

News snaps

Tua village gets electricity

COMILLA, Apr 25: Comilla Palli Biddut Samiti-2 has brought village Tua in Nangolkot thana under electrification network, reports BSS.

Local MP Zainal Abedin Bhuiya inaugurated the electrification programme in Tua village on April 21 as the chief guest. Connections were given to 200 residents.

Deputy Commissioner Chowdhury Ghulam Maula, General Manager Palli Biddut Samiti-2 Nizamuddin Ahmed ADC (education) M Yunusur Rahman, TNO Bikash Chandra Saha were present at the inaugural function.

Price of firewood goes up

PANCHAGARH, Apr 25: The price of firewood has shot up abnormally in all the 16 districts of the northern region, reports UNB.

The crisis of firewood has been worsening day by day creating inconveniences to the people of the region especially poor and medium classes. Firewood at different hat-bazars in the districts of the region is being sold at Tk 65-70 per maund. It is being used in the brickfields in all the districts, including Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Bogra, Gaibandha, Sirajganj, Pabna, Natore, Joypurhat, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj and Rajshahi. Besides, bamboo is on the verge of destruction as its roots are used extensively in the brickfields.

Tribal people offer prayers

BANDARBAN, Apr 25: People of Bomang tribe offered special prayers on Saturday to protect the people of the district from natural calamity, reports UNB.

Bomang king Aung Shu Pru led the 'nadi' prayer at 8 am in the Sangu river. About 300 tribal people took part in the prayer. Government Parishad Chairman Mong Kya Ching Chowdhury was also present. The prayer is held with the leadership of their king as per rule of the tribal society each year.

Farmer kills machine operator

SHERPUR, Apr 25: An angry farmer killed a man as he failed to supply irrigation water to the paddy field on Thursday morning, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Moslem, 55, a shallow machine operator of Mazhpara village in sadar thana. Police sources said the incident occurred as Suruz Ali, a farmer of the village, hit Moslem on his head with a stick for his delay in supplying the water. The victim succumbed to his injuries on the same day after he was admitted to the sadar Hospital. It was learnt that the operator could not supply the water due to erratic power supply.

Naogaon jail construction work

NAOGAON, Apr 25: Construction work of the jail here started seven years ago could not be completed yet due to lack of fund, reports UNB.

The construction work of the prison started in the fiscal 1992-93 involving a cost of Tk 12.54 crore under the supervision of Public Works Department. The authority concerned allocated Tk four crore 37 lakh and 57 thousand for implementation of work at the end of the last fiscal year. Seventy per cent work of barrack for the prisoners and 75 and 65 per cent work of Hospital and Warders' Bhaban respectively were completed with the amount. But the rest work could not be implemented due to shortage of fund.

450 tonnes wheat for 31 projects

NATORE, Apr 25: A total of 450 tonnes of wheat have been allocated for 31 projects under the rural infrastructure development in the district during the current financial year, reports APB.

The wheat will be used to construct and renovate roads, culverts and for earth-filling work in school playgrounds and bazaars.

Decomposed body recovered

KHULNA, Apr 25: Police recovered the decomposed body of a young housewife from Daulatpur Senpara area in the town on Saturday, reports UNB.

They said some miscreants picked up Rabeya, 19, from the house of one Abdul Jabbar in the area and allegedly stabbed her to death and left her on a roadside. Local people informed the matter to the police and they recovered the body from the area at 11 am. Her body was sent to the hospital for autopsy.

Five-year pilot project to alleviate poverty in 3 dists

ISRAWARDI, Apr 25: The government has taken up a five-year pilot project in Pabna, Natore and Sirajganj districts to develop agriculture and alleviate poverty without destroying the environmental balance, reports APB.

Work on the 102 crore taka project, financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), has already begun under the supervision of the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), official sources said.

A superintendent engineer, 3 executive engineers, 18 assistant engineers and 48 sub-assistant engineers have already been appointed for implementing the first phase of the project, Panasi Programme.

