

## News snaps

### Razzak visits massgrave

CHITTAGONG, Dec 11: Water Resources Minister Abdur Razak visited Kamantila massgrave at Patenga here on December 9, reports BSS.

Local Awami League leaders Abdus Salam, Khorsheed Alam Surjan, Dr. Jalilur Sultana accompanied the minister during his visit to Kamantila, where a massgrave has been discovered and several hundreds human bones and skulls exhumed. Talking to the people gathered at Kamantila, Razzak said that the massgrave discovered now is the clear testimony to the brutality of the Pakistani occupation forces during the Liberation War. The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been building monuments at the massgraves a sites wherever they are unearthed. Our government has taken steps to check distortion of the history of the Liberation War, he added.

### Tribal students submit memo

RAJSHAH, Dec 11: The city unit of Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) on Thursday submitted a memorandum to Rajshahi University Vice Chancellor Prof Saidur Rahman demanding to make double the existing admission quota for tribal students, reports UNB.

At present, there is a reserved quota of 10 tribal students for admission into first year honours classes. The FCP demanded the quota to be increased to 20. PCP in its memorandum alleged that the RU authorities only admitted seven tribal students last year although there were many applicants for the 10 reserved seats.

### Protest procession

SATKHIRA, Dec 11: Three main opposition parties brought out a protest procession in the town on Thursday and submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner demanding early arrest of the killers of Jamaat activist Ali Mostafa, reports UNB.

Mostafa suffered severe injuries during a clash between Awami League and Jamaat activists here on November 25 and later died in hospital. Jamaat filed a case with the police accusing Kaliganj thana Awami League president Sheikh Wahid and general secretary Mozahar Hossain for the killing. After a joint procession in the town BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and activists thronged the DC's office and held a rally there before submitting the memorandum. The memorandum alleged that police did not arrest the two FIR-named accused persons although they were seen moving around openly.

### Office-bearers

CHUADANGA, Dec 11: The Executive Committee of the Chuadanga unit of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society was formed here, for the next three years, on December 5, reports BSS.

In a meeting of the general and life members of the Red Crescent Society, Chuadanga, held at local Dr A M Mallick Red Crescent Eye Hospital premises the executive committee was formed unanimously. Bashira Mannan, acting president of the committee was in the chair. The office-bearers of the committee are: President — M R Chowdhury, Deputy Commissioner, Chuadanga, Vice-President — Bashira Mannan, Secretary — Fazlur Rahman, Members — Abdur Razak Malick Dulu, Advocate Selimuddin Khan, Humayun Ahmed, Azad Maliha and Rizal Islam Toton.

### Training for Ansars

KISHOREGANJ, Dec 11: A two-week long basic training course of the women members of Ansar and VDP concluded at Bajitpur thana in Kishoreganj on December 7, reports BSS.

According to official sources, the training course began on 24 November. Two hundred women members of Ansar and VDP participated in the training. Abdus Sattar and Soukat Uddin, Thana Ansar and VDP officers of Sadar and Tarail thana conducted the training. District Ansar Adjutant Pabitra Kumar Shaha supervised the training course. TNO of Bajitpur thana, Shamim Sara was present in the concluding function as the chief guest.

### Youth festival observed

MANIKGANJ, Dec 11: The National Youth Festival was observed here recently at Manikganj holding various programmes, reports BSS.

The daylong programmes, included mini-marathon for young men and women, colourful rally, discussion meeting, distribution of certificates and cheques among the trained youths, essay competition for trainees and trained youths, friendly football match for the young man and handball for the young women, cultural function and documentary film show. A 15-day mobile training course for the youths was inaugurated by Sheikh Mozahar Uddin, Deputy Commissioner, Manikganj at Dighi Union Parishad, office on this occasion.

### Polio virus infected boy found

BARISAL, Dec 11: One polio virus infected patient was found here at Barguna Pourasabha area, reports BSS.

According to hospital sources, the World Health Organisation Representative, Dr Shaiful Islam found one polio virus infected patient in Barguna General Hospital, Aleya Begum, mother of the patient Al-Amin, 9, told that polio drops were given five times after the birth of her child. The child was attacked with fever five to six months ago. Later, the right side of the boy became paralysed and he was admitted to the Barguna General Hospital, she added. The patient was shifted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital and Dr Shafiq has been giving necessary treatment to the boy. Wild polio virus was found in the body of the boy after examinations, the sources added.

