

News snaps

Lawyers boycotting magistrate's court

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, July 24: Lawyers of the local bar association have been boycotting the court of Abdus Salam, magistrate first class for an indefinite period since July 15.

They took the decision in a meeting on July 15 following misbehaviour of the magistrate with the advocates. They demanded his removal to somewhere else. They also submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner.

Commissioner murder: Two arrested

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA July 24: Kushtia police arrested Laitu and his brother Poltu from Dhaka on July 15 in connection with the murder of Abdus Samad, commissioner of Kushtia Poursabha who was killed by gun shot in the night of September 8, 1998 at his Kalisankarpur house.

Police arrested them on the confessional statement of arrested Mizanur Rahman alias Sakil alias Harial son of Murad Ali alias Mobarak Ali of Kalisankarpur. Mizanur Rahman was arrested on June 29 last.

3 posts of police admin vacant

NARAYANGANJ, July 24: While law and order situation continued to deteriorate in the town, three important posts of police administration have been lying vacant for long, reports UNB.

Though there are 4,000 mills and factories, including 200 garments factories in the industrial town, the post of Assistant Police Super (ASP, Industrial belt) has been lying vacant since January 13, 1997. Official sources said the post of senior ASP (Admin) has been lying vacant in the headquarters, hampering administrative activities. Besides, the post of additional police super is also lying vacant. As the three posts remain vacant, the Police Super is performing the important duties of the police administration alone.

Pisciculture in orphanage farm

TANGAIL, July 24: Madhupur Barabaid Orphanage has taken up a programme to culture 60,000 fish fries in its pisciculture farm in this season to earn at least Taka three lakh, reports BSS.

The fish are Ruhi, Katla, Mrigel, Silver Carpe and Grass Carpe. The orphanage sources said that the fries, set free last year in this large pond, were washed away by last flood. Subir Kishore Chowdhury, Thana Nirbahi Officer, Madhupur allotted twenty-five tonnes of wheat to raise the bank of the pond. The work has already been done.

Founding anniversary

CHAUDANGA, July 24: The fifth founding anniversary of Chaudanga Theatre, a local group theatre organisation, was held recently at Srimonto town hall here, reports BSS.

Deputy Commissioner M R Chowdhury attended the function as the chief guest. Presided over by Keramat Ali Biswas the function was addressed, among others, by Chaudanga Press Club president Washinuar Rahman Joardar and general secretary Wallur Rahman. A play titled Kahar written by Ahsan Habib Titu and directed by Richard Rahman was staged on the occasion.

39 projects implemented

NETRAKONA, July 24: Netrakona Zila Parishad has implemented 39 projects from its own resources at a cost of taka 1,08,37,641 in 1998-1999, reports BSS.

According to an officials source, Zila Parishad also implemented 28 projects at an allocation of taka 90,29,600 under the ADP. The work of the projects contributed to the overall development of the district.

IPRA seminar

MADARIPUR, July 13: A day long seminar on the effect of child marriage and the risk of child-birth organised recently by the International Project for Rural Advancement (IPRA), a non-government organisation, at its office here, reports BSS.

Thirty newly-married husbands and wives participated in the seminar. Physicians and social workers conducted the seminar. The participants have been advised to adopt family planning devices and encourage others to adopt the same for a happy family life.

Poor healthcare facility

From Our Correspondent

NETRAKONA, July 24: Inadequate medicare facilities for pregnant mothers in the hospitals have been compelling 90 per cent of them to give birth in their houses at great risk.

According to a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) survey, of them 80 per cent are also being deprived of the services of midwives. It has been found that, some 2.4 per cent pregnant mothers of the district, are getting health care facilities during delivery period. The survey quoting allegations of mothers and locals, said, lack of specialist doctors and other facilities are the causes behind this situation.

Power supply situation reviewed

BARGUNA, July 24: A meeting on power supply situation in the district was held here on Wednesday, reports UNB.