The project, covers, Sirajganj, Raiganj, Shahzadpur, Kazipur, Ullapara, Kamarkhand, Tarash, Chouhali and Belduchi thanas of Sirajganj district, Pabna, Atgharia, iswardi, Chatmohar, Bhanguara, Faridpur, Bera, Santhia and Shujanagar thanas of Pabna district, and Natore, Bagatipara, Singra, Lalpur, Gurudaspur and Baraigram thanas of Natore district.

One of the most important aspects of the programme will be improvement of the irrigation system.

About 25 'control structures' will be erected, 30 reservoirs will be dug along with distribution system, 250 deep tubewells will be sunk, 500 irrigation channels will be dug and 75 km canals will be renovated under the project.

The other aspects will be crop diversification, afforestation and fish and poultry farming. Mechanisation of agriculture will be promoted by distributing 250 power tillers among farmers.

About 100 km roads will be built or developed in the rural areas and about 6,000 farmers will be given training on agriculture and fish cultivation. About 20,000 women will also be imported training.

Twenty-four demonstration farm will be set up to train farmers on latest agricultural techniques and crop diversification and 24 nurseries will be set up to provide improved variety of plants.

Smuggling on the rise

PANCHAGARH, Apr 25: Smuggling activities have increased alarmingly at the frontier areas in greater Dinajpur district, reports UNB.

A large number of smugglers in 23 thanas of Thakurgaon, Dinajpur and Panchagarh districts have become rich overnight. They are doing their illegal trade with the connivance of a section of law-enforcing agency men, local people alleged.

Huge contraband items worth millions of taka are being smuggled into the country from India through frontier areas, including Banglabandh, Jagadal, Shaban, Meeragar, Garinabari, Tunrhat, Kalia-ganj, Chilahati of Panchagarh district.

The areas also included Haripur, Ranishankoil, Baliadangi, Ruhia and Lahiri of Thakurgaon and Bagra, Rani-nagar, Udarni, Zapatiali, Deshma, Achintapur, Bhaigar, Daudpur, Ghasria, Mongla, Norpara, Hili, Atapara, Chehra and Faria of Dinajpur districts.

The smuggled goods are rice, paddy, lentil, kerosene, pesticide, chemical fertilizer, saree, cloth, firearms, bye-cycle, spare-parts of motor-bike, tyre-tube, rickshaw-van, sugar, onion, cattle, play-things, phensidyl, and various other drugs, including heroin and hemp.

On the other hand, various goods, including coin of one taka, hilsa fish, shirt, pantaloon, gold, copper, silver, brass, aluminium, shallow machine are being smuggled out from the country.

Water crisis in C'nawabganj

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Apr 25: Acute scarcity of water has been prevailing at the Nawabganj municipality area here since long causing suffering to the dwellers, reports UNB.

The pourashava authority is supplying water only one-fourth of the requirement of the people. Besides, drought and hot spell have intensified the problem.

Municipality sources said a total of 16 deep tubewells have been installed to supply pure water among the dwellers. Of the tubewells, four were sealed due to arsenic contamination and the other six could not be operated due to lack of power connection.

The dwellers are getting the supply of 7.2 lakh gallons of water against the total requirement of over 28 lakh gallons daily.

Besides, there are 1,675 hand driven tubewells, of which 50 are lying inoperative. It is also very difficult to get water from the ground, as the water level has fallen alarmingly.



MAGURA: As hot spell continues across the district, the vendors are doing brisk business selling hand fans. —Star photo

**Outlaws kill 19 in Jhenidah in 3 months
4 more police stations to be set up to fight crimes**

JHENIDAH, Apr 25: Jhenidah has been declared a 'crime zone' and four new police stations will be set up in the district soon to contain crime, highly placed sources in the district police said, reports APB.

Nineteen people were killed by outlaws in the district in the last three and half months. The number was 114 last year, they said.