### Uplift projects progressing

TANGAIL, Dec 11: Tangail District Council (TDC) has taken up different development projects in six thanas at a cost of Taka 32.5 lakh in the current fiscal year, reports BSS.

According to official sources, the development projects include repair of two Dak-Banglows and two bridges. TDC has also taken up some projects including construction of five roads and the mazar of Habibur Rahman, BB, at Ghatail. The projects will be completed within couple of months, sources added.

### Anti-terrorism procession

PATUAKHALI, Dec 11: Some two hundred women of Golkhal village in Mirzaganj thana came to Subidkhal port on Thursday to stage an anti-terrorism procession protesting the snatching of gold earrings from a housewife, reports UNB.

The women paraded main thoroughfares of the port town and submitted a memorandum to the Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) of Mirzaganj. Later, the women held a rally at the TNO office premises with cooperation of TNO Syed Sabir Ahmed. Addressing the rally, the TNO urged the police officials to sternly deal with terrorism and arrest the miscreants who took away the gold rings from the housewife by rupturing her ears. Earlier, on December 3, two miscreants tore away the earrings from Sajeda Begum, 35, of Golkhal village when she went to bring water from a tubewell in front of the house. She was rushed to Subidkhal Hospital in a critical condition.

### Acid thrown on widow

BAGERHAT, Dec 11: A widow is fighting for her life at the Sadar Hospital here with serious burn injuries caused by acid thrown by miscreants on Wednesday night, reports UNB.

Police and hospital sources said the widow in Koramara village of Sadar thana, was picked up by some miscreants when she came out of her house at night to answer the call of nature. The miscreants raped her and then poured acid over her body. She was rushed Thursday to the hospital, where attending doctors stated her condition as critical.

### Bumper output of Aman

PATUAKHALI, Dec 11: The farmers are elated with a bumper production of Aman this year, reports UNB.

Agriculture Extension Department sources said the bumper Aman production this season following favourable climate will make the district surplus in food in the last one decade as the production is expected to exceed demand by nearly 1.76 lakh metric tons. Aman paddy of high yielding and local varieties were cultivated in 2.21 lakh hectares as against the target of 2.12 lakh hectares. As a result, the department expects a total production of 3.92 lakh metric tons that would meet the demand of additional 10 lakh people elsewhere after meeting the demand of the district.

### Landless being rehabilitated

HABIGANJ, Dec 11: Twenty landless poor families have been rehabilitated under the Ashrayan project at Charhamua village in Sadar thana here, reports UNB.

Another 20 families will be rehabilitated soon under the project. On Dec 5, the Deputy Commissioner of the district formally handed over the documents to the recipients relating to their houses and lands. Besides, Tk 5,000 as soft loan was given to each of the rehabilitated families for their self-employment.

# Shabash Bangladesh — best achievement of RU

From Kamran Reza Chowdhury

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Dec 11: One of the best achievements of Rajshahi University is "Shabash Bangladesh", a Liberation War sculpture.

The sculpture is, no doubt, its very attractive. This is because of its artist Niton Kundu's unique art work.

Shabash Bangladesh is situated at the northern side of the field adjoining the Rajshahi University (RU) Senate building.

Anyone passing along Rajshahi-Natore highway, he/she can easily observe the great monument looking over the university boundary wall through the university main gate.

Shabash Bangladesh was built about seven years ago, on February 10, 1992. Its plaque was unveiled by late Shaheed Jannat Jahanara Imam, Earlier, on March 26, 1990, its foundation stone was laid by the then Vice-Chancellor of Rajshahi University Prof Muhammad Amanullah.

It is not the result of single effort. The then RUV, teachers and students everybody worked relentlessly to set up the monument.

Leaders of Rajshahi University central Students Union (RUCSU) of 1988-89 played a key role in this regard. They proposed additional subscription from the students and communicated with artist Niton Kundu. So, the lion's share of its cost came from the students.

But the artist did not take any money for this purpose as remuneration. His dedicated sacrifice will remain everfresh.

Shabash Bangladesh has three mentionable stages. The first is the 40 feet by 40 feet premises which is 4 feet high. The second portion is a six feet high altar on which figures of two freedom fighters carrying two rifles in their hands, the main attraction of the monument. Behind the two figures, there is a flag of Bangladesh. It has made the figures more attractive. The total length of the flag is 36 feet.

Moreover, on the front walls of the altar, there are two white panels on which the artist has portrayed students, youths, bauls, women and freedom fighters.

