable in various districts of the country. Our Staff Correspondent from Barisal reports: Acute loadshedding has gripped again the Barisal Power Development Board (PDB) region. According to PDB sources here, only 12 megawatts (MW) of power had been supplied from 6:30 pm on March 23 evening. Earlier, it was only five megawatts during the day time. Nearly 56 megawatts power is required for Barisal PDB region which includes Barisal, Patuakhali, Jhalakati, Barguna, Swarupkati in Pirajpur and some parts of Madaripur. But against the requirements supply is very meagre. As a result loadshedding is prevailing in the southern districts causing immense sufferings to people.

According to the grid substation here, power supply has decreased as two power generation units at Ghorasal have been tripped. Power supply towards Barguna and some parts of Patuakhali and Jhalakati districts remained shut for eight to 10 hours on March 23.

Our Myensingh Correspondent reports: Severe loadshedding in the town and other 12 thana headquarters has totally paralysed life. The situation has worsened in this ongoing summer. After the sunset the town and its adjacent areas plunge into deep darkness.

All kinds of activities have to be suspended. Loadshedding continues for four to five hours daily. Sometimes the power goes off for hours together. Following frequent power failure the production in mills and factories has come down. Supply of water has also been disrupted for the last few weeks. Students are the worst sufferers. They have to suffer lot. During the SSC examinations, the examinees fell worst victims. When contacted with some SSC examinees, they narrated their sufferings to this correspondent.

Loadshedding has been hampering greatly the business activities everywhere, some businessmen lamented. Patients in the hospitals, health complexes, clinics are suffering much due to power crisis. X-ray machines in the hospitals including private clinics, technical and pathological laboratories remain inoperative for hours every day.

According to local Power Development Board (PDB) officials, the district is now facing eight to 10 megawatt (MW) loadshedding daily. When contacted with the Superintendent Engineer of PDB, he told The Daily Star that due to short supply of electricity from Ashuganj Power Station than the actual demand, the loadshedding has become so severe.

Our Chuadanga Correspondent says: Once again frequent power failure has become a regular feature in Chuadanga Pourasabha area and its adjacent areas. Besides general consumers, a good number of industrial units including saw-mills, ice-fac-

ories and paddy husking mills, oil mills, printing presses, cinema halls, patients of the local hospital and examinees of SSC examinations are the worst sufferers. Businessmen of the town are forced to close their shops after evening for want of power supply every day. Resident Engineer of the local electricity supply department told that power was being supplied to Chuadanga from Khulna via Jhenidah where power failure occurs very frequently.

UNB from Jamalpur says: The people of Bandroha village in Sadar thana here have been suffering badly for the last four years due to indifference of the Palli Bidyut officials.

The villagers said, local Palli Bidyut Samity completed a high-powered Three-km LT line construction work up to nearby Helenchia village in order to supply electricity in the village in 1995.

But the authorities concerned did not give power connection in the village although power supply is needed to irrigation pumps, bazaars, rice and wheat crushing mills and dwelling houses.

The suffering villagers have appealed to the authorities concerned to ensure power supply for mitigating their persisting problem without further delay.

Our Rajshahi Correspondent reports: Crisis of water in the city has become very acute in recent days.

Frequent loadshedding and low voltage of electricity are the main causes behind the crisis. According to the Water Supply Department of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) water lifting capacity of the pumps has decreased by about 30 per cent of the usual capacity for sharp fall in ground water level. It has created and acute crisis of water. Frequent and long lasting loadshedding and low voltage of electricity have seriously aggravated the crisis. In some areas people are not getting water at all.

RCC sources said that most of the water lifting pumps could not be operated properly due to loadshedding and low voltage of electricity.

People are being forced to use contaminated water from other sources like ponds and wells. When contacted, city mayor Mijanur Rahman Minu expressed deep grief at the distress and suffering of the city dwellers.

Water Supply Department (WSD) of RCC urged the city dwellers not to be impatient. WSD is conscious and aware of the crisis and all its manpower have been on the alert. Pre-fixed time table of water lifting and supply to a specific area is not followed now, rather they are lifting and supplying water at any time when electricity becomes available.

Despite the emergency measures taken by RCC's Water Supply Department, water is not flowing in many areas for low pressure of water in the pipelines. At least 50 per cent of hand tubewells have gone out of order

for sharp fall in ground water level caused by drought and adverse effect of Farakka.

Scarcity of water will aggravate more if electricity supply situation is not improved soon. UNB from Chapainawabganj says: IRRI-Boro cultivation here has been affected seriously due to long disruption in power supply and non-operation of irrigation pumps.

Power supply in the district came down to six or seven megawatt a day as against the normal demand of 17 megawatt. Most of the supply is directed to the town dwellers depriving the Boro areas.