Of the 19, seven were killed in Harinakunda, four in sadar, four in Shalkupa, two in Kalliganj and two in Kotchahddpur thanas.

Most of the victims were workers or supporters of different political parties.

They were killed by members of outlawed parties like Sramajibi Mukti Andolan, Gana Foj, Purba Banglar Communist Party, Revolutionary Communist Party, and Gana Bahini. There are also some other gangs involved in criminal activities.

Apart from extortion from members of the public, which is rampant throughout the district, crimes like kidnapping, abduction, rape, arson and dacoities have become an everyday affair.

The sources said, the underground parties and gangs have divided the district into several areas. The Sramajibi Mukti Andolan, a breakaway faction of the Revolutionary Communist Party, controls the eastern part of sadar thana and parts of Maheshpur, Kotchandpur, Kalliganj, Harinakunda and Shalkupa thanas through the Gana Foj, its armed cadre.

Bidhan Bahini controls the eastern part of Kalliganj thana while the Pankhiraj Bahini, Santu Bahini and others control the southern part.

The Moutoo Bahini controls the southern part of the Harinakunda thana while the Gana Bahini, Siddique Mollah Bahini, Krishna Bahini and others hold sway in the eastern, western and northern parts.

None dares to complain against their activities for fear of reprisal. Many of the affluent persons have moved to safer places from the district as they are the main targets of the outlaws.

Nearly half of the 68 Union Parishad chairmen in the district have left their village homes and shifted to Jhenidah town for safety.

The armed gangs operate openly in the district despite the frequent 'special operations' by police.

When contacted, SP of Jhenidah Khoda Baksh Chowdhury told this correspondent that police can do not cope with the gangs as they do not have adequate manpower, enough modern arms and speedy vehicles.

Many crimes are not reported to police for fear of reprisal, he said.



NETRAKONA: A procession was brought out in the town to mark the International Women's Day. —Star photo

Fund shortage hits credit scheme for poor women

NETRAKONA, Apr 25: The District Women Affairs Department has taken up a credit scheme to make the unemployed young women and distressed women aged between 18 and 35 years self-reliant.

Under the project, these women are being imparted training on handicraft, sewing, dress-making, family planning, basic healthcare, sanitation, and volunteer services.

The activities of the credit programme are being carried out in four thanas of the district with the direct supervision of the Netrakona district Women Affairs officer Parveen Sultana. But now the programme is being affected for want of necessary fund and acute shortage of staffs.

There are 29 women organisations in four of the ten thanas of the district. The department has started their programme in Mohonganj, Barhatta, Kendua and Atpara thanas since 1997 and they have been using five women training centres including Netrakona district Women Development office for the purpose.

The government has given financial and technical assistance to the trainees. A total of 190 women are taking part in the training programme.

Each trainee gets 30 kg of and Tk 90 as allowances per month during the training period. On the other hand, Tk 25 is deposited every month against each of the trainee with the saving account of a bank.

With a view to rehabilitating the distressed women, Tk 3.15 lakh have already been distributed as loan among the member of 29 samity. And Tk 1.5 lakh will also given as loan to the members this month.

Parveen Sultana told this correspondent that the credit programme have been playing an important role in improving the financial condition of the distressed and unemployed women of the district. By this time, those who have completed six months training have been provided with financial assistance for setting up handicraft units and poultry farms.



NETRAKONA: Participants in the training programme run by the District Women Affairs Department. —Star photo

Drought, loadshedding hit Pabna economy hard

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Apr 25: A five-month long dry spell coupled with unprecedented loadshedding and low voltage power supply have forced agriculture, industry and other economic sectors to sustain huge losses in this district.

December 1998 was the last time the district witnessed rain. Power and drinking water supply have become acute in the district as all the rivers, canals, and other water bodies have dried up, barring the Padma and the Jamuna.

Surface water level has dipped alarmingly making drinking water almost unavailable in the rural areas. Over 60 per cent of the tubewells in the villages are inoperative. Underground water level has also fallen abnormally, rendering over 40 per cent of the shallow tubewells in the district out of service.

