

## News snaps

### Child labour on rise

COMILLA, Oct 30: Though the country is a signatory to the UN Charter on Child Rights, the number of child labourers are increasing at an alarming rate, reports UNB.

A large number of children of 8-13 age group are seen working in the town and rural areas throughout the day at nominal wages. According to statistics provided by an NGO, 20,000 children aged between 6 and 11 are being deprived of primary education. These ill-fated children, some of them are orphans, have to work as domestic helps, farm workers and hotel boys, helpers of bus and tempo drivers or pull rickshaws and pushcarts and break bricks. They are also seen working in factories and workshops. Besides, some children vend groundnuts, ice cream and cold drinks at bus and railway stations. Although they work hard for minimum wages, their employers never bother to torture them for minor lapses. More agonising is that majority of these helpless children pass nights on footpaths, verandas of different offices and platforms of railway stations after day's hard labour.

### Loan for potato growers

BAGERHAT, Oct 30: Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) has undertaken a massive loan disbursement programme for boosting potato production in Khulna division, including Bagerhat district, reports UNB.

Official sources said the bank has sanctioned Tk 27 crore for disbursement among the potato growers in 10 districts of the division during the current season. The farmers, owning 16 decimal to 82 decimal lands, will be eligible for the loan from the local branches of the bank. BKB has already disbursed Tk 23.88 lakh among 182 potato growers. The loan disbursement will continue till November 30. The district-wise loan allocations are: Bagerhat Tk 1.98 crore, Jhenidah Tk 2.02 crore, Satkhira Tk 3.90 crore, Jessore Tk 2.95 crore, Khulna Tk 5.05 crore, Magura Tk 1.03 crore, Narail Tk 2.20 crore, Kushtia 3.05 crore, Chuadanga Tk 2.20 crore and Meherpur Tk 2.62 crore.

### Special immunisation drive

RANGAMATI, Oct 30: In an effort to eradicate six killer diseases, a special immunisation drive will be launched in remote villages of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in January next, report UNB.

The special drive will be in addition to the programmes of the 6th National Immunisation Day (NID) to be observed in the country on Nov 2 and Dec 2. Vaccines will be provided in the hill districts also on both the days. "The special drive will be conducted in collaboration with UNICEF," said UNICEF Chittagong Divisional chief Dr Saiful Islam at a press briefing at Chittagong Circuit House on Oct 23. Dr Islam said the remote areas like Sajek, Farua, Dumdumia, Taimudung of Rangamati and Tanchi of Bandarban districts where it is difficult to reach in a day will be brought under the special drive. He said steps have been taken to conduct the drive involving the volunteers of Integrated Society Development Project, which have centre in nearby hill areas. He hoped that the special drive would be able to help NID achieve its target.

### Four get 3-yr-RI

CHITTAGONG, Oct 30: A special tribunal here has sentenced four people to three years rigorous imprisonment (RI) for possessing explosives and bombs, reports UNB.

The convicts are Mohammad Selim of Rangarh thana in Khagrachari district, Abul Khair of Laksam thana in Comilla district, Milon Hossain alias Miru of Ramganj thana, and Kamal Hossain alias Kamal Mollah of Raipur thana in Laxmipur district. The court acquitted another accused Jainul Abedin. The case history in brief: police acting on a tip-off raided Hotel D Saultan in Bayedj Bostami area on a tip-off on March 20, 1996 and arrested them along with 15 bombs, huge bomb-making equipment and other materials. After a long hearing, judge Osman Haider delivered the verdict recently.

### Birth anniversary

BRAHMANBARIA, Oct 30: The 35th birth anniversary of Shaheed Sheikh Russel, the youngest son of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was killed on August 15, 1975, was observed here on October 18, reports BSS.

Sheikh Kamal Smriti Parishad of the local district Committee organised a discussion on the occasion with its president advocate Abdul Quayum in the chair. The meeting was addressed, among others, by journalist Syed Mohammad Afzal, Prof Mohammad Ashraf, S M Aslam, Sukumar Chandra Saha, Ferdous Begum Poly, Md. Mizanur Rahman, Tofazzal Hossain Tareq, Shammul Khondkar and freedom fighter Md Rajan Ali.