At the foot end of the two figures, a brass plate is attached with which reads verses of the ever green poet Sukanta Bhattacharya that ignited the Bangali nationalism.

Artist Niton Kundu has initiated a new dimension in its construction using red oxides with cement in addition to concrete. It was the first of its kind in any sculpture.

The sculpture of students, youths, bauls, women, on the two panels of the second portion vividly express that the whole countrymen were united against autocracy and brutality, the spirit which led to our national victory.

Niton Kundu's work has not only depicted the history of our war of independence, but also the present and future of the country. He himself expressed after the inauguration of Shabash Bangladesh, "I have tried to attract the attention of

all towards the future alongside the glorious past and present of the nation.

A large number of visitors come here every day to visit the spectacular Shabash Bangladesh.



Shabash Bangladesh.

— Star photo

## Treadle water pumps gaining popularity

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Dec 11: Treadle water pumps have gained popularity in rural areas in greater Rangpur district.

At least three lakhs treadle water pumps, locally known as "dhaki kal", are now in operation in Rangpur, Gaibandha, Lamonirhat and Kurigram districts. Mainly the pumps are being used in irrigation projects. The waters are also being used in domestic purposes, local people said.

International Development Enterprise (IDE), a non-governmental organisation, introduced the low-cost pump, which costs Taka 800 at present, about twelve years ago in the area to help rural people irrigate and solve drinking water problem. Some important features of the treadle pump are: it can lift

75 litres water in one minute. It needs no fuel, and it can irrigate one acre of land in a day.

The IDE undertook the scheme in the four districts under a poverty alleviation programme to provide the low-cost pump to poor and marginal farmers.

The 5th co-ordination committee meeting of IDE, Rangpur was held here recently to review the progress of the programme.

The meeting attended, among others, by Neil Janzen, consultant of the management; Soaib Chowdhury, GM Marketing; and Dr Abdul Hamid, GM Production, discussed activities of the organisation and urged the officials to make the programme a success.

## PCJSS pays tributes to MN Larma

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 11: Leaders and supporters of Parbatya Chhattagram Jana Sanghati Samity recently paid rich tributes to its founder president Manabendra Narayan Larma on his 16th death anniversary, sources in the hill districts said.

MN Larma was assassinated by his rival faction led by Priti Kumar Chakma in 1983 due to intra-party conflict in PCJSS, the political body of the then Shantibahini who fought a bush war for over two decades.

After the death of MN Larma, his younger brother Shantu Larma took the helm of PCJSS as its president, who became the first chairman of CHT

regional council after a peace accord signed with the government on December 2, 1997.

The tribal rebels returned home after peace accord and laid down their arms. But Priti Kumar Chakma stayed back in Tripura state of India.

Pankajini Chakma, wife of MN Larma, also did not return home.

Rallies and discussion meetings were organised in the hill districts in observance of the death anniversary of Manabendra.

Addressing the discussion meetings, Shantu Larma and other PCJSS leaders recalled the activities and contribution of their founder president.

## 'All political parties are violating Constitution'

MOULVIBAZAR, Dec 11: Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hussain has charged that major political parties in the country are violating the Constitution which, he said, is the main cause of the present political crisis, reports BSS.

He was addressing a citizens' meeting at Saifur Rahman auditorium recently.

Organised by the local unit of Gano Forum, the citizens' meet was presided over by district Gano Forum President Syed Anjad Ali, and addressed by Gano Forum central leaders Paikaj Bhattacharya, Advocate Zahurul Islam, Engineer Abul Kashem and local leaders

Advocate Tobarak Hussain and Advocate Shanti Pada Ghose.

The Gano Forum chief, in his speech as the chief guest, said that it is high time to react and protest against the 'destructive politics' of political parties like Awami League and BNP and parties of razzaks and autocrats. He said both Awami League and BNP are continuing their party programmes which, he thought, are not in the interest of the people of the country.

Dr Kamal Hossain alleged that the elected members of the parliament were not discussing the actual problems.

## Seed crisis may hamper potato farming in dists

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAH, Dec 11: Acute scarcity of potato seeds has been prevailing here, casting an adverse impact on potato cultivation this season.

Sources in the local Agriculture Extension Department said production target of potato will not be achieved in the district this season.

Local farmers said Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) has failed to ensure adequate supply of potato seeds here. They also alleged they are not

getting quality seeds. AED has fixed a target to bring 11,500 hectares of lands in nine thanas under the cultivation to produce 1,38,000 metric tons of potato.