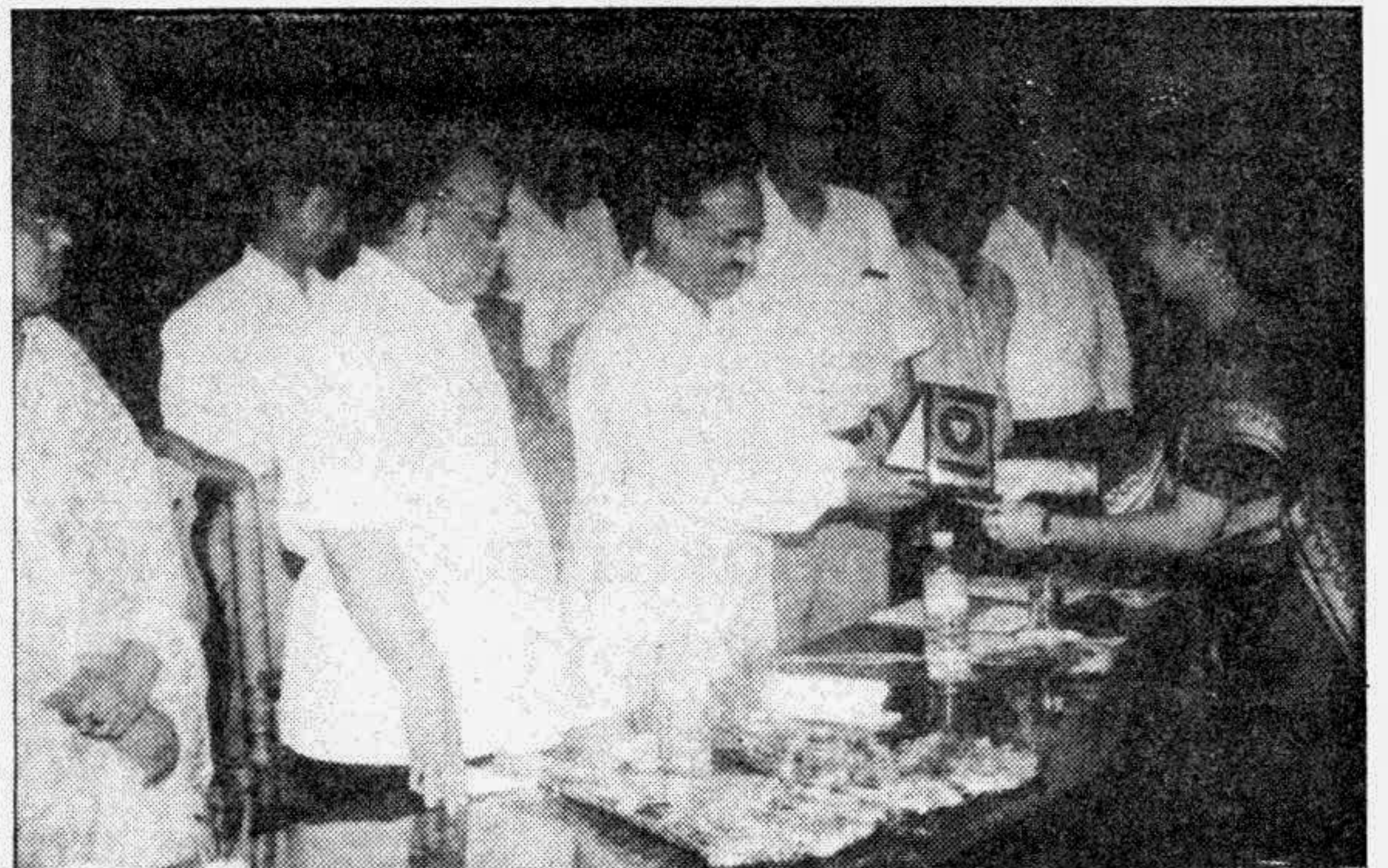
Irrigation of land has also been badly affected by the low level of surface and underground water. Standing crops in Pabna sadar, Santhia, Syanagar, Ishurdi Chatmohar, Bhan-gooro and Faridpur thanas have mostly gone gray. The authorities have, however, started taking alternative measures for saving the crops.