The meeting, chaired by State Minister for Power and Energy Rafiqul Islam, discussed the problems in power supply sector. Emphasising the importance of electricity for overall socio-economic development, the meeting decided to take immediate steps to ensure uninterrupted power supply. Deputy Minister for Food Dharendra Debnath Shambhu, acting Power Secretary GM Mondal, PDB chairman Kamrul Islam Siddiqui, concerned officials, DC and pourasabha chairman of Barguna and other professionals were present.

New electric lines to be constructed

MAGURA, July 24: As part of electrification of the country's rural areas, the Rural Electrification Board (REB) will construct 2,000 kilometres new electric lines during the current fiscal at a cost of Taka 12 crore, reports UNB.

This was disclosed at a meeting here recently to hand over all the PDB lines of Sreepur thana of Magura Pally Bidut Samity (PBS). Magura PBS launched its activities in 1993 with an initial amount of Taka 53 crore, funded by OPEC. Since its inception, PBS gave 12,000 new connections after electrifying 126 villages in the district.

Uplift works progressing

NARSINGDI, July 24: The work of 24 development projects taken up by the Facilities Department under the Ministry of Education in six thanas is expected to be completed within six months, reports BSS.

Official sources said, the government allocated Taka 4,30,08,000 for implementation of the projects. According to the Facilities Department sources, of the total projects 10 projects have already been implemented. The rest is expected to be completed by December next. The projects include construction of eight government and non-government schools, eight non-government madrasahs, four vocational course hall rooms, three government and non-government colleges and one government primary school.

Two held for possessing firearms

HABIGANJ, July 24: Two people were arrested on charge of possessing unauthorised firearms from Nabinjanj thana on Sunday, UNB.

Police said they arrested Aksil Mia, 26, and Sattar Mia, 28, of village Gandha in the thana along with a foreign-made revolver.

7 including DC, SP sued

CHANDPUR, July 24: Chandpur Mohila Samity has filed a case against seven people, including Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Superintendent of Police (SP), Chandpur for putting a land it took lease 40 years back on auction, reports UNB.

Bilkis Aziz, general secretary of the samity, filed the case in cooperation with over a hundred lawyers on July 20. The samity claimed that it took lease three decimals of land from the Social Welfare Directorate 40 years ago in a bid to expand its activities. But recently the land has been put on auction bringing it under the lease-out programme of khas land, Bilkis said.

Three with revolver arrested

SIRAJGANJ, July 24: Police arrested three young men from Beglati area along with a revolver on Thursday, reports UNB.

On suspicion, police challenged motorcycle riders Saidur Rahman, Wadud and Monir Bhuiyan on a bridge and recovered a revolver from their luggage. The policemen were crossing the bridge after arresting a wanted criminal from the area earlier on the day.

One tubewell for 80 persons in Rajshahi dist

Poor coverage of safe drinking water supply

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, July 24: At least 25 per cent tubewells installed by the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) in nine thanas of the district have been lying out of order for various reasons.

According to the DPHE sources, there are 13,257 hand driven tubewells, 880 deep tubewells and 8,764 Tara pumps in the nine thanas. The coverage rate is about 80 persons per tubewell. The acceptable coverage rate is 25 persons per tubewell.

Tubewells of the city corporation area have not been included in this figure.

However, DPHE has claimed that almost cent per cent population have been brought under the coverage of safe drinking water supply.

Moreover, a total of 347 hand driven tubewells, 154 deep tubewells and 338 Tara pumps have been lying inoperative for many days. These are not being repaired for a long time, the users have alleged.

A DPHE official said, "This is not a fault from our part, rather the concerned people are mainly responsible for it." Ac-

cording to the recently introduced rules of the government, DPHE installs a tubewell at a suitable common site for a group of families. Then, if it requires, DPHE extends its service only when the users provide the necessary spare parts. But, in practice, the users are found very much reluctant in extending their hands of cooperation", the DPHE official said and pointed out that non-cooperation from the part of the people was the main cause behind the problem.