### Discussion on agri-development

KURIGRAM, Oct 30: A discussion to exchange views on sustainable agriculture development without chemical fertiliser and harmful pesticide was held in Chhinnamukul Hall here on October 15, reports BSS.

Organised by Bio-village Project of Thikana Sangstha, the discussion was presided over by Abdul Mazid Hari, Deputy Commissioner of Kurigram Aminul Islam Khan, CIDA Representative Helen Thomas, USC-Canada-Bangladesh International Project Director Lora Brunlar, USC-Canada-Bangladesh country Director M A Zaman, deputy Director Agriculture Abdur Rouf, Wajeda Begum and Aminul Islam Mondol, among others, took part in the discussion.

### Man electrocuted

RAJBARI, Oct 30: A man was electrocuted at village Khankhanapur in Sadar thana recently, reports UNB.

Family sources said Bhikhar Rabisdas, 50, met the tragic end of his life as he came in touch with a live wire in his house. In another incident, police recovered the body of an unidentified man, aged about 40, from Daulatdia launch ghat on the day. The body had several injury marks.

### Workshop on gender issue

Thakurgaon, Oct 30: A three-day workshop on in-depth reporting on gender issue concluded in HADS auditorium here on October 18, reports BSS.

The workshop organised by News Network was inaugurated by deputy Commissioner of Thakurgaon Md Abdul Baki. Ten newsmen and 10 NGO workers participated in the workshop. Editor of News Network Shahiduzzaman, AP Dhaka bureau chief Farid Hossain, Special correspondent of The Ittefaq Hasan Shahriar, Sultana Begum of Diakonia and Masuda Khatun Shefali of Nari Uddoj Kendra were present as resource persons. In the workshop, discussions were held on in-depth reporting on 'gender issues', techniques of feature writing, investigative report writing.

### 30 LGED schemes completed

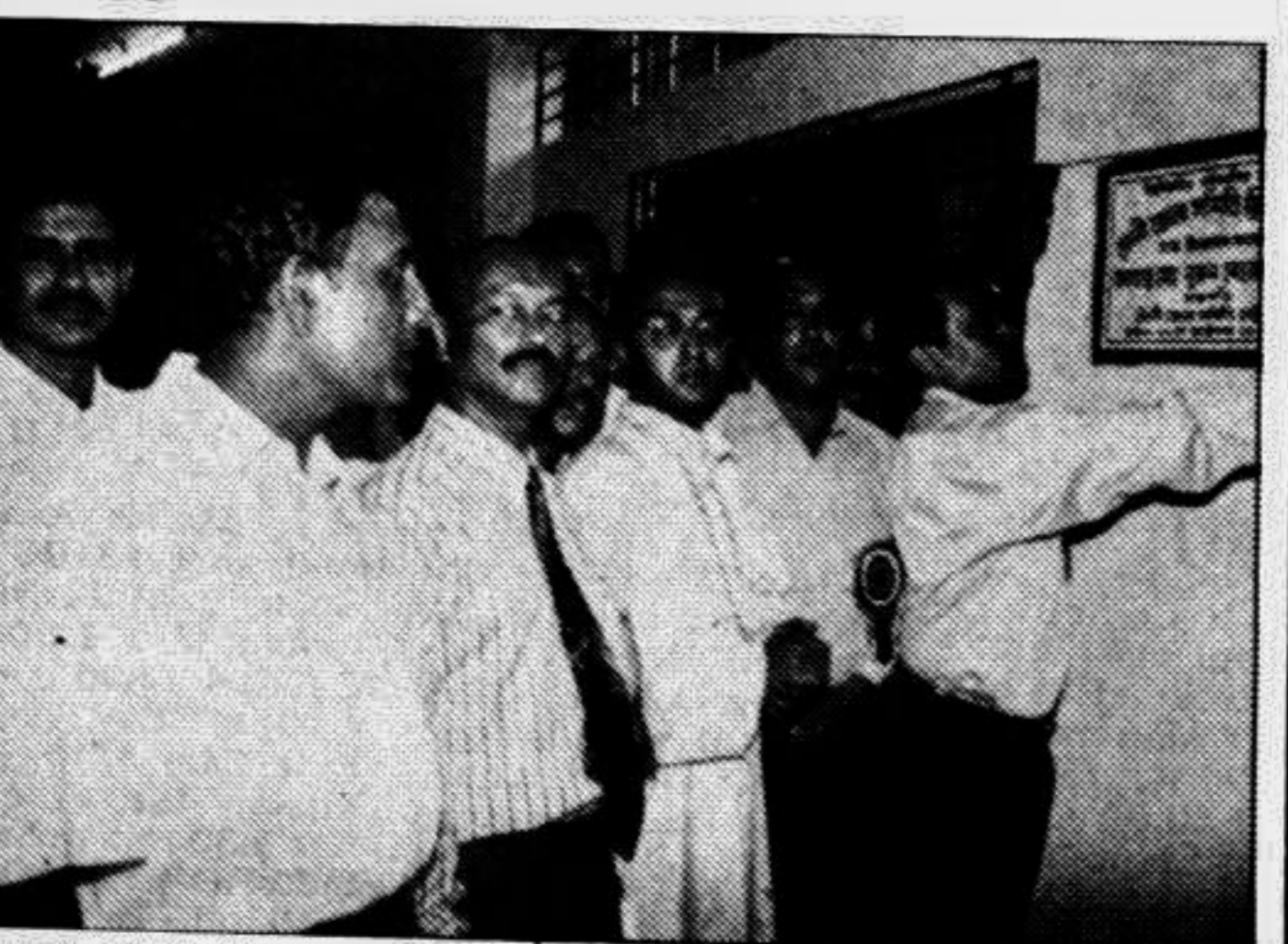
MANIKGANJ, Oct 30: Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has completed 30 development projects under Rural Infrastructure Maintenance Programme at a cost of Taka 1.45 crore in seven thanas recently, reports BSS.

