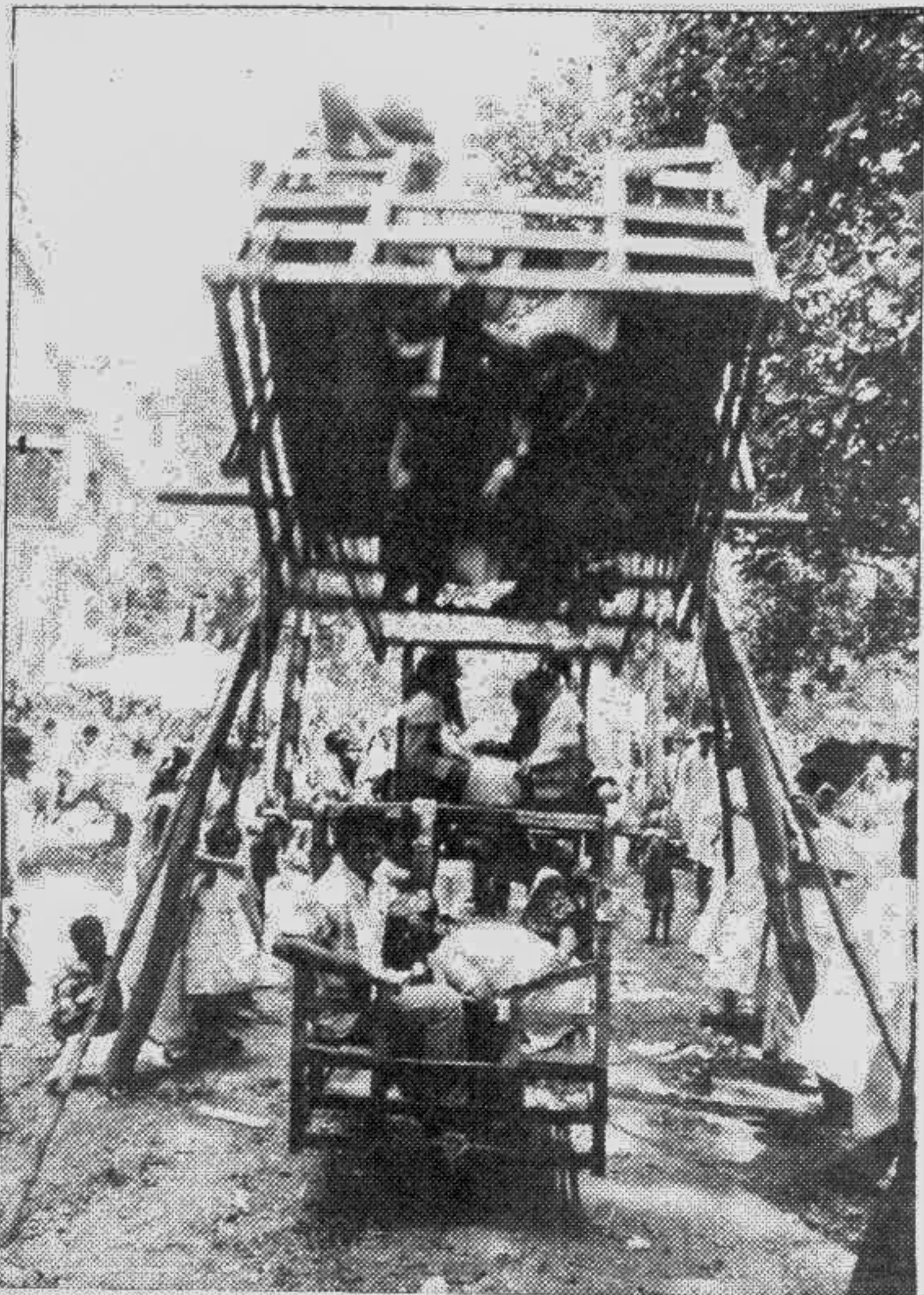


Pahela Baishakh celebrations arrested in frames by Zahidul I Khan



Esho Hey Baishakh



Dreary Days, Endless Nights

From Delwar Kabir

JHENIDAH: Steps to curb terrorism curb activities in Jhenidah district have virtually become a farse as the people of the district wake up from bed hearing the news of killing, rape, dacoity, Snatching, suicide or other crimes. It has become a regular feature to the people of Jhenidah district. Besides, number of arms recovered and arrest of miscreants including outlawed activists were not reported satisfactory although the authorities sought to curb the anti-social activities through different media.