Another reason behind the problem is ignorance of the people. Most of them think that Tara pump cannot be repaired once it goes out of order. This is why they do not even inform the DPHE authorities about the situation. Sometimes they even destroy the tubewell.

But there are allegations that the mechanics of DPHE do not respond positively even after repeated reminders by the users of the tubewells. The DPHE official said that the allegations were not always true.

"Our technicians have to remain very much busy almost everyday with the installation

of new tubewells, reinstallation of old ones and repairing the faulty ones. This is why sometimes they are unable to respond to the call of people immediately."

In 1998-99 fiscal year, 23 hand driven tubewells and 297 Tara pumps had been reinstalled and 141 more hand driven tubewells had been installed anew, he informed.

In total there are 36 posts of mechanics - four in each of the nine thanas. Out of them, five posts have remained vacant. Actually we need two mechanics in each union to meet the existing demand", the DPHE official said and added that if two mechanics had been appointed, they could extend their services to the private-owned tubewells in exchange of a fixed rate of cost. "This will not only improve the overall situation of safe water supply in the rural areas, but also bring some additional amount of money", he said.

Meanwhile, the DPHE personnel are anxious with the arsenic problem. When contacted, Sarwar Jahan, Executive Engineer of the DPHE Rajshahi of-

fice, said that water contaminated with arsenic of non-acceptable range had been detected mainly from hand driven tubewells and deep tubewells which lifted water from the depth of 60 feet under the ground.

There is only one example of Tara pump which lifted water with arsenic beyond the acceptable range. Tara pumps lift water from the depth of upto 100 feet under the ground. "This is why we have designed the Super Tara pump which is able to lift water from beyond the depth of 100 feet", he said and added that DPHE had already installed 65 Super Tara pumps in Godagari thana.

Sarwar Jahan further said, "We may have to discourage hand driven tubewells and even deep tubewells in future for this arsenic problem. This is also for another problem which is sharp fall in ground water level in the dry season". The level of the ground water in most areas of the district falls below 50 to 60 feet in the dry season rendering 60 per cent of hand driven tubewells inoperative.

Arsenic panic grips Shariatpur

SHARIATPUR, July 24: Arsenic content beyond permissible limit has been detected in water of 25 per cent tubewells in six thanas creating panic among the people, reports UNB.

The Health Department recently tested 2,000 wells out of 25,000 in different villages and identified and sealed 500 tubewells as highly arsenic contaminated. People have been asked not to drink water of these tubewells.

According to a non-government organisation, 95 per cent tube-wells in Siddya Union of Damudya thana were marked as highly arsenic contaminated and many people of the thana have been afflicted with arsenic-related diseases.

Meanwhile, water-borne diseases are reportedly attacking those people using polluted pond and river waters to avoid arsenic contaminated water.

When contacted, an Executive Engineer of the Health Department said that it was difficult to test the water of all the tube-wells in all the six thanas due to lack of necessary equipment and manpower.

The local leaders urged the government to take immediate steps to test the tube-wells and ensure supply of pure water.

Coconut output declines in Jamalpur

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, July 24: Coconut production has declined to a great extent in the district due to absence of planned plantation.

Local farmers said climate and soil of the district is suitable for the cultivation of this crops but the potentiality is not being seized due to various reasons.

Agriculture experts said coconut can be cultivated in the district in large scale which also can play an important role in poverty alleviation. But due to lack of motivation and proper guidance, the growers are less interested to cultivate the crop.

Concerned authorities have been urged to take necessary steps for planned and proper plantation of the crop in the district so that growers can cultivate the crop on commercial basis.

UPHCP to help set up 10 health centres

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, July 24: Urban Primary Health Care Project (UPHCP) will assist Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) in establishing 10 primary health centres in the city.

UPHCP expert Dr Thon Bert Lemma assured the Mayor of the City Corporation, Mizanur Rahman Minu, of providing the assistance at a meeting at the latter's office here recently.

Dr Bert Lemma said that he had been satisfied and happy seeing the health care activities under taken by Rajshahi City Corporation. "We are very much keen to help its health sector," he told the mayor.

