

News snaps

130 incidents of violation of HR

COMILLA, Apr 5: Some 130 incidents of violation of human rights (HR) took place in the country in the month of last February, reports UNB.

The Comilla based Gana Sahajya Sangstha, a non-government development organisation, in a survey based on newspaper report and other sources, showed that cases have been filed in 76 incidents while the accused were caught only in 21 cases. According to the survey report, during the period, 32 rape incidents were occurred. Of the victims — seven were killed after violation. Besides, 21 incidents of kidnapping, four acid throwing, 22 murders, including four related to dowry, seven incidents of women repression, four women and child trafficking and 15 incidents of child murder took place.

Because of inability to pay bribe

MAGURA, Apr 5: A candidate for the post of teacher who stood first in selection test failed to secure the job allegedly for being unable to pay a fabulous amount in bribe, reports UNB.

The Managing Committee of Beral High School announced the appointment of Tahurul Islam who stood first in the test. But finally he was deprived and the offer of the job went to the candidate who finished seventh in the test. Tahurul Islam sought redress of his grievance from the Deputy Commissioner who ordered an inquiry into the allegation by magistrate Abul Kalam Azad. He also filed a suit upon which Assistant Judge Ranu Bilquis Akhtar issued order restraining the managing committee of the school to appoint teacher and to explain why Tahurul Islam would not be given the job.

Oath taking ceremony

KISHOREGANJ, Apr 5: LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman recently pleaded for enhancement of administrative power and efficiency of the local government institutions including the pourasabhas for the sake of taking up plans for execution at the local level, reports BSS.

Rahman who is also the deputy leader of the Jatiya Sangsad was speaking as the chief guest at a function marking the oath taking ceremony of the newly elected Bhaishah Pourasabha chairman and commissioners. The Deputy Commissioner of Kishoreganj, ASM Forhad, administered the oath taking ceremony. Presided over by the out-going chairman of the pourasabha Md Mominul Haq, the function was addressed, among others, by the newly elected chairman, Fakrul Alam Akkas.

Tk 30cr development project

RANGAMATI, Apr 5: Rangamati unit of women's affairs directorate plans to implement a project at a cost of Taka 34 crore to develop the socio-economic condition of the women living in Chittagong Hill Tracts in the next fiscal, reports BSS.

Construction of a special training centre for women, fruits and food processing centre, three cold storage of large sizes and a residential hostels are included in the project, now awaiting approval of ECNEC, an official of the directorate told. Provision for training on handlooms, raising poultry birds, horticulture and agriculture were prescribed in the training centre for women, who will be selected on ability basis from the three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban, official said.

Harvesting of wheat begins

CHUADANGA, Apr 5: The harvesting of wheat of the current season in all the four thanas of Chuadanga district has just begun. According to an official source, during the current season a total of 48,000 tonnes of wheat is expected to be produced in the district, reports BSS.

Of the total wheat, 11,000 tonnes may be produced in Chuadanga sadar thana, 17,000 tonnes in Alamdanga thana, 13,000 tonnes in Damurhuda thana and 7,000 tonnes in Jibanigar thana. A total of 22,260 hectares were brought under wheat cultivation in all the four thanas. The harvesting of wheat in the district will be continued till last week of April.

Agri-loan disbursed

NETROKONA, Apr 5: Under the post flood agricultural rehabilitation programme of the government, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Khaliyari branch disbursed Taka 62 lakhs and 21 thousand as agricultural loan among 866 farmers of Khaliyari thana, a down-stream area in Netrokona district during the period of last six months, reports BSS.

An official source said, the agricultural loan was disbursed among the farmers to enable them to overcome the losses caused by last devastating flood.

Elected representatives take oath

COMILLA, Apr 5: The oath-taking ceremony of the newly-elected pourasabha chairman and members of Barura Pourasabha was held at thana parishad auditorium on March 25, reports BSS.

Parliament member Abdul Hakim was present as the chief guest. Additional district magistrate Mesbah Alam administered the oath to the elected chairman and members. Thana Nirbahi Officer ASM Ahmad presided over the function. Chairman Mobarak Hossain Meer and a total of 12 members, including three women, took oath as the first elected representative of the new pourasabha of Barura.

Relief distributed

MANIKGANJ, Apr 5: Manikganj Red Crescent Society distributed 12,000 kg rice, 3,000 kg pulse and other household goods among 600 poor families of sadar thana on the independence day, reports BSS.