The projects included construction of 10.598-kilometre road and 268.735-metre bridges and culverts in the rural areas.

### Banana farming increasing

MEHERPUR, Oct 30: Banana cultivation has been gaining popularity here as a cash crop, reports BSS.

Agriculture Extension Department sources said, about 3,000 acres have been brought under banana cultivation in two thanas here. According to a farmer, he spent last year about Taka 6,500 for the cultivation of banana on one acre of land and gained profit of Taka 30,000.



Al-haj Md Nurun Newaz Selim, a social worker, founder of Moulvi Shamsul Karim College in Feni and director of National Credit and Commerce Bank Ltd inaugurating the Feni Zilla Samity Free Clinic at Chotteswari Road in Chittagong recently at a simple ceremony.

# Non-iodised brand of salt floods Natore

From Anwar Ali

NATORE, Oct 30: Rural markets in six thanas are flooded with non-iodised salt which has been causing serious health hazards.

In absence of any check by the concerned authorities, the sale of non-iodised salt which is coming from a neighbouring country goes on unabated in the local markets.

Most of the rural people buy this smuggled non-iodised salt as it is relatively cheaper compared to the locally produced iodised salt.

A competent source said the unscrupulous businessmen sell both iodised and non-iodised salt at random to the innocent people especially in the rural areas of Shingra, Boraigram, Gurudaspur, Lalpur, Bagatipara and Natore Sadar thana areas defying a ban.

The government passed the legislation in 1989 in favour of universal iodisation of salt and banned the production, storage and sale of non-iodised salt in the market.

People suffer from mental retardation, physical abnormality, stunted growth, goitre, neo-natal death, miscarriage and stillbirth due to non-consumption of required iodine, an expert on public health said.

The National Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) survey, carried out in Bangladesh in 1993 reveals almost 84 million people which is 70 per cent of

the population are iodine deficient while 56 million people which is 47 per cent have visible and palpable goitre.

The IDD survey also reveals, six lakh people which is 0.5 per cent have neurological deficiency syndromes. Due to iodine deficiency more than 250,000 people go mentally impaired while 33,000 infants die in the first month of life and another 41,000 stillbirths occur every year, the survey says.

The packets of such smuggled non-iodised salt sometimes contain the seal of iodisation, it is alleged. Some experts on public health observe that this salt is non-refined and contains sulphur which is usually used for processing of wet-blue leather.

The existing number of salt industries in the country is about 300, of which 265 salt industries are equipped with iodisation plants supported by UNICEF and government. UNICEF has supplied iodine mixing machine worth about Tk seven lakh each to these plants free of cost.