Irregular power supply has been affecting irrigation and the power-driven deep tubewells. In absence of timely irrigation, parts of Boro field dried up frustration the farmers. Agriculture officials said a vast area was brought under IRRI-Boro cultivation this year to make up the loss of Aman sustained in the floods.

About 21,000 hectares in Barind area were brought under of IRRI-Boro which should be fed with adequate irrigation from power-driven deep tubewells. Severe drought coupled with the absence of irrigation facility is killing the prospect of good harvest.

Angry farmers laid siege to the office of Nachol Thana Nirbahi Officer last week demanding regular electricity supply.

UNB from Naogaon says: Farmers of different parts of the country including Naogaon and Shariatpur have become agitated due to continuous loadshedding and erratic power supply, which threatened their cultivation of IRRI-Boro.

The irrigation crisis persists in about 1.10 lakh hectares of cropland under Barindh Project due to the power supply problem. Erratic supply and voltage fluctuations have been causing serious damages both to the irrigation machinery and electric gadgets of the farmers.

Agitated farmers demanded the project authorities to ensure regular power supply to their pumps to facilitate irrigation. They held separate demonstrations in front of the project offices across the district demanding power.

The farmers of Mahadevpur thana have stopped paying the power bills of the Rural Electrification Board for the last few months as they said the supply was not contributing to their agriculture production.

Barindh Project sources said that during the current season, the authorities had fixed a target to bring 1.62 lakh hectares of land under IRRI-Boro cultivation in Naogaon, Rajshahi and Nawabganj districts. Of the total land, 1.20 lakh hectares had already been brought under the programme and cultivation was going on in additional 30,000 hectares, they added.

The production target of paddy was fixed at 6.5 lakh tons. The sources said there were 6,852 deep and 5,808 shallow tubewells in the project area and the lands are mainly depended on irrigation. Of these, some 3,280 deep

tubewells were power driven, said the sources. For smooth running of these power-driven tubewells, there is a need of 24 MW electricity in Naogaon, 24 MW in Rajshahi and another 15 MW in Nawabganj districts.

But the highest supply in the region was only 10 MW. On the other hand, 440-volt electricity is needed for running the deep tubewells, but the available supply is only 380 volts.

Due to the voltage fluctuations, a huge number of electric gadgets including electric motors, starter and main switches went out of order during the last few weeks causing heavy damage to the farmers.

Source in the project area claimed the loss of gadgets due to the voltage fluctuation was about Tk 1.25 crore in the project area.

Local district administrations have already contacted the higher authorities in this regard saying that due to erratic power supply agitation among the farmers is gaining momentum, which is causing embarrassment for the officials.

Meanwhile in Shariatpur, cultivation on about 50,000 acres of land is seriously being affected due to faulty power supply.

Official sources said that over 500 deep tubewells in the district went almost out of operation due to this problem. Agriculture officials feared that if the situation continued, only half of the production target could be achieved during the current season, though a favourable climatic condition has been prevailing this year for crop production.

In many places of the district, the croplands have developed cracks due to want of water for long, farmers said. The government sunk about 800 deep tubewells across the district to ensure irrigation to about 50,000 acres of land following the adverse affect of Farakka Barrage. But serious problem in power supply has been hampering the irrigation this year threatening heavy production shortfall in the district, usually considered a crop surplus area.

Farmers said the power supply hit them at a time when irrigation to the fields was most necessary. The average loadshedding here was about 18 hours in a day, they added.

They have been deprived of even a drop of water in their fields during the last few weeks, but irrigation was an urgent necessity at present for better yield.

In many places, they said, the crops in the field are being dried up due to lack of irrigation water. Most of the drivers of deep tubewells have been avoiding their respective pump stations out of fear that the farmers might attack them.

Agriculture Extension Department officials expressed their frustration saying that all the efforts they put on for better production would become futile due to the power problem. They said last year there were better production in the district, but this year the chance was bleak.

30,000 tornado victims of Panchagar in misery

PANCHAGAR, Apr 2: Some 30,000 people, who were hit by the tornado on Friday, are now passing their days under the open sky in a miserable condition, reports APB.

Heavy rain on Wednesday morning added more woes to the sufferings of the homeless people, who sources said, got very inadequate succour from the authority.

Office of the Deputy Commissioner here told that according to primary estimates some 82 villages, 3,634 dwelling houses and 29,027 people of Sadar and Tetulia thanas were ravaged by the tornado. Besides, some 1,083 people were injured.

As many as six medical teams and some 122 BDR personnel have been working in the tornado-torn areas to help mitigate the sufferings of the afflicted people.

State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Satish

Chandra Roy visited the affected areas.

Former Ministers Jamiruddin Sirkar MP, and Mirza Golam Haiz visited the affected areas and demanded adequate relief and medicare for the victims.