Sheikh Mozhar Uddin, Deputy Commissioner, was present as the chief guest during the distribution of relief materials. Each family got 20 kg rice, 5 kg pulse, one tub, one saree and a pot.

Fish rotting for want of ice

BARISAL, Apr 5: Load-shedding in the 21 districts under Barisal and Khulna divisions has assumed a serious proportion, affecting agriculture, industry and fishery, reports APB.

Power Development Board sources said the districts' daily requirement is about 360 MW, but the supply is only 190 to 200 MW. Power units can not be run optimally because of mechanical problem in some of the units, they said. Fishermen and fish traders said thousands of maunds of fish are rotting every day in the coastal districts of Barisal, Patuakhali, Bhola, Barguna, Jhalakathi and Pirojpur as they can not preserve fish for want of ice.

Fisherman missing

MUNSHIGANJ, Apr 5: One fisherman was beaten and hurled into the river Meghna following a clash between two groups of fishermen over fishing near Nayanagar in Gazaria thana recently police said, reports BSS.

Boby of the victim, identified as Swapan, son of Lalit Mohan Burman of Nayanagar could not be traced till Wednesday, according to police. Meanwhile, one person was arrested for his alleged involvement in the incident. Search for the missing body is continuing.

Krishi Mela concludes

CHANDPUR, Apr 5: A five-day Krishi Mela concluded at Khumar Bari in Chandpur District Agriculture Extension Office recently, reports BSS.

The mela, organised by district agriculture extension office, Chandpur was inaugurated by Md Bazulur Rahman, Deputy Director, Agriculture Extension, Comilla region recently. About 30 stalls of different agricultural products were set up in the mela. A large number of people visited the mela everyday.

Allocation for school's uplift

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Apr 5: Government has allocated Taka 86,65,000 for the development of schools and madrasahs which were damaged in the devastating flood last year, reports BSS.

These damaged institutions needed repair. According to official sources, the repair and renovation work of the institutions are in full swing.

Man killed in road accident

SHERPUR, Apr 5: A man was killed and six others were injured when a truck ran over three rickshaws at Sazbarkhila in the town on Wednesday morning, reports UNB.

The deceased was identified as Kala Mia, 40. Police said, the accident occurred at 7.15 am when one of the wheels of the Kamapur-bound speeding truck disintegrated and smashed the rickshaws leaving seven people injured. Kala Mia succumbed to his injuries on way to hospital. Of the injured, four have been admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital while two in Sadar Hospital. The truck driver however, managed to flee the scene.

Clashes leave three injured

JHENIDAH, Apr 5: Three people were murdered following a series of clashes between activists of Workers Party and Sramajibi Mukti Andolon in Shailakupa thana recently, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash erupted at Mirzapur village after abduction and killing of a Sramajibi Andolon activist named Gani member. Andolan activists allegedly killed Mantu Biswas at Mirzapur village after body of Gani member was recovered. Workers Party members allegedly abducted Gani member.

Acute scarcity of drinking water in districts

By Staff Correspondent

Scarcity of drinking water in different district towns and rural areas has turned acute due to various reasons.

Our Kushtia correspondent reports: Acute scarcity of pure drinking water is causing serious problems in rural areas of the district.

Existing number of tubewells in six thanas are quite inadequate to meet the demand of the people. A large number of tubewells are lying out of order for the last two years causing untold sufferings to the villagers. Innumerable number of tubewells are out of order due to damage of filter pipes beneath the earth, leakage in the pipe and more tubewells are lying out of order for want of spare parts.

Plans for re-sinking the choked up tubewells were initiated by the concerned authorities, but it is yet to be implemented. Adequate fund is needed for re-sinking and repair of the tubewells.

A Netrokona correspondent says: An acute scarcity of pure drinking water is prevailing in 10 thanas here causing immense sufferings to the people.

According to Public Health Engineering Department, Netrokona, out of 22,288 hand tubewells 21,443 have become totally inoperative in 10 thanas due to sharp fall in the underground water level. As a result, people are suffering a lot. They have to bring water from rivers, ponds and ditches for domestic use.

Besides, water supply in the pourasabha area is not sufficient. The total requirement of water in Netrokona Pourasabha is 6.10,000 gallons, while at present only 2.80 lakh gallons are being supplied by the pourasabha authority for about 45,000 people.