In last three months at least 14 persons were killed in Jhenidah sadar thana, Saikupa, Harinakunda, Kaliganj, Kotchandpur and Mohespur thanas of the district. Of them a college student was shot dead when police opened fire on innocent people demanded punishment of five policemen who were allegedly helped the road decoits to flee committing dacoity in two trucks on March 17 last.

On the day of Eid-ul-Azha three persons were shot dead and another chopped to death in Saikupa and Harinakunda thanas of the district.

According to police, Jahirul Islam, 34, of village Bhabanpur in Saikupa thana and a regional leader of outlawed, Sramajibi Mukti Andolon was shot dead at about 10.30 am when the inmates opened fire on him at village Shabajpur. They were taking food in the house of Ataur Rahman after Eid-ul-Azha prayer. Immediately after the killing the supporters of dead Jahir set 34 houses of nine families on fire and properties worth about Taka 25 lakh burnt to ashes. The owners of the houses could not save anything except their clothing they wear. The innocent villagers ran here and there but nobody came forward as the followers of Jahir threatened them not to stop fire.

Abdul Goni, 39, a UP member of Mirjapur union in Saikupa thana was shot dead in early morning of Monday. Police said, Goni was caught from a tobacco curing house and shot. Later his body was recovered from village Subaspar in Harinakunda thana. Reason behind the killing could not be known.

Serajul Islam, 39, Alias Montu Master of village Sahabpur in Saikupa thana was shot dead by the river bank at village Chakiarpota in Harinakunda thana on same morning. Police said, some unknown armed men picked up Montu on a motorbike and shot him to death on spot at about 7.30 am.

Abdus Sattar, 45, of village Kalipara in Saikupa thana was chopped to death in the noon of the same day by his villagers.

Police said, the feud originated following distribution of meats of sacrificial.

Separate cases were lodged with respective thanas and the bodies were sent to morgue for postmortem. No one was reportedly arrested, police said.

Each and every corners of the district have become spots for collecting tolls by the outlawed activists who collect tolls showing firearms in the name of parties.

Activities of outlawed parties came to a shape after independence war in 1971. Biplabi Communist Party (BCP), Purbanga Communist Party (BPCP), Sarbahara party, Ganabahini of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and some other parties started their activities in the country which had a suitable environment in Jhenidah and surrounding Magura, Narail, Kushtia and Chuadanga districts. After the death of founder of the party Abdul Haque, BCP was divided in two groups like BCP (previous) and Sramajibi Mukti Andolon. Sramajibi is now active in the district. Sarbahara party, Ganabahini of JSD activists could not control the activists well which helped to form many small groups led by local leaders. In all thanas the activists of all the outlawed parties are more or less working forming their own "Bahini".

According to police report, 57 killing were reported in 1993, 39 in 1994, 55 in 1995, 65 in 1996, 57 in 1997 and 74 killing in 1998.

But the actual number of killing was about double as the number of killing was about 110 instead of recorded 76, 17 persons were killed in Saikupa thana, 38 in Jhenidah sadar thana, 22 in Harinakunda thana, 17 in Kaliganj thana, eight in Kotchandpur and eight in Mohespur thana.

Regarding variation in number of killing this correspondent talked to some officials of police department. They said that they were not in a position to record all the cases for want of evidences. As a result, a good number of cases were recorded as unnatural death (UD) cases.

According to government records, the number of killing is alarmingly increasing in the district breaking all the previous records.

When this correspondent visited some crime-prone areas of the district talked many villagers and came to know that the main reasons behind the increasing of outlawed activities was killing. When someone of a family was killed by some armed men, the brother, son or any male member of the dead join another rival group for revenge.

In different areas of the district the number of toll collectors have increased alarmingly. Not only the outlawed activists or their followers, but also the

activists of ruling and opposition both parties are allegedly involved in doing the same here. Entrepreneurs like contractors, new house builders, shopowners, high officials, NGO workers are victims to them. A good number of young men some times carry pistols or revolvers during toll collection. Some responsible officials said that at least 10 per cent of their salaries are allocated for the heroic sons (?) who had been claiming themselves as partymen.

Law and order situation in the district has fallen despite government initiatives. A trend has drawn attention of the people of Jhenidah, Saikupa and Kaliganj towns. If there is any clash or apprehension of clash, the activists carry ramda, chapati, kirich, chinese axe, sarki, lathi, ballam, dhal, iron rods etc. Even some of the leaders carry hand bombs and pistols, shutter gun or revolvers. It is a matter of great fun that the law enforcing agency men follow them only when the processions parade the towns.