Mizanur Rahman Minu expressed his gratitude to Urban Primary Health Care Project for providing its services to the city dwellers.

The mayor apprised Dr Bert Lemma of various health care activities and success of the city. He said the city received national awards on several occasions for its outstanding performance in Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) and Polio Vaccine and Vitamin A capsule feeding programmes.

He hoped that the inauguration of 10 new primary health centres, which will have all modern medicare facilities, would greatly improve the health care services of the corporation.

The Urban Primary Health Care Project is also funding some other health care programmes in Rajshahi city area.

Events of districts in picture



Return to normal life: Ranju Biswas, an outlaw of Magura, laying down arms to the superintendent of police on July 1 last.

— Star photo



Kazi Md Zunnun, chairman, Rangpur municipality, speaking at the municipal auditorium, on the budget.

— Star photo



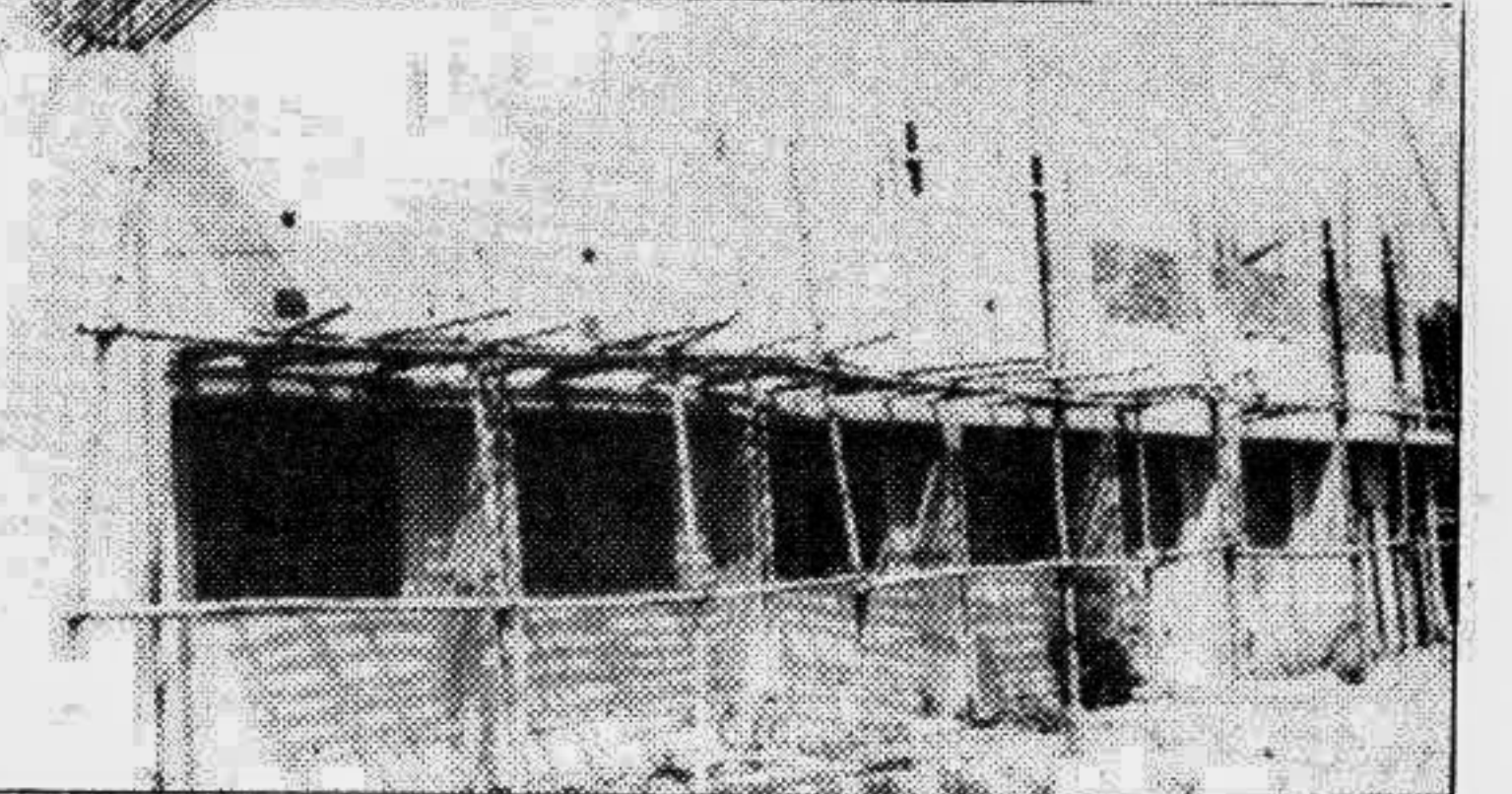
Preparing for the worst: Mayor Mizanur Rahman of RCC inaugurating a workshop on society based disaster management organised by the city unit of Red Crescent. About 50 participants from across the country participated.