Katli, Mainpur, Pukuria, Gajipur and Malni areas in the pourasabha have not yet been brought under water supply scheme though the pourasabha was upgraded to a

first class one in 1996. Due to absence of water supply and insufficient 'tara' pumps people of this area are suffering a lot.

When contacted, Executive Engineer of Public Health Engineering Department Mahabubul Alam told that 9,321 shallow tubewells have become inoperative completely due to fall in the underground water level. As a result irrigation of IIRI-Boro lands is being hampered seriously in Sadar, Purbadhala, Barhaila, Atpara and Durgapur thanas.

A total of 845 tubewells damaged by the last years flood have not yet been repaired for want of spare parts, it is learnt.

UNB from Panchagarh reports: About two lakh people of the district are being deprived of drinking water due to lack of tubewells in their villages posing threat to the public health.

Sources in the local Public Health office said that out of the total 1,168 villages in five thanas of the district, some 583 villages lack tubewell for supply of pure water.

The people living in these villages are totally dependent on surface water including that of pond, ditch, canal, river and other water bodies. They are to depend on the water of these sources for drinking purpose and other household needs.

Besides, the sources said that 170 different types of tubewells out of the total 7,285 here remained out of order. Due to this, about 17,000 people of 12,700 families are being deprived of drinking water.

Another APB report adds: Ground water level in the northern districts had fallen to the lowest in 11 years, official sources said.

The level has fallen by 30 to 40 feet and tubewells sunk up to 100 feet can not lift water at places, sources in the Public Health and Engineering Department (PHED) and Agricultural Extension Department (AED) told this correspondent.

The present drought like

situation and rapid fall in the water levels of rivers due to Farakka-effect for long have caused the abnormal fall in ground water level," a PHED official said.

At least 32,000 tubewells have become inoperative. PHED could sink only 30 per cent of its 18,000 new tubewells in 16 fall in the underground water level, the official said. Ground water level, the official said seeking anonymity. As a result, some 50 lakh people have not been getting supply of safe drinking water.

The problem is acute in Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Naogaon districts where local people said, nearly 80 per cent of indaras (wells) have dried up.

Irrigation is being greatly affected due to the situation, an AED official said.

UNB from Shariatpur says: Most of the tubewells here have been sealed off because of severe arsenic contamination. As a result, acute scarcity of drinking water has been prevailing.

The crisis cropped up in January last as a group of experts visited the district and identified some 523 tubewells in the town as highly arsenic contaminated.

Red marks were put on these tubewells and the people have been asked not to use the ground water of these tubewells.

All the contaminated tubewells are now out of operation and according to the experts the risk involved in using water of other tubewells is also high.

The town dwellers alleged that the Public Health Engineering Department or Health Department is not taking any step to overcome the scarcity of pure water.

UNB from Sunamganj reports: Ignoring public health consideration, municipal authorities here has been continuing the supply of contaminated water to the town dwellers since long.

People are forced to use the water contaminated with mercury even after its detection three years ago, said the local subscribers of water supply.

Mercury was detected in the water supply at the end of 1995, but the supply was not stopped or measures were not taken to purify the water from the dangerous element.

Contaminated water is still being used in hotels and restaurants particularly at Rail Station Road and Old Bus Station Road causing various intestinal diseases to the people.

Some hotel owners said they were compelled to serve the customers with the supply water, as there is no tubewell near this shops.

Experts and doctors said that the consumption of mercury contained water might cause holes in the stomach and many other complications.

Presently, 50,000 people receive the water from the Municipal Water Supply Project, which was completed in 1988 at a cost of Tk 80 lakh.