On March 30 and 31 two rival groups of the chairmen of Umdepur union and Dudsar union under Saikupa thana faced each other with dhal, fala, ramda, kirich, ballam, sarki, brick-bats etc. to establish their influence in the locality. Eyewitnesses said, at least five thousand persons took part in the clash. Left about 40 persons injured.

Ansars without Weapons

From Abu Ahmed

SATKHIRA: More than one hundred fire arms and one thousand rounds of cartridges have been looted from different places of south-western districts of the country during the last 10 years.

During this period four police personnel were killed by the armed terrorists in these looting incidents. The law-enforcing agencies were not able to recover the looted fire arms. So with these looted fire arms, the activists of outlawed parties engaged themselves in killings and terrorist activities in the region.

The latest looting incident with fire arms occurred at Akij Jute Mill at Noapara in Abhoy Nagar thana of Jessore district. At the dead of night on January 19, a group of armed terrorists entered into the mill premises and attacked the on duty Ansar personnel in commando style. They broke breaking the locks of the godown of fire arms of the mill and took away twelve 303 rifles and 155 round of cartridges. One Ansar personnel and two guards of the nearby mills were also injured when

A good number of the followers of some parties allegedly carry firearms on the nose of the police and policemen were the witnesses there. They could not arrest anybody who carried firearms. Some villagers said that the lives in remote villages have become misery for them. The innocent people are compelled to provide "partymen" with food and shelter regularly. A good number of rural people reportedly sold their trees, lands, animals etc. to meet the demands of the outlawed activists. Of the victims who have enough money had already settled in urban areas.

14 lakh people of the entire district are the playthings in the hands of the outlawed partymen here. Minority cast poor people are the worst victims there, said an 82-year-old man at village Kamalnagar in Saikupa thana.

When contacted the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Jhenidah told that they had arrested 17 miscreants and recovered 19 firearms and 41 rounds of bullets in last three months. 18 police pharees including four outposts were set up to maintain law and order. Cooperation of common people including political personalities and elite was badly needed to curb the anti-social activities. Farther more, manpower, technical and other facilities for the police should be increased, SP added.

Silt, Sediment Retard Rivers

From Our Correspondent

G AIBANDHA: The water resources in the northern areas of the country are drying gradually following high siltation of the bottom surfaces. Every year a huge amount of silt and sediment get deposited into the water basin which result in the loss of the usual depth and becomes dry during the month of March-April.

Nearly 55 different rivers, over 300 irrigation canals and about one lakh 25 thousand ponds in northern areas are facing shortage of water during the dry season. The rivers and water pools could not accommodate enough water for using in crop fields as well as pisciculture.

Northern areas are extremely flood prone where farming of aman crop is almost uncertain. So farmers in the northern belt largely dependent on the Irri-Boro crop. Now it has become the staple crop in the areas. Unceasing irrigation is an important factor for growing Irri-Boro crop. As such, farmers use water from available sources like rivers, pools, canals and ponds. Besides, during Irri-Boro farming innumerable irrigation equipment have to be used without considering any space limitations. So water reservoirs, in-

cluding ground water are affected seriously.

According to an assessment about 75 per cent of Irri-Boro fields are being irrigated with mechanical equipment like deep and shallow tubewells and remaining 25 per cent crop fields are provided with water from natural resources through manual processes. As such water pools become dry prior to maturity of the Irri-Boro plants.

There is also large scale siltation of nearly 55 large and small rivers including Teesta, Brahmaputra, Padma, Karatola, Dharla, Atrai which are gradually losing their navigation depth. With sharp decreasing of water level many shoals develop along the river channel and cause hindrances in the movement of water transport.

The level of ground water also comes down sharply following unplanned use of irrigation equipment. Farmers have been sinking deep tubewells in their plots in a scattered way and ignoring this fact.

This season due to a long-standing drought the farmers get in trouble because they cannot arrange fuel for operating irrigation equipment in the hard days following a crisis.

Curse Dispelled, Smiles Restored on Scared Faces

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH: "We all have been treated at Saikupa thana health complex and getting relief from the evil disease. All the drugs are free there and we did not have to spend any money for our treatment," said Dharendra Nath and four other members of his family at village Kamalnagar in Saikupa thana of the district.

Dhirendra Nath Mandal, 63, a farmer saw a spot on his forehead about one year ago and saw some local physicians but in vain. Then he was motivated by a health worker who suggested that Dhiren see a government doctor at Saikupa thana health complex, and he did it accordingly.