—Star photo



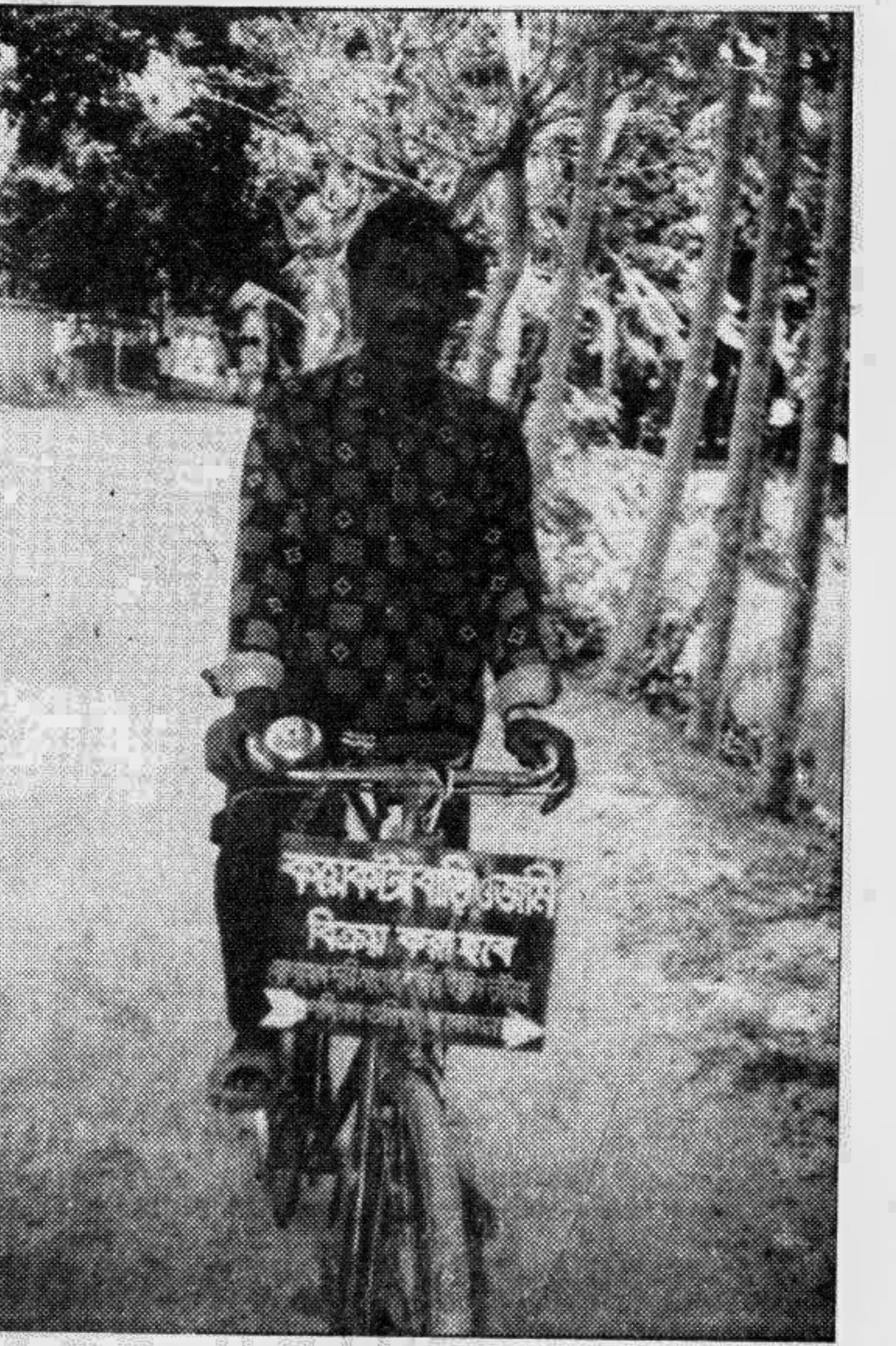
The menace continues: Empty polythene bags left behind by alcohol consumers. The product is sold in such bags in Magura.