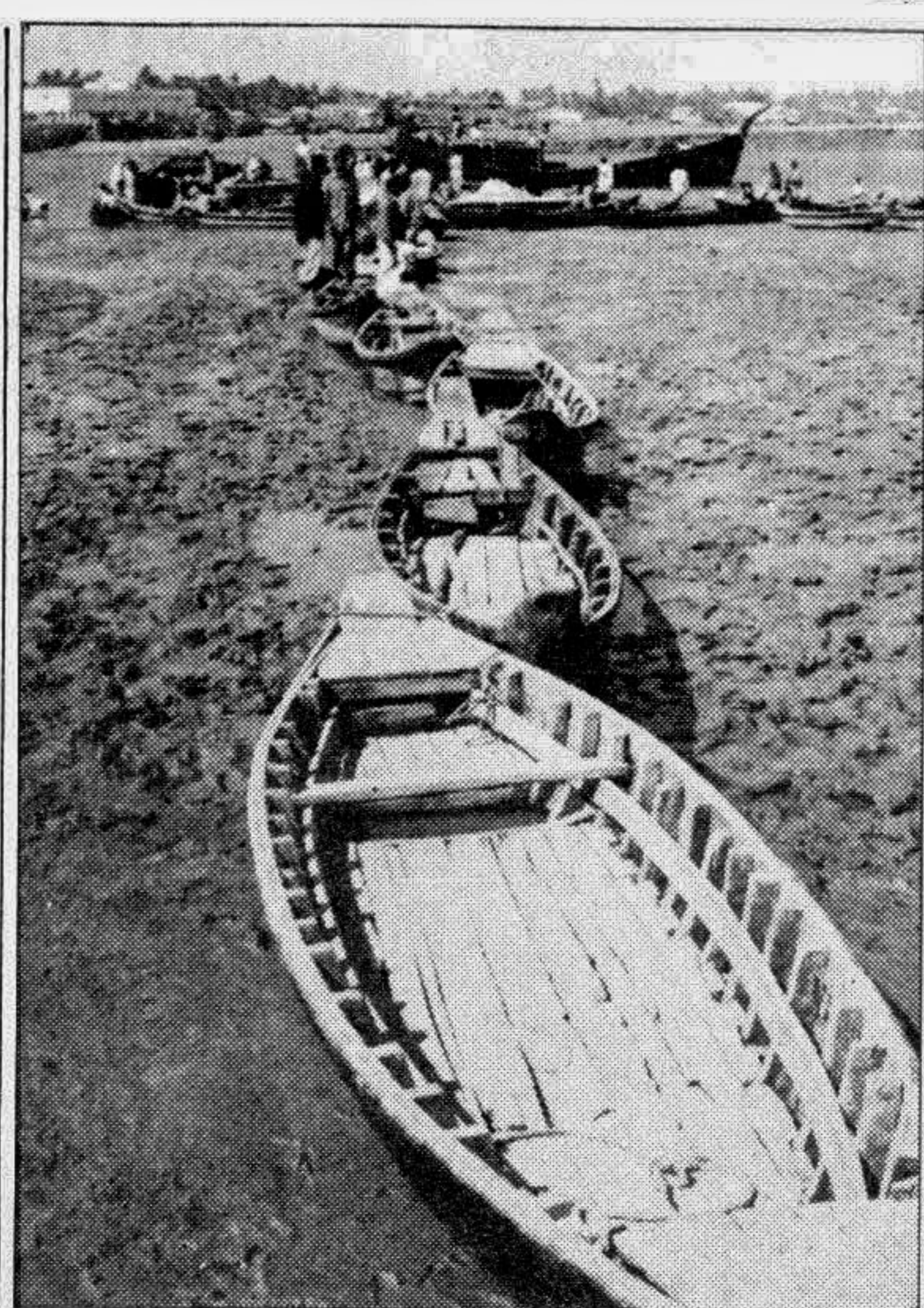
Public Health Engineering Department supplied the water till 1992 and later handed over the responsibility to the municipal authorities.

An Engineer of Engineering Department of Municipality said water is being supplied from the layer of sweet water found about 100 feet to 400 feet depth of the ground in different parts of the pourasabha.

Mercury was detected in water at the end of 1995, but the supply was not stopped. Rather the authorities continue to provide the subscribers with the contaminated water.

Local Health Department officials warned the people of the danger of using contaminated waters and suggested them to use it in the domestic purposes instead of drinking.

The subscribers are becoming increasingly reluctant to use this water and urged the authorities to take immediate steps to solve the problem.



COX'S BAZAR: This 'Boat Bridge' is used by the tourists from home and abroad to get on board a trawler for visiting Moheshkhali from here during ebb-tide. — Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Armed robbery: 2 hurt in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Apr 5: Two persons were seriously injured in an armed robbery at about 10-30 am on Saturday near Primary Training Institute (PTI) in Kotwali thana here.

They were soon admitted to sadar hospital in a critical condition.

Police and eyewitnesses said, some young men attacked four rice traders of Fakirhat thana with lethal weapons and snatched away a sum of Taka 1,20,000 from them at gun-point.

The injured rice traders are Mujibor Rahman, 35, and Shukha Ranjan Biswas, 40. They were going to Khulna bazar along with two others namely Afzal and Mofazzal for buying rice for their shops at Fakirhat.