Till November 30 only 8,000 hectares of lands were brought under the cultivation. Farmers will continue potato farming up to the end of this month.

Some farmers in Paba thana said the month of November is the best time for potato cultivation. Delayed cultivation affects the productivity of the crop,

they added. At present, seed sells between Taka 14 and Taka 16.

Growers said many lands meant for potato cultivation have not been prepared. Recent flood has played havoc with the farming, they added.

About 40 per cent lands in Baghmara thana, famous for potato cultivation in the district, have not been prepared yet. AED sources said around

85,000 metric tons of the crop are produced in the thana every year.

Our Netrakona Correspondent adds: According to Agriculture Extension Department sources, the demand for seed in the district is 2,550 metric tons during the current season. But so far the supply has not been satisfactory, the sources added.

Local AED has fixed a target to bring about 1,500 hectares of

land under the cultivation to produce about 18,000 metric tons of potato.

Local farmers said Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) has failed to ensure adequate supply of potato seeds and the cultivation may face set back due to the scarcity.

Seed Department of BADC supplies seeds through its selected dealers. At present, the seed sells between Tk 15 and Tk

17 a kg. According to official sources, the target has been fixed to bring 250 hectares of land under potato farming in Sadar thana, 125 hectares in Atpara thana, 175 hectares in Kendua thana, 130 hectares in Madan thana, 125 hectares in Mohanganj thana, 75 hectares in Khalajury thana, 150 hectares in Barhatta thana, 160 hectares in Kaimakanda thana, 160 hectares in Durgapur thana, and 150 hectares in Purbadhala thana.

## River Piain turns into curse of eight lakh people

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Dec 11: Their hopes hang in balance for decades.

Once mighty River Piain has now turned into a curse for about eight lakh people of the region. Though a number of plans and programmes had been taken by the government agencies and departments during the three decades, nothing effective has yet been done. It has resulted in flooding of a huge area almost every year.

It has also caused siltation to a vast tracts of land on both the sides. Extraction of stones from the river beds during the season is also declining alarmingly.

The rivers — Piain and Dholai flow through Companyganj thana in Sylhet. Originated from the Meghalaya hills in India, the River Piain enters into the Bangladesh territory near Ohmghat and joins with the

Surma near Chhatak through Gowainghat and Companyganj thanas. On the other hand, the Dholai being originated from the Khasia hill near Bholaganj border and joins with the Piain. The Piain having a length of 34 miles had a depth of 25 to 30 metres even 50 years ago. But, the river has lost its previous navigability due to the large-scale siltation at different points.

The biggest stone quarry of the country is at Bholaganj on the riverbed of Dholai. It crosses of taka is being earned as revenue every year. Huge quantity of stones across the country are being supplied. There are some other quarries in the region. About 40,000 to 50,000 labourers are engaged in collection of stones from these quarries. The stones roll down from the upper stream during the monsoon.

Once big water vessels used to ply in the river. But water transportation is being greatly hampered due to the siltation, which has caused an alarming situation in the whole region.

Besides, almost every year, vast areas in Companyganj, Gowainghat, Sylhet Sadar and Chhatak thanas face frequent and seasonal floods causing large-scale damage to crops and lands as well as to other property. The River Piain has changed its course in at least four points — Rataner khal, Pabitr Dhal, Lamna Khal and at Telikhal. Huge number of dwelling houses and croplands had also been devoured. Besides, accumulation of two to three feet silts on both banks of the river and other small canals linked to it have also turned thousands of hectares of cropland uncultivable every

year.

In the mid-fifties, the then member of Provincial Assembly late Mokbul Hossain proposed to the government for resolving the problems relating to the Piain river. President Ershad visited the Piain river and asked the concerned authority for taking necessary steps in 1985.

The officials of Water Development Board (WDB) prepared a Tk 40.43 crore project in two phases in July 1986 and it had been sent to the higher authority. In 1993, the board prepared a revised plan for the 'Piain River Flood Control Project'. PCP of the project was made showing an estimated expenditure amounting to Taka. 46.24 crore. But no development was made as yet. The government itself has been incurring huge loss of revenue. Besides, the

people have also been suffering extremely due to the delay in implementing the project, local leaders feel.

Fishery in the region is being hit seriously. On the other hand small haors and marshy lands are turning into plain lands due to the siltation. Due to fall in navigability, transportation of stones is also being hampered.