— Star photo



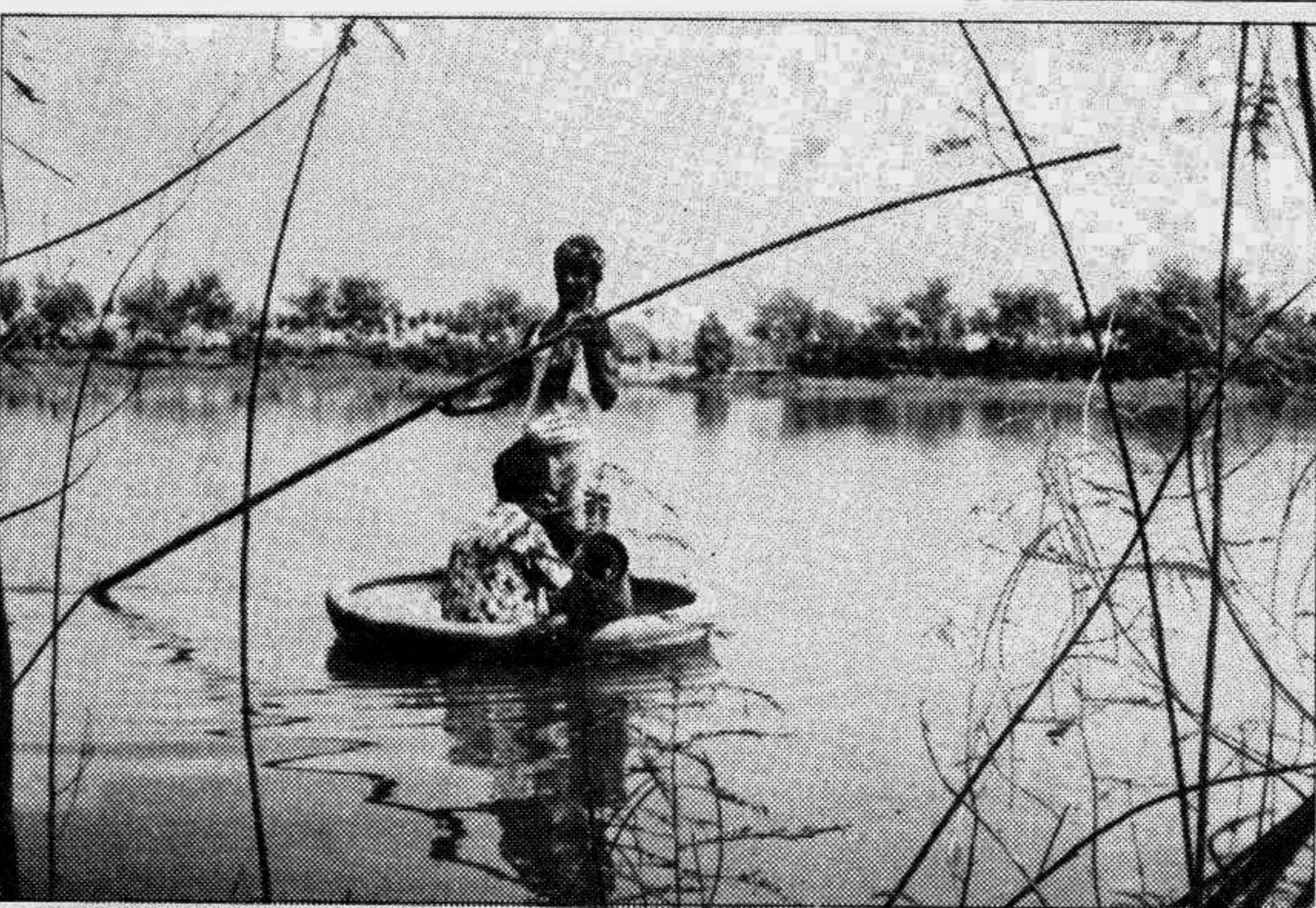
Poor craft: Construction of the new Fine Arts' Building of Rajshahi University remains suspended following charges of using low-quality material.