While going away by rickshaws, the muggers fired shots and exploded four hand bombs in presence of hundreds of people and six on duty policemen.

A case has been lodged with Kotwali thana in this connection.

Besides, another armed dacoity was committed on early Friday morning in the house of Abdul Hannan Khan, Manager of Khulna branch of Shilpa

Bank.

According to victim, a group of six masked young men looted money and gold ornaments at gun-point from his house at Gobarchaka in Sonadanga thana.

Dacoits exploded two hand bombs while escaping in a white microbus. A case has been lodged in this connection.

It may be mentioned here on rise in the city in recent time.

Price of LP gas up in C'nawabganj

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Apr 5: Price of LP gas has shot up in the local markets ahead of the Eid festival, reports UNB.

Gas dealers are selling gas cylinders into black markets to earn extra money before the Eid.

At present, a cylinder of LP gas is being sold between Tk 500 and Tk 600 against the government rate of Tk 281.

Some consumers alleged that police, bureaucrat and the authorities remain silent in this regard as they get it at lower rates.



GAIBANDHA: Local people have been demanding for a long time a concrete bridge instead of this bamboo bridge connecting between Rakhon Bruze union and Gobindaganj thana sadar. — Star photo

Incomplete bridges hamper traffic movement in places

By Staff Correspondent

Construction of some bridges have been left incomplete for a long time hampering traffic movement in those districts.

UNB from Netrokona says: The construction of a bridge over the river Kangsha near Zaria-Zangjali bazaar in Purbadhala thana here has been left incomplete for the last five years.

Sources said, government sanctioned Tk four crore for constructing of the 700-feet long bridge over the river with a view to developing communication system between sadar, Purbadhala, Kalmakanda and Durgapur thana.

The railway line of Zaria could not be expanded up to Durgapur in absence of the bridge.

People of Durgapur thana cross the river Kangsha by ferry. The bus services could not be developed for the same reason.

People of Mymensingh and Netrokona districts have to face similar difficulties while intending to go to Durgapur thana and other border areas of Kalmakanda thana.

The authorities concerned started constructing the bridge

three years back, but after making seven pillars, they left the work.

When contacted, the Executive Engineer of the Roads and Highways Department here told that of the allocated money, government provided only Tk 1.20 crore and the rest amount has not been given as yet resulting in the suspension of work of the bridge.

A report from Noakhali says: The construction of Sifonia Bridge of Dagon Bhuiyan thana in Feni on Noakhali-Feni road is yet to be completed since its beginning three years back hampering the movement of vehicles as well as pedestrians.

Roads and Highway Department sources said, M/s Raique Enterprise was entrusted with the responsibility to construct the bridge, the main means of road communication between three districts of greater Noakhali and other parts of country, costing Tk 3.72 crore on June, 1996.

Two years time was fixed for constructing 1,600 feet connecting roads on both sides of the 290 feet long and 32 feet wide bridge, it said.

Earlier, the constructing

firm worked in other sectors by stopping the work of the bridge two times on various excuses after receiving the order to complete it.

Currently, the work has been kept suspended for the third time for the causes unknown to the people.

When contacted, the Executive Engineer of Feni declined to talk on the issue while the contractors of the project said that it has become difficult to carry on the work for them due to the increasing demand for tolls by the official and unofficial extortionists.

Another report from Rajbari adds: Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has started the construction work of a bridge at Mashalia ghak in Baliakandi thana.

Under the Rural Development Project-4, the work on the 48-meter bridge, involving nearly Tk 47 lakh will be completed by May this year, official sources said.

After completion of the work, about 20 kilometre distance between the district and thana headquarters will be lessened.

Our Staff Correspondent from Barisal reports: Construction work of Dapdapia Bridge on Barisal-Patuakhali regional highway is expected to be started within December next.

An amount of Taka 108 crore has been allocated for construction of this bridge over the Kirtonkhola river. The Government of Kuwait will bear its cost.

Of this allocation a huge amount of money will be spent for 14-kilometre long bypass road including the construction of the approach road.

According to the official sources, the bridge will be 860-metre long and 12-metre wide. Construction work of this bridge is expected to be completed within the next three years, official sources said.

After completion of this a long felt demand of the local people will be solved. Communication system will be much easier then to and from Barisal, Patuakhali and rest of the country.