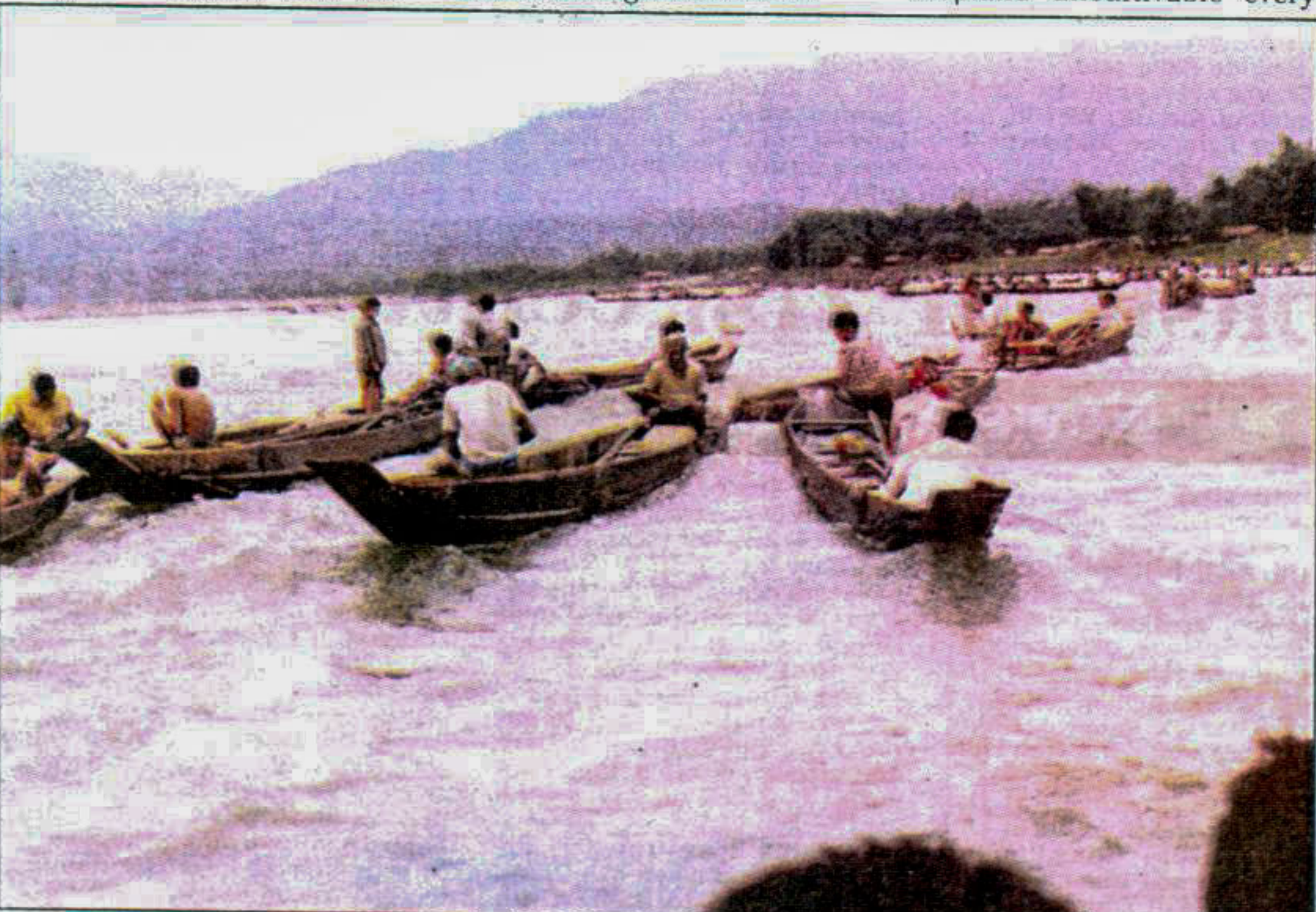
The BDR Out Post and the Khasia punji (organised homesteads) at Sangram border in Gowainghat thana had already been devoured in 1988.

Local leaders of different political parties have demanded necessary steps for dredging in the river. But these gave no response from the concerned people, they allege. They hoped that, crops worth about Taka 200 crore could be saved by

checking erosion and siltation. It was stated in the PCP that, property worth over Taka 600 crore would be saved through proper implementation of the project, they asserted.