Earlier Dhiren's wife Saraswati Rani, 57, saw some flashy balls on various parts of her body and saw a good number of private and government doctors in the locality and at Magura Government Hospital. At first the nodules were detected about 20 years back. Most of the doctors were of opinion that she was affected by allergy and treatment continued for a couple of years. At last she was taken to Saikupa thana health complex (THC), and the physicians after examining her, revealed that she had been suffering from leprosy. Hearing the word leprosy she was disheartened. The physicians convinced her that leprosy was no longer a killer as she, had known earlier. She returned home with some medicine free of cost.

Sonaton Mandal, 22, the eldest son of Saraswati, felt about one year back that a spot was developing on his lock-jaw and saw some local physicians. The physicians said that he was allergic and gave him some drugs. But the spots did not go, rather the same was developing more and more. Finding no other alternatives, his mother advised him to see the physicians at Saikupa THC. Now he is under treatment.

Saraswati's youngest son Dipul, 16, is the other victim of the same disease. About one year back when he was working at a field at noon, he felt some fleshy nodules on his back and later some spots on his forehead, chest and back. Immediately he met the physicians at the same THC and the authorities administered drugs after examining him.

The only daughter of Dharendra and Saraswati is

Radha Rani, 14, who is in class seven in a local school. She felt that her jaw was reddish and disshaped. Her family saw the physicians. They said that she was also suffering from leprosy. Radha was also provided with drugs from the THC.

Talking to all the affected members of the family it was learned that all the drugs were supplied by the government free of cost and the health workers kept in close contact with the patients regularly.

The family members said they had earlier thought leprosy was a disease which had no treatment and pushed the patients towards certain death. But they found the idea quite wrong. They have now been getting relief from the disease gradually, the family members added.

When this correspondent talked to the members of the family, they said that at first they were afraid of the disease. But the notion dissolved when the health workers convinced them that the disease actually was not harmful if proper treatment was taken. Since then, the villagers started cooperating with the poor family and accepting them in society.

Dr Ataur Rahman Rezi, Thana Health and Family Planning Officer (THFPO) of Saikupa THC said that leprosy was a chronic infectious disorder that leprosy was no longer a killer as she, had known earlier. She returned home with some medicine free of cost.

Dr Rezi said that they examined about 250 patients at his THC and only 10 patients were detected as leprosy. He said that it was a multi-drug treatment (MDT) and they had been treating the patients with Rifampicin, Clofazimine and Dapsone. All the drugs were given free of cost. If a patient was treated with MDT regularly for two years he would be cured.

The THFPO further informed that a leprosy eradication programme was started long ago in the country but they started the campaign extensively on "leprosy week" in February this year. People of the area were conscious about their health and all the leprosy had been collecting drugs regularly, the THFPO further informed.

one sub machine gun (SMG), seven rifles and 95 round of cartridges. One platoon commander of the Railway Ansars was killed and forty passengers including seven railway police were also injured by the terrorists.

On September 4, 1998, twenty four fire arms and 600 round of cartridges were stolen by a group of miscreants from the Malkhana of Khulna Collectorate. Their rifles were looted by the dacoits from a launch in the river Banshkhal in Khulna the same year.

On December 30, 1997, a group of armed terrorists attacked Ansars who were on duty in the Sundarban Sea Food at Rupsa in Khulna district and looted away six rifles including fifteen round of cartridges. One rifle was also looted from Rampal branch of Sonali Bank in Bagerhat district during the same year. Seven fire arms were also looted from the police camp of Raruli in Khulna district in the same year.

At the dead of night, on August 25, 1997, a group of armed terrorists attacked the railway police and Ansar personnel who were on duty in the Simanta Express near Kaligonj in Jhenidah district and looted

Bazar branch in sadar thana in Jessore district were also looted by the terrorists and one security guard was also killed by the terrorists at Bhairab Bazar branch of BKB during the same year.

In 1992, two rifles were snatched away by armed terrorists from Bablatola, Jessore pousava, and three police personnel were also injured in the incident. In 1991, one rifle was looted by the terrorists from Halsia in Kushtia district and in 1990, seven rifles were looted away by the terrorists from Ansarbaria in Kotchandpur thana in Jhenidah on May 9, 1988, the activists of outlawed Sarbahara Party raided Sreepur Police Station in Magura district. More than 50 firearms and a huge quantity of cartridges were also looted.

Incident of rifle looting is occurring every year in this region.

Law enforcing agencies are yet to take any initiative in this regard, including recovery of the firearms. According to the police, the activists of outlawed parties are the perpetrators.