Knowledgeable circles advocated for strong monitoring and enforcement of law during the production and sale of salt and extensive campaign for creating awareness among the members of the public about the necessity for exclusive consumption of iodised salt.

## Diarrhoea in Kurigram

KURIGRAM, Oct 30: Diarrhoea broke out in an epidemic form in some areas of the district claiming at least nine lives in five days till Wednesday, reports UNB.

Officials confirmed the death of Rubia, 35, Khezmatullah, 70, Kachu, 60, Habibur

Rahman, 45, Arifa, 4, Makri Bawa, 50, Abdul Hanif, 7, and Islamuddin, 35, in Ulipur thana and Rowshanara, 25, in Bhurungamari thana.

Unofficial sources said, about 20,000 people have been affected by the disease by taking unwholesome food.

Improvised people living in shawl areas of Durgapur, Guhaigachh, Daldalia, Buraburi and Begumganj unions in Ulipur thana are the worst sufferers.

Local doctors said intake of stale food and contaminated water and unhygienic environment are the main reasons for outbreak of the disease.

The district Civil Surgeon's office claimed that 41 people of eight unions were attacked by the disease till October 25. It failed to give latest information about the number of people affected by the disease.

Officials said 88 medical teams are working round the clock in the diarrhoea prone areas to combat the disease.

The Civil Surgeon visited some of the affected areas and distributed oral saline and other medicine among the victims, which proved quite inadequate. The Health Complexes in the area reported inadequate supply of oral saline to meet the growing demand.

## Brahmanbaria DIARY

Tk 56,00,000 BRDB loan for women

From Our Correspondent

BRAHMANBARIA, Oct 30: Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), Brahmanbaria unit recently distributed Taka 56,00,000 loan among 1,150 jobless women of four thanas, Sadar, Sarail, Kasba and Banchharampur, of the district.

The loans were distributed among the women for poultry, small-scale business activities, cow raising and vegetable farming.

### Boy killed in road accident

A 12-year-old boy was killed at Prato Bazar under Sarail thana recently when an auto rickshaw hit him from behind.

The boy was identified as Md Rana Mia, son of Md Gulap Mia of village Salpa Noagong.

According to witnesses, the vehicles hit the boy when he was crossing road. The boy died on the spot. Police seized the vehicles. A case was filed in this connection.

### Two housewives commit suicide

Two housewives committed suicide at village Kalamura and Nayonpur of Paharpur union under Sadar thana recently.

According to police and family sources, Kulsum Nahar, 20, wife of Rahim Mia of village Kalamura committed suicide by taking poison. The reason behind the suicide could not be known. In another incident Husna Begum, 19, wife of Md Oli Mia of Nayonpur village committed suicide also by taking poison. Separate cases were lodged.

### Rice trader robbed

A group of muggers robbed a rice trader of Taka two lakh at Pakpara in the town recently.

According to police sources, rice trader Md Maju Mia of Ashuganj was returning home in a tempo. The muggers intercepted the vehicles and robbed the passengers, including Maju Mia. A case was filed in this connection.

### Biennial meeting held

Biennial general meeting of Bangladesh Disabled Welfare Society of Brahmanbaria unit was held in the district headquarters recently.

Presided over by Md Mansur Kamal the meeting was addressed, among other, by Taslima Sultana, Md Ghuas Uddin, Nazrul Islam Badal, Md Arzoo and Al Mamun Sarker.

### Bomb planting

2 alleged terrorists arrested

FARIDPUR, Oct 30: Madhukhali police recently arrested two alleged terrorists from e area in connection with the bomb planting in a cinema hall at Madhukhali bazaar last week, reports BSS.

A team of Madhukhali police, acting on a tip off, arrested Hafizur Rahman, 27, and Abu Bakar Sheikh, 52, from Mathurapur and Askandi village for their alleged involvement in planting a high powered explosive in the 'Nilaborna' cinema hall.

Abdul Mabud, Superintendent of Police (SP) said arrested Hafizur Rahman was an alleged local agent of recently banned weekly 'Jago Muzahid', a newspaper of Harkat-ul-Jihad Al-Islami and Abu Bakar Sheikh is a sacked naik of Bangladesh Army.

The SP said Abu Bakar was sacked from the army in 1990 for gross indiscipline in service and was involved in anti-social activities.