BSS from Barisal says: Doanka and Shikarpur bridges on the Sandhya river on Barisal-Dhaka highway at the gateways of Barisal divisional town will be constructed.

Handloom industry of Jhenidah facing closure threat

From Delwar Kabir

JHENIDAH, Apr 5: The weavers of the district have been facing manifold problems.

As a result the handloom industry has been facing a closure threat. The weaver community are locally known as 'Tanti'. People of this community are skilled in making lungis, sarees, bed-sheets, napkins, towels, mosquito nets and other things. They are involved in this trade for centuries in Bhagabannagar, Pobahati, Kalicharanpur, Surat, Kanchnagar, Halidhari and some other villages in Jhenidah sadar thana, Jhaudia, Habibpur, Dahakula, Achintapur, Harora, Sarutia, Barura, Kesnagar, Shitali, Dalipur, Noupura, Shastibar, Fulahari, Bhatai, Tribeni and some other village in Saikupa thana. Parbotipur, Hari-nakundu, Joradahi and Bhobanpur villages in Harinakundu.

The female members of weaver community were also active workers with their male counterparts. But now the entire community has been facing untold sufferings. This trade was the only means of their earnings. This correspondent visited some handloom-based areas of the district to see the actual condition of the weavers.

Islamuddin, 37, Siddique Ali, 39, Anwara Khatun, 30, and Nazima Khatun, 33, all of village Noupura in Saikupa thana said that the trade has become completely a losing concern.

They said that the price of yarn, colour, inputs had increased. On the otherhand price of their products have fallen. A weaver can hardly produce 32 pieces of towels with the yarn

for Taka 1,900. It would take at least 10 days which would further cost at least Taka 600 more as Taka 60 have to be paid each day for a day labourer who is engaged in production. At least Taka 2,500 would be required for the produce. From the production sale proceeds would not exceed Taka 2200.

The weavers categorically expressed their survival is at stake.

Monirul Islam, 23, a weaver of the same village said that the

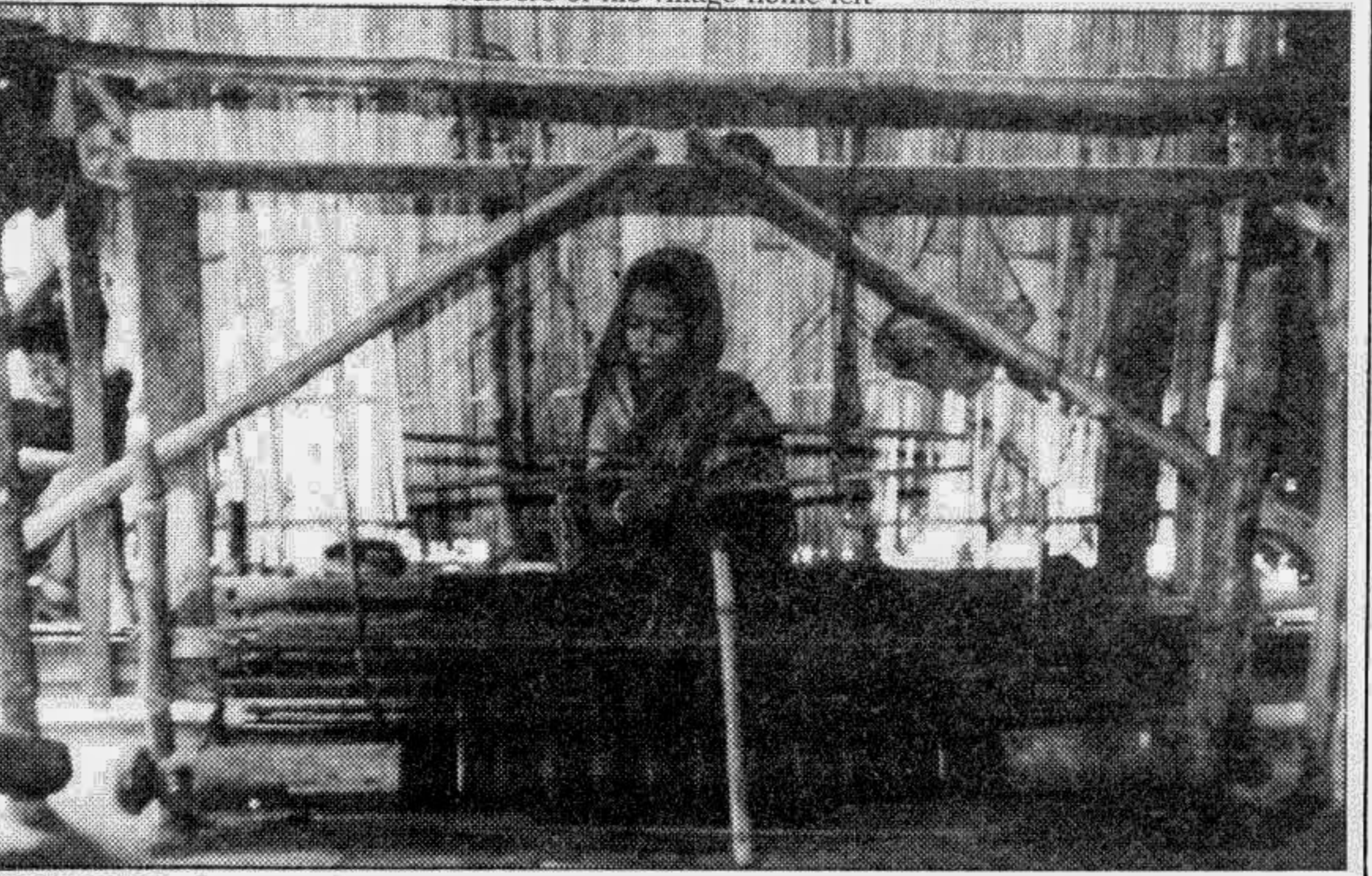
weavers of Jhenidah, Magura and adjoining districts were poor and they were not engaged in preparing finished goods like the weavers of Pabna, Baburbhat, Tangail and other weaving industry based areas.