They said the government should allocate three bundles of corrugated iron sheets to each affected family and sufficient fund for rebuilding their homes on an emergency basis.

Officials said some 15 mounds of dry food, 24 metric tons of rice and Tk 1.32 lakh had already been distributed among tornado-hit people.

Besides, Red Crescent and Muktiyoddha Sangsad are distributing dry foods among the victims.

The locals alleged that the distribution system of the gratuitous relief is not satisfactory.

3 telephone exchanges in deplorable condition

MADARIPUR, Apr 2: Three telephone exchanges here have been facing setback causing untold sufferings to the subscribers, reports UNB.

The exchanges are located at Kalkini and Rajoir thana headquarters and at Tekerhat river port.

Two magnate boards of the two exchanges at Rajoir and Tekerhat port were set up in Pakistan era and were not renovated during the last 28 years.

The boards are virtually on the verge of collapse due to lack of necessary repair, said the T&T sources here.

Getting connection through the operators at Tekerhat exchange is very difficult because the number of cords there is very limited and the jacks are in bad shape.

Subscribers alleged that they can not get through the exchanges at the river port and at Rajoir thana and have to depend on Madaripur telephone exchange for making phone calls to other parts of the country.

Gopalganj and Faridpur trunk lines from Tekerhat exchange remained in bad shape for the last three to five years due to lack of repair.

Besides, the capacity of the board at Kalkini telephone exchange is 30 line while it is now serving 50 subscribers.

Only two pairs of cord out of the total five pairs are now operative, which has been badly hampering the services to the subscribers. Sources at the exchange said that the service is

being continuing with the ring bells.

As the board is faulty, the conversation is hardly audible, alleged the subscribers.

Another report from Gopalganj said telephone subscribers are facing trouble as the district telephone system is in deplorable condition owing to the technical faults and alleged corruption by a section of the employees.

The subscribers alleged that they are facing problems due to frequent absence of dial tone, extraneous noise, sudden malfunctioning and wrong connection. Over billing is also another headache for them.

A section of T&T employees maintain secret understanding with many dishonest telephone subscribers who pay them monthly bribe in order to get a small amount of bill. They also earn extra money by providing unauthorized connections and allowing illegal Public Call Office (PCO), it is alleged.

No significant improvement has been made in the exchange even after the introduction of auto dialing. The exchange continues to function on makeshift arrangement.

Telecommunication experts said, the number of connections should be 20 per cent less than the capacity of a board to ensure trouble free operation. But the number of connection here is 100 per cent, which partially accounts for the problems faced by the people.

Meanwhile, about 500 applications for new telephone connections from bonafide consumers including government and semi-government offices have been lying pending since long. But no provision has yet been made to enhance the number of channels.

Moreover, officers and employees of T&T have increased the rate of their bribe money, informed some local sources.

Currently, the exchange has 33 incoming and 18 outgoing channels, but most of these remain inoperative for lack of trained personnel in the switch room.

