

Pirates abduct 6 fishermen in Bay

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Feb 14: Pirates swooped on a fishing trawler, looted valuables, including fish, and abducted 6 fishermen in the Bay last week.

According to Chowdhury Mostafa, president of Patharghat Trawler Owners' Association, a group numbering about 15 attacked the trawler, FB Rina. Ten fishermen on board were also beaten up by the pirates.

The abducted fishermen were identified as Mostafa Majee, 40, Nasir, 25, Majibar Matubar, 45, Ayub Ali, 22, Awal, 24, and Jalil, 25.

Adulterated fertilisers seized

From Our Correspondent JHENIDAH, Feb 14: Police recovered a huge quantity of adulterated fertilisers from Natun Hatchkha area in the town on Friday morning and arrested two persons.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided a truck recovered the fertilisers from the vehicle.

Consignee of the seized fertilisers Siddique and driver of the truck Romin were arrested.

A case was lodged with police in this connection.

Boy killed in road accident in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent SATKHIRA, Feb 14: A teenage boy was killed in a road accident at Plashpole on Satkhira-Kaliganj road recently.

The victim was identified as Jahangir, 13, son of Ali Moral of village Kumira in Tala thana.

Police sources said the victim was run over by an ambulance when he was trying to cross the road. He died on the spot.

A case was filed in this connection.

Drug addicts increasing in Kishoreganj

KISHOREGANJ, Feb 14: The number of drug addicts in the district has increased sharply causing grave concern among the guardians and peace loving people, reports UNB.

Unemployed youths, transport workers, day labourers, school and college dropouts are the victims of drug addiction.

Inform sources said bus stands, railway stations, Barabazar in the town, Bhairab Ferry Ghat are the main areas where dens of hemp, phenisidyl and home made alcohol are located.

Gambling and other immoral activities are also reported from different thana areas, hats and bazaars.

Smuggling of contraband Indian phenisidyl has increased alarmingly and it is sold openly in the hotels, restaurants and tea stalls.

It is alleged that a section of dishonest medicine dealers in the town are engaged in smuggling of phenisidyl and other sedative drugs to earn windfall profit.

Uncertainty over Rajshahi, Kurigram flood protection work

Erosion takes serious turn in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Feb 14: Works on protection of Rajshahi city from erosion and flood before the next rainy season has become uncertain with the postponement of the works on revetment of the most vulnerable parts of bank of the River Padma.

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) took the project of the Padma River Bank Revetment at Alupatty, Fudkipara and Kumarpara of the city under Phase V of Rajshahi Town Protection Project under Border River Protection Development and Town Protection Project (9 sub-projects) during the year 1999-2000.

Rajshahi Town Protection embankment, an earthen-work

The authorities has not shown any reason of suspending the work," the contractor, Kh Mainul Islam said. He has already completed about 35 per cent of the work and spent about Taka 90 lakh, he claimed. He imported boulders stones from India and made cement blocks that have been placed at different points alongside the bank of the river.

When contacted, the Chief Engineer, North-Western Zone, BWDB, Rajshahi said that the work of the revetment of the bank of the River Padma had been postponed at the instruction from the Ministry of Water Resources and Flood Control. A bidder named Milon Traders of Naogaon has submitted a com-

The lottery was held in presence of the four bidders and Kh Mainul Islam stood the winner.

Accordingly, the Executive Engineer, Rajshahi O&M Division-I issued the formal work order on January 6 and Sub-Divisional Engineer, Rajshahi O&M Sub-Division-I issued the detailed work order on the same day.

"I have agreed to work on condition of getting payment of the bills when the fund will be available as there has been no fund for the work at present," Kh Mainul Islam said. "And I have already spent a handsome amount", he said.