As a result the poor weavers were the victims. He said that he had left his village home and now working in a weaving industry at Enayetpur in Pabna district which helped him to survive hardly.

He informed that most weavers of his village home left

their forefather's occupation. They are now engaged in rickshaw-pulling, working in farm land and other jobs.

Anwara Khatun and Nasima Khatun said once peace and happiness prevailed at the homes of weavers. But those days are gone and they have been passing their days in uncertainty. They expressed that only interest-free loan or loan on least interest could save the weaving industry from extinction.



JHENIDAH: One woman weaver running her handloom at village Noupura in Saikupa thana. — Star photo

Man chopped to death in B'baria

From Our Correspondent

BRAHMANBARIA, Apr 5: In presence of many people, a group of miscreants chopped one person to death in the northern side of Brahmanbaria railway station on Friday morning.

According to police and public sources, Shahnaz Khan alias Mahub, 27, son of late Fazlur Rahman Khan alias Edon Mia was going to the station from his home at Kazipara by a rickshaw. When he reached the station premises, a group of miscreants numbering eight to 10 armed with arms and lethal weapons attacked him.

They dragged him down from the rickshaw.

Later on, to make sure his death one of the gangs shot him on the back.

They disappeared from there easily. Nobody dared to come to the spot to save the victim. He was rushed to Brahmanbaria sadar hospital, but the doctor on duty declared him dead.

His autopsy was done at the same hospital.

It is worth mentioning his father Fazlur Rahman was also killed by miscreants about 25 years ago.

His uncle Muklesur Rahman filed a case at Brahmanbaria sadar thana accusing eight persons including Helal Mia.

AL leader gets 2-year RI for misappropriation

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Apr 5: Awami League leader and former Upazilla chairman Alauddin was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for misappropriation of money of Godagari upazilla.

The court also fined Taka 61,000, in default, to pay the money he will have to suffer another term of six months' imprisonment.

Rajshahi Divisional Special Judge A T M Fazle Kabir gave the verdict on Wednesday.

Alauddin was an MP candidate from Awami League in the last parliamentary election. He has now been suffering imprisonment for seven years for misappropriation of money in another case.

Farmer stabbed to death

NAOGAON, Apr 5: A farmer was stabbed to death in Mohadevpur thana here as he allegedly failed to pay the price of the shallow tubewell he bought from a local shop, reports UNB.

The victim identified as Mannan, 32, of Sultanpur village in Uttargang union of the thana, reportedly bought on credit a shallow machine from the shop of one Jahurul a few days ago.

Mannan failed to pay the due in time, which infuriated the shop owner. On the night of March 18, he attacked Mannan with a knife and inflicted several stab injuries. The victim died on his way to the hospital.