350 bags of rice looted in Khulna

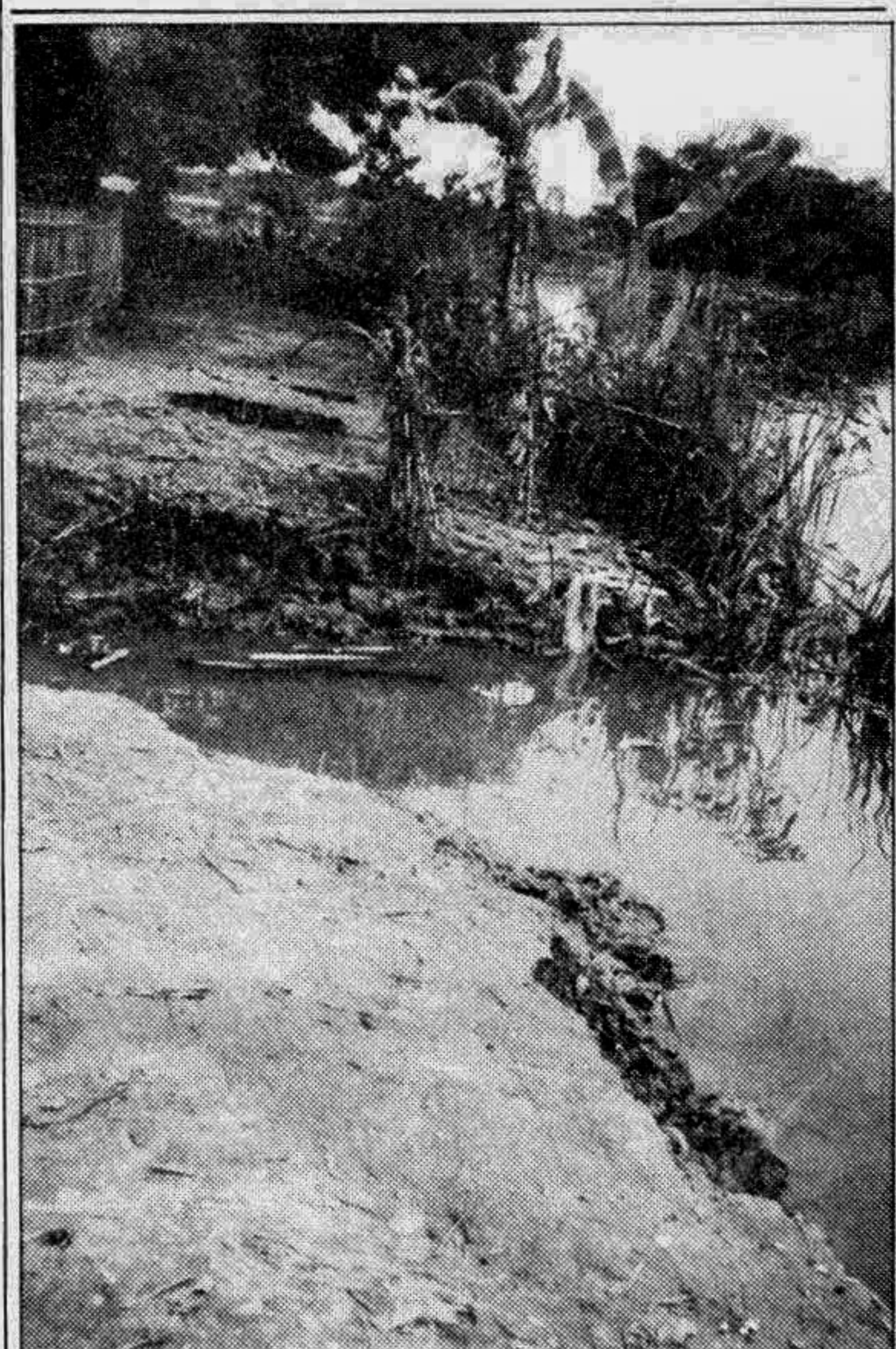
From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Apr 2: Extortionists looted 350 bags of rice from an engine boat in the Bagmara river at Rupsha thana here yesterday evening, police said.

The armed extortionists also severely beat Abu Bakar Bepari, the owner of rice bags, when he refused to pay Tk 50,000 to them as toll, police added.

Bakar was going to Khulna Kalibari Ghat from Sharpur of Batighata to sell the rice to wholesalers.

A case has been lodged with Rupsha police in this connection. However, none was arrested till filing of this report.



PABNA: Mathpara Road which was damaged by the last year's flood is yet to be repaired. — Star photo

Level of arsenic contamination of groundwater alarming

PANCHAGAR, Apr 2: The level of arsenic contamination of groundwater has been detected at 10-11 micrograms in different areas in greater Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Khulna districts, reports APB. Scientists of Atomic Energy Commission and Public Health Engineering Department who tested tubewell waters in the areas said arsenic contamination beyond 05 micrograms is harmful for human health. This causes various diseases. They said they tested tubewell water samples in 37 bordering thanas in the districts.

Diarrhoea claimed 5 lives in Barguna last month

BARGUNA, Apr 2: Diarrhoea that broke out in an epidemic form claimed five lives including two girls and attacked 1,980 people in the district during the last month, reports UNB. In the last 24 hours ending 9-30 am on Thursday, 105 people were affected by the water-borne disease, official sources said. The deceased were identified as Lily, 5, of Rudpan village in Patharghata thana, Rina, 3, of Kakchira village, Shah Alam, 44, of Jalimegha village, Azhar Helan, 70, of Kaimegha village. Health Department sources said 38 medical teams have been working in the affected areas to combat the menace. But another sources said the disease has taken serious turn due to shortage of doctors in many health complexes. A medical official said the number of diarrhoea patients is increasing day by day due to change of climatic condition and increase of salinity in the seawater. Civil Surgeon office informed that 4,50 lakh oral saline packets, 20 sacks of bleaching powder, 75,000 water purification tablets have been stored to combat the growing menace.

Krishak League leader hacked to death in Khulna

KHULNA, Apr 2: A leader of the ruling party backed Krishak League was hacked to death by some unidentified assailants at village Mallikpur under Rupsha thana here today. Wahidur Rahman, 35, an activist of Krishak League Rupsha thana unit, was killed at 9 in the morning when he was going to Sener Bazar, witnesses said. The assailants fled the scene by a three-wheeler van chanting slogans in favour of an outlawed party. The victim's father filed a case with Rupsha police in this connection.