— Star photo



Indomitable spirit: Tariqul, a young man of Magura, has found an innovative way to buy and sell land.

—Star photo



Earthen boat: Ponds, canals and marshes in Natore have reached their optimum capacity to hold water. Charis — big earthen wares — are widely used for fishing, cruising and ferrying. Shot from Boro Vita village, Natore sadar.

—Star photo by Anwar Ali

Erosion renders 1,000 families homeless in Pabna district

From Ranesh Maitra

PABNA, July 24: Erosion by the Padma and the Jamuna rivers has taken serious turn in the last three weeks. The erosion by the river, on the other hand, has started grabbing lands in Demra and Dighulia under Faridpur thana and Nag Demra, Chhota-Pathailhat and Pathailhat villages under Sathia thana.

Elderly villagers in the areas said they never experienced such a severe erosion in the last 20 years.

The homeless people have taken shelter on flood control embankments and in other places. According to the Water Development Board authorities, the erosion has now started affecting the western bank of the river Jamuna, posing threat to Mujile embankment.

Our Correspondent from Kushtia adds: Erosion by the Ganges and the Gorai has taken an alarming turn, posing threat to houses, land and business establishments in four thanas of Kushtia district.

With the water level of the rivers rising sharply in the last week panic was created among the people of eight unions of Daulatpur, 3 unions of Bheramara, one union of Mirpur thana and 3 unions of Kumarkhali thana.

Standing crops on about 5,000 acres of land were damaged during the last two weeks.

The Ganges-Kobaddak (GK) Project, a gigantic irrigation scheme in the country, has been facing serious setback as the 3000 feet long intake channel

linking the Ganges has been badly damaged by the erosion of the river which started a few years ago.