Police will produce the arrested terrorists before the court for remand.

### Arsenic panic in Manikganj

MANIKGANJ, Oct 30: As arsenic panic has gripped the district, 90 per cent people in rural areas are using waters from ponds and ditches instead of tubewells, reports UNB.

People got into panic when Public Health Engineering Department has declared that 20 per cent tubewells in seven thanas were pumping out arsenic contaminated waters.

According to the department there were 57,000 tubewells in the district of 12 lakh people.

Arsenic was detected in the tubewell waters on December 12, 1997.

Since then, water samples of 1,348 tubewells were examined and of them 278 or 20.62 per cent tubewells detected with arsenic beyond permissible limit of 0.05 mg.



The mobile island: Art of riverine navigation is demonstrated by two or three people, moving an island of bamboos hundreds of miles to a port. There are at least six types of bamboos grown in the country. Some are useful as strong pillars, some fences and various other purposes. The picture shows an island of bamboos being navigated through rivers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts which is famous for producing bamboos. On top of the island a small hut is home for the seasoned navigators who mainly depend on the tides to move on to their destinations. The painstaking journey from CHT to Dhaka could take as much as one month to complete.

— Photo and story by Morshed Ali Khan

## Padma devouring fresh areas in Rajshahi district

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, Oct 30: Erosion by the River Padma has taken serious turn again due to fall in water level of the river.

Vast tracts of lands in most villages situated on the bank of the Padma are being washed away everyday.

After recession of flood waters several weeks before, the water level in the river is now rapidly falling. Many shoals have been emerging in the river bed.

Godagari Municipality and Deopara, Gogam, Matikata and Basudepur unions are situated on the bank of the Padma. Erosion is a common phenomenon in these areas, but no step has been taken so far to check it.

More than 300 families have already become homeless by the river erosion.

The seriously effected areas are Nimtola and Khorchaka villages in Deopara union, Alipur, Farhadpur and Harinbika villages in Gogam union, Premtoli, Shekherpara and Ujanpara villages in Matikata union, Kashimpur and Faridpur villages in Basudepur union and Madarpur and Sarangpur villages in the municipality area.

Local people alleged that they had tried to draw the attention of the concerned authorities several times in the past for building protection embankment.

Officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board and foreign agencies, as well as ministers visited the area several times. They assured them of taking necessary measures but ultimately did not do anything yet, they said.

Meantime, erosions have created another major problem regarding territorial border of

the country with India. The midline of the Padma is considered here as the international border between the two countries. For the last several years, the Padma has been eroding the Bangladesh side. The river has been shifting into

Bangladesh territory. For this reason some shoal lands possessed by Bangladesh has become 'disputed' as India has now been demanding the lands on the basis of the midline of the river theory.

Border clashes between the

common people and Border Security Force (BSF) of India and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) have been occurring very frequently. Unless the river erosions are checked, border disputes will aggravate in future, local people have apprehended.



Living beside erosion prone area: Erosion by the River Padma has taken serious turn again. This is because of fall in water level of the river. This photograph was taken recently from Premtoli in Godagari thana of Rajshahi district.

— Star photo

## Unofficial results of polls in three municipalities

Peaceful municipal elections were held in Taherpur of Rajshahi district, Singra of Natore district and Kendua of Kishoreganj district recently, report agencies.

Awami League-backed Alo Khandoker was unofficially declared elected chairman of the newly formed Taherpur Municipality.

Some 7,700 voters, out of 8,100, cast their votes on October 28 election showing over 95 per cent turnout.

Former RSD leader Alo Khondoker bagged 3,324 votes while his nearest rival BNP-backed Abdul Wahed Molla got 2,603. Jatiya Party hacked Abdul Alim pulled 1,123 votes.

The nine ward commissioners elected are: Abdul Gafur Pramanik, Tapos Kumar Das Pinit, Shamsul Alam Sarder, Ziaur Rahman Rubon, Shamsur Ali, Khalilur Rahman, Akbar Hossain, Abdul Hamid and Jamiruddin.

Niru Kamrunnahr Beauty, Asia Begum and Rousan Ara were unofficially elected women commissioners in three reserve seats.