The Agriculture Extension Department of Pabna district has urged the farmers to dig the land deep and resink the shallow tubewells with longer pipe for facilitating pumping of water. According to the authorities, the normal depth for shallow tubewells in the district is 31 yards but the level of underground water has, on an average, gone 38 to 40 yards deep. A section of farmers have responded to the call and dug deep wells and sunk the shallow tubewells again.

Besides, the unprecedented drought has severely affected river communication in the district. Boats are no more plying. A small number of ferries are plying in the Jamuna and the Padma following heavy dredging. But other river vessels are hardly found sailing in the rivers. As a result, riverine trade and commerce in both the urban and rural areas have been badly affected.

Innumerable cracks have again appeared in the crop lands and the soil has become rock hard. 'Even if rain comes within a week, it would not be easy to prepare the land for cultivation, because for that at least three weeks' time would be required,' said Abdull Khaleque, a cultivator of village Bhulbaria under Sauthri thana.

Meanwhile, people started offering special prayer for rains.



MYMENSINGH: State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Prof Dr M Amanullah giving away prizes to the winners of various competitions organised on the occasion of the National Education Week at the Bangladesh Agricultural University recently.

Bumper boro crop likely

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Apr 25: Bumper production of boro paddy is expected in all the four thanas of Chuadanga district during the current boro season.

In this season, a total of 27,500 hectares of land have been brought under boro cultivation in all the four thanas of the district - Chuadanga sadar, Alamdanga, Damurhuda and jibannagar.

Of the total land under cultivation, 5,145 hectares are in Chuadanga Sadar thana, 8,980 hectares in Alamdanga thana, 7,575 hectares in Damuhuda thana and 5,800 hectares in Jibannagar thana.

It is expected that over one lakh metric tons of boro paddy will be produced in the district against its target of 82 thousand metric tons. The harvesting of boro paddy in the district has just begun.

Arsenic poisoning affects 75 pc villagers at Benagati

From Our Correspondent

BHERAMARA, Apr 25: About 75 per cent villagers at Benagati in Alamdanga thana are suffering from various diseases due to arsenic contamination of groundwater, reports APB.

The condition of 40 per cent of them is serious. Women and children are the most vulnerable to arsenic poisoning, according to a survey done by some NGOs.

No step has yet been taken either by the government or any NGO to provide them with treatment facilities or alternative sources of water.

There are only 29 families in the small village, possibly the worst affected in the southern districts.

Two of the villagers, Mohi-uddin, 26, and Abdul Quddus, 28, are now undergoing treatment at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. Their condition is critical, family sources said. Five villagers have already died from arsenic-related diseases, villagers said.

The arsenic contamination of groundwater has taken a serious turn, affecting 1.5 crore people in 16 districts of the country.

Drought likely to hit mango production

From Our Correspondent

BHERAMARA, Apr 25: The persistent drought is likely to affect mango production this year in 12 thanas of greater Kushtia district, reports APB.

Owners of mango gardens were optimistic about a bumper yield because of favourable weather in the first two months of the season.

But lack of rainfall in the last one and a half months has dashed their hopes as buds in many gardens have been damaged in the Sadar, Kumarkhali, Khoksa, Chuadanga, Damurhuda, Jibanagar, Gaugni, Meherpur and Daulatpur thanas, the owners said.

Horticulturists told this correspondent that the hot and dry weather will not only decrease the yield but also make the size of mango smaller.

Tk 525 cr remain outstanding BKB disburses Tk 200 cr among farmers in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Apr 25: Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) has disbursed about Tk 200 crore among the farmers of eleven southern districts — six under Barisal division and five under greater Faridpur region in the Barisal Agriculture zone during the current fiscal year.