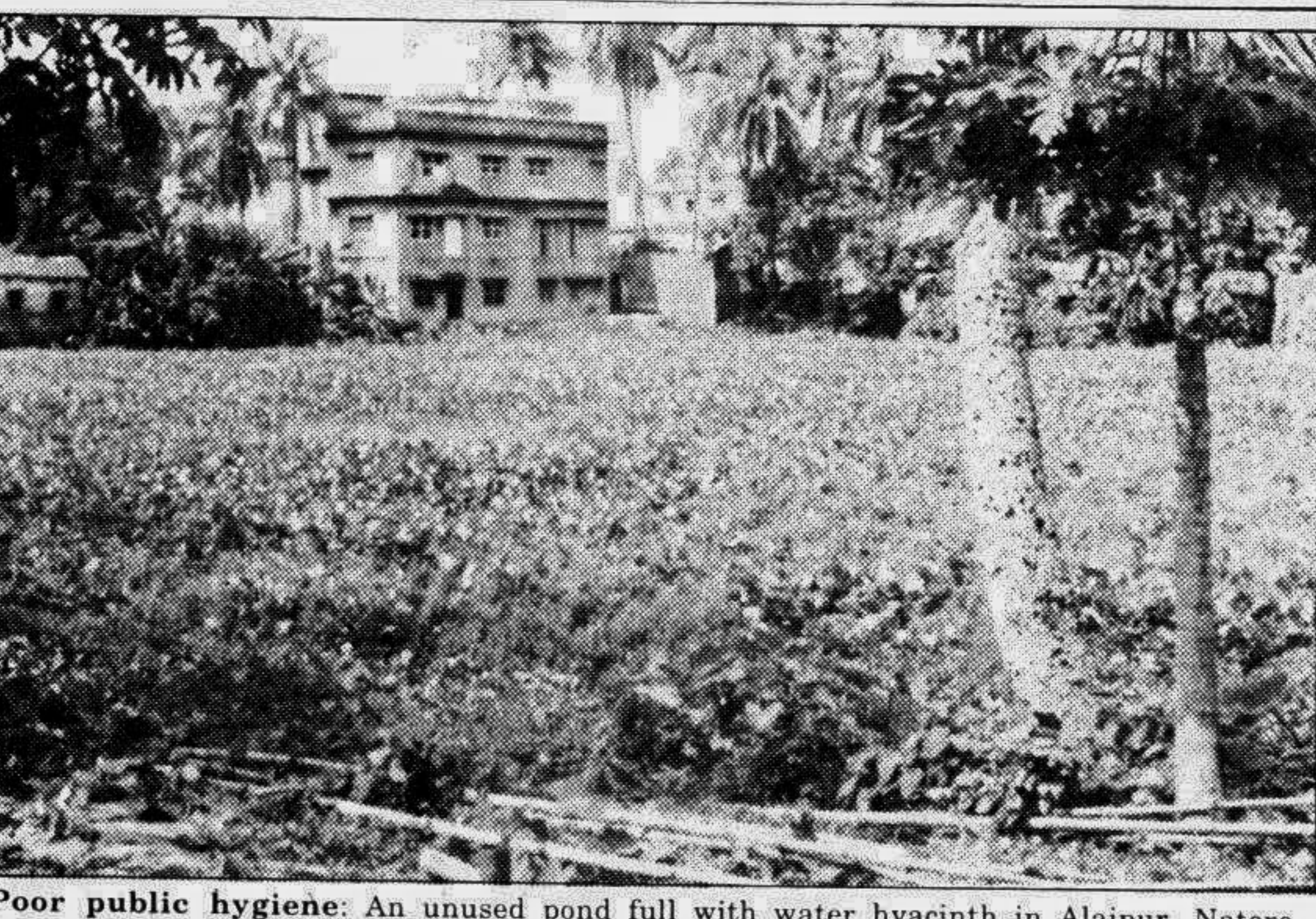
"Meanwhile, the river has also devoured a vast tract of land, including the approach road towards Bheramara-Paksey ferry ghat, compelling the Roads & Highways Department to construct alternative road to maintain uninterrupted communication from the southern to the northern part of the country."

The erosion by the rivers took a violent turn in 1982-83 with the Gorai devouring several crop land, business establishments and educational institutions, official sources said.

The erosion by the river Ganges has devoured 30 educational institutions, 50 mosques, 3 cattle markets, 25 huts and bazars and 8 kilometres flood protection embankment during last 10 years.

Besides, 20 thousand acres of arable land have also been devoured by the river Ganges in Daulatpur thana during the time. The affected areas are Adabaria, Pragpur, Boalia and Aria. While Philipnagar, Ramkrishnapur, Maricha and Chilmari are severely affected areas.

The erosion hit people of Daulatpur thana have now been facing severe problem as they have no land to cultivate crops. They have not received any help so far. The thana administration has been facing an uphill task in rehabilitating the people.



Poor public hygiene: An unused pond full with water hyacinth in Alaipur, Natore town, has become a breeding centre for mosquito.

—Star photo