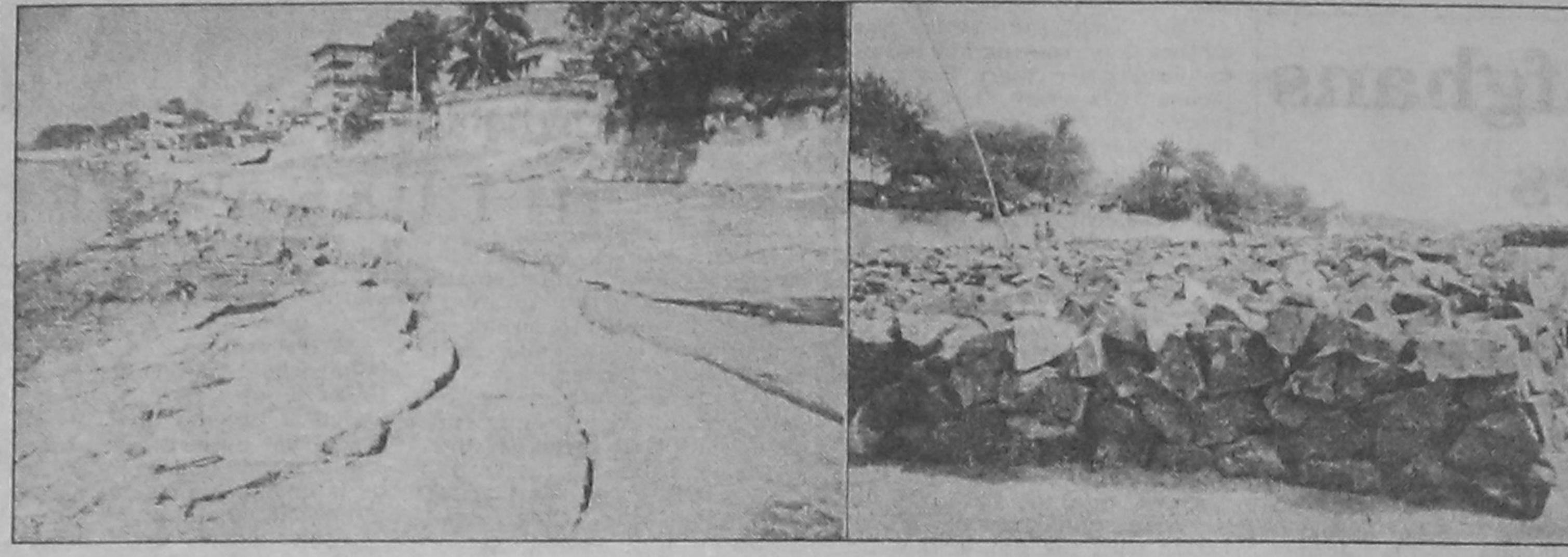
A source in BWDB said that an influential minister, recently appointed from greater

Ziaur Rahman. Another attempt was made in 1991 to salvage the project and BWDB completed construction of 179km embankment, 145km irrigation canals and 12 bridges and installation of 17 sluice gates, spending Tk 86 crore.

In 1991-92, a total of Tk 4.52 crore was spent for renovation and repair of the project.

Later in 1992-93, construction of two groynes, 540km riverbank protection work, 574 crossdams and two groynespans were completed under Secondary Town Integrated Protection Project funded by ADB.

However, a 500-metre area of the flood protection embank-



(Left) Unabated erosion by the River Padma threatens Kumar Para area in Rajshahi city. (Right) Deposited boulder stones meant for river bank revetment works, which have been suspended recently, lying in Dargah Para area.

plaint to the ministry of tampering in scrutinising and evaluating the bids and the ministry responded to it.

According to the official sources, a number of six bids were received. At first the Tender Committee A (TC-A) of the Chief Engineer, North-Western Zone, BWDB, Rajshahi evaluated the qualification and price of the bids and found all the six bids 'technically qualified'. TC-A submitted its evaluation report on December 21, 1999 to the Tender Committee-M (TC-M) comprising Member (O&M) and BWDB, Dhaka as the chairman, Member (Finance), BWDB, Dhaka as a member and Additional Chief Engineer, North-Western Zone, BWDB Rajshahi as the member-secretary.

The river, diverting its course to the Bangladesh side, has been directly striking the city causing severe erosions during last three years. A vast area has already been devoured by the river. At some places, as in Alupatty, Fudkipara, Kumarpara, Dargarpa, Bulanpur, Talaimari, Dashmari, Shyampur and Shahapur, the river has approached closer to the city residences and the Town Protection Embankment and is flowing only a few yards of the bank on the side of the city.

It is being apprehended that the River Padma would breach the Town Protection Embankment at those points in the next rainy season and in that case the whole city and the suburbs would go under five to 10 feet deep water within half-an-hour. To save Rajshahi city from such a devastation the project on Padma River Bank Revetment was taken on emergency basis by BWDB early this financial year.

The estimated cost of the work was Taka 2,50,58,621.

After all necessary formalities, the work was given to Kh Mainul Islam of Hossinigonj, Rajshahi. The work order was given in the first week of January this year and scheduled to be completed by May next.

But suddenly on January 29 the work was suspended by the BWDB authorities.

Rajshahi region, was playing behind the screen to manage the work for his 'favourite' Milon Traders. The minister has reportedly got agitated when his 'favourite' Milon Traders failed to win another BWDB bid for a work in Naogaon even after creating a reign of terror, it is learnt.

The allegation of Milon Traders against the tender committee of tampering in scrutinising and evaluating the bids is a serious allegation and the ministry has taken it seriously," the Chief Engineer, North-Western Zone, BWDB, Rajshahi said over telephone.

The ministry has ordered suspension of the work and formed a body to investigate into the matter, he said.

Sources are apprehending that the investigation and final disposal of the issue, that is feared to be more intricate with passage of time will take much time. This will make impossible to complete work by May. Then the rainy season will begin and Rajshahi city with