BNP candidate Shameem Al Razez unofficially elected chairman of Singra pourasabha defeating his nearest rival

KU management dept classes begin Oct 31

KHULNA, Oct 30: The first year honours classes of the School of Management and Business of Khulna University will begin on October 31, reports UNB.

Prior to beginning the classes, an orientation programme will be held at the Business Administration Discipline at 10am on the day, said a KU press release.

Awami League candidate Biswanath Das by 129 votes on October 28.

Election officials said Shameem got 2,873 votes while Biswanath 2,744 votes. The turnout was about 85 per cent.

Voting was almost peaceful amid tight security. However, there were few allegations of casting false votes at a number of centres. The election officials denied the allegations.

Abdul Haque Bhuiyan on October 28 unofficially declared as chairman of the newly formed Kendua Municipality of Kishoreganj district after the peaceful election, the district

election office sources said.

Abdul Haque Bhuiyan got 4490 votes while his lone rival Delwar Hussain Bhuiyan bagged 3373 votes, the unofficial result indicated.

Elections for the chairman post, nine commissioner posts in nine wards and three reserved commissioner posts for women were held and the voter turnout was 85.3 per cent, election officials said.

The election was held with 30 polling booths at nine centres.

Acting District Commissioner Amir Hussain acted as the Returning Officer.

### Sugarcane output in Kushtia affected by flood, pest

KUSHTIA, Oct 30: Sugarcane production in Kushtia mill zone area has been affected severely due to the last flood and by pest attack, reports UNB.

Sources said officially 17,000 acres of land was brought under sugarcane cultivation in the mill area this season but plants on 10,000 acres have already been affected by flood. Besides, swarms of 'Majra' pest affected the stems of sugarcane.

Officials said the roots of sugarcane plants were badly affected by flood while pest attacks are turning the sugarcane leaves yellow and causing the stems to rot.

General Manager of Kushtia Sugar Mills said that he has received report that a similar condition was prevailing in Rajshahi zone.

He said the only way to combat the attack is to cut the affected stems and burn those, otherwise, it may spread to other plants.

The GM informed that the

workers and employees of the sugar mills were assisting the farmers to cut and burn the affected sugarcane to get rid of the menace.

Another source said that in the Majra affected areas, farmers were harvesting the immature sugarcane and making 'gur' (molasses) by power crushers.

Another report from Magura says: Standing crops on about 2,195 hectares land were damaged by last week's incessant rains in Magura district official sources said.

They said due to the heavy precipitation from October 17 to October 22, transplanted Aman paddy on 596 hectares of land in Sadar, 222 hectares in Sreepur, 1,117 hectares in Shalikha and 260 hectares in Mohammadpur thanas were damaged.

The damage would cause a shortfall of 811 metric tons of paddy in the stipulated target, district agriculture officials said.

Recurrent natural calamities like drought, flood and storm are causing crop failure every year, giving rise to marginal farmers. Farmers are not getting fair prices of their products, compelling them to, sell their arable land.

Poor and marginal farmers usually face much hardship to repay bank loans.

### UP chairman reinstated

From Our Correspondent

NETRAKONA, Oct 30: Suspension of Sandikona union parishad chairman was reinstated on October 21 following a court order.

Earlier a division bench of High Court in a verdict on August 23 ordered the authorities concerned to reinstate Lutfur Rahman Shanti, who was suspended by LGD Ministry.

After he was suspended, the chairman of Sandikona union under Kendua thana challenging the decision filed a writ with High Court division of the Supreme Court.

After receiving the court order Thana Nirbahi Officer of Kendua asked the acting chairman, Abdur Rahim, to hand over the charge to Lutfur Rahman Shanti.

### Number of marginal farmers on rise in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Oct 30: Number of small and marginal farmers is on gradual rise in the district. About three per cent people own land over 25 bighas, five per cent have below 25 bighas, 10 per cent have below 10 bighas, and 22 per cent have below five bighas, an unofficial survey said.

According to the survey, about 60 per cent people are landless in the district, which has a population of about 18 lakh. Most of landless people earn their living as agriculture labourers.

Recurrent natural calamities like drought, flood and storm are causing crop failure every year, giving rise to marginal farmers. Farmers are not getting fair prices of their products, compelling them to, sell their arable land.

Poor and marginal farmers usually face much hardship to repay bank loans.