The rate of loan disbursement is 84 per cent while recovery rate is 64 per cent, official sources said. The district-wise break-up of loan distribution is as follows: Tk 22.03 crore in Barisal district, Tk 19.31 crore in Bholu, Tk 12.91 crore in Projpur, Tk 6.09 crore in Jhalakati, Tk 20.57 crore in Patuakali, Tk 16.20 crore in Barguna, Tk 21.32 crore in Faridpur, Tk 14.68 crore in Gopalganj, Tk 15.51 crore in Madaripur, Tk 20.75 crore in Shariatpur, and Tk 17.98 crore in Rajbari.

The loan has been given to the farmers for development and setting up dairy and poultry farms, and cottage industries, and to implement irrigation projects, poverty alleviation programmes and for generating self-employment opportunities.

Meanwhile, Tk 525 crore farm loan given by the Bangladesh Krishi Bank is yet to be recovered from the farmers in eleven southern districts under Barisal Agriculture zone.

To realise the amount, nearly 11,000 certificate cases have been lodged against the farmers in default.

Armed clash in Mehndiganj: 50 hurt

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Apr 25: At least 50 people were injured in a series of armed clashes between two rival groups at Gobindapur under Mehndiganj thana of the district on Wednesday.

Witnesses and police said the clash between the supporters of Kamal Mollah and Altaf Sarder erupted at about 9 am as both the groups wanted to tighten reign over the fish loading and unloading centre in Kalliganj bandar area.

They used ramdao, firearms and other lethal weapons during the clashes. Nine people sustained bullet wounds. Fourteen injured were sent to the Barisal Medical college Hospital in critical condition.

Later, police arrested 20 people from the area.

Summer crop cultivation programme in Mymensingh

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Apr 25: A massive programme for summer crop cultivation has been taken in greater Mymensingh by the Agriculture Extension Department (AED) during the current season.

According to AED sources, a total of 91,159 hectares of land will be brought under aus cultivation in 12 thanas of Mymensingh district. Of the total land, 36,850 hectares have been earmarked for local variety and 58,309 for high yielding variety (HYV). The department has fixed the production target at 1,07,477 metric tons of aus paddy.

The officials said that the crop will be cultivated in 13,220 hectares of land in Sadar thana, in 12,260 hectares in Muktagachha, in 15,960 hectares in Phulbaria, in 13,360 hectares in Trishal, in 12,310 hectares in Bhaluka, in 14,163 hectares in Gafargao, in 13,710 hectares in Nandail, in 13,590 hectares in Ishwarganj, in 8,540 hectares in Gouripur, in 8,560 hectares in Phulpur, in 7,077 hectares in Haluaghat and in 6,600 hectares of land in Dhubaura.

The AED official also said that some 350 hectares of land will be brought under aman cultivation in this season in the four thanas of the district. Of the land, 220 hectares are in Gouripur, 65 hectares in Phulpur, 55 hectares in Nandail and 10 hectares in Sadar thana.

Meanwhile, a massive programme for cultivation of summer vegetables and groundnut has been taken in greater Mymensingh region.

One killed in Chuadanga road accident

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Apr 25: One person was killed and five others were injured in a road accident on Chuadanga-Jessore road under Jibannagar thana of the district on April 19.

The victim was identified as Sadar Ali, 25, son of one Tahajjad Ali of village Krishnapur. The injured persons are Sufia, 35, Sathi, 12, Monika, 15, Aulad, 8, and Sonu mi, 25.

According to police, the driver of a Kalliganj-bound passenger bus lost control over the steering when he was giving side to a speeding truck which was coming from the opposite side. And the bus ran over Sadar Ali, leaving him dead on the spot.

The bus also skidded off the road and fell into a ditch. Five passengers of the bus were also injured.

The injured persons were taken to Jibannagar thana health complex for treatment.