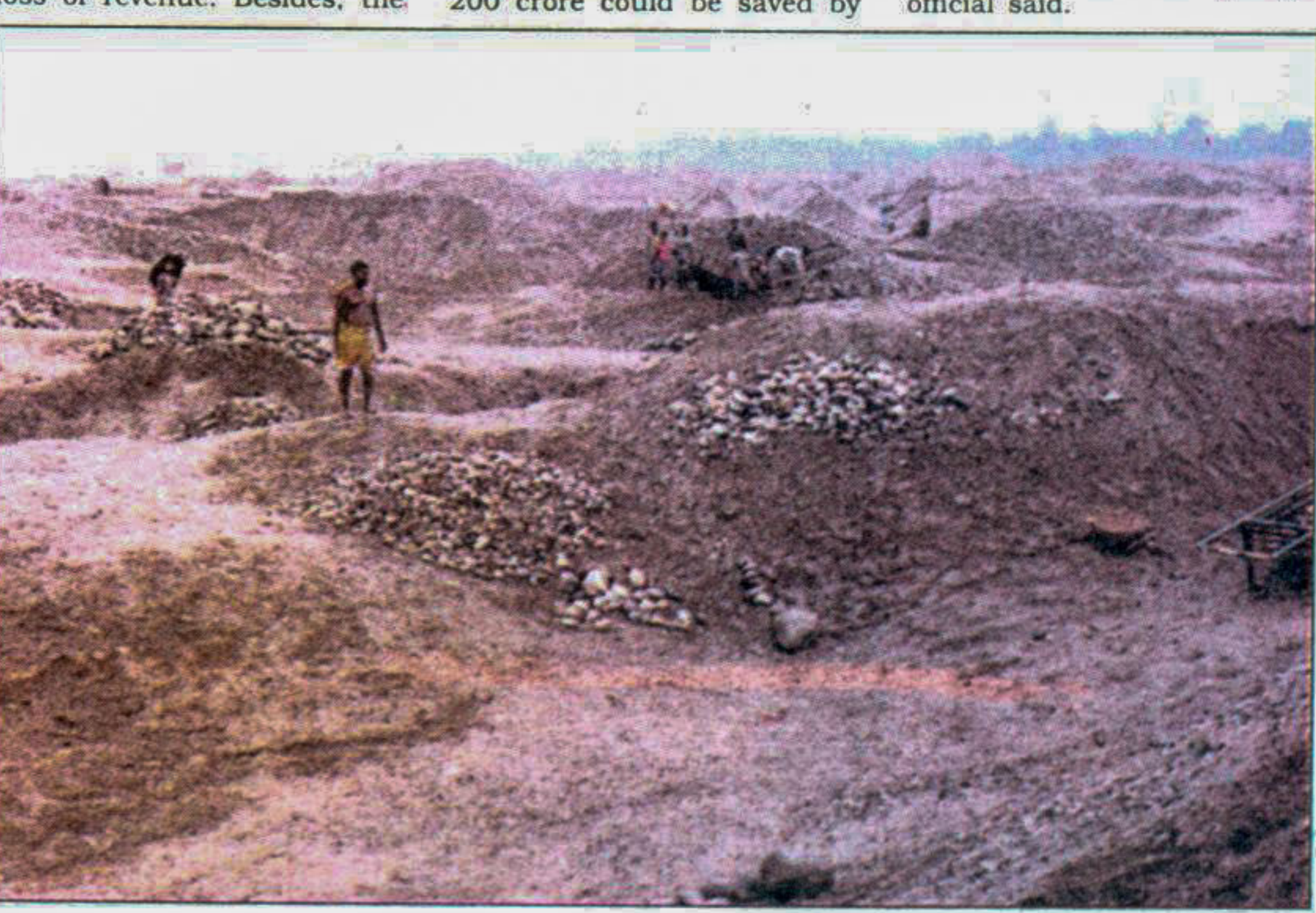
When contacted, an official of the WDB said that, the project was prepared several times, but it could not be implemented due to shortage of funds. He, however, informed that, considering the importance, the revised project has recently been included in the 'National Desiltation Programme', which had chosen some very important rivers through out the country.

Recently, a team of experts from the consultant firm conducted a field survey in the project area of Companyganj thana, he added. Feasibility study of the whole project is already in the concluding stage, official said.



Thousands of boats are being used for collecting stones from Bholaganj stone quarry in the riverbed of the River Dholai in Companyganj thana of Sylhet district.

— Star photo



Huge quantity of stones collected from the riverbed at Bholaganj stone quarry being readied for transportation to Sylhet and other places of the country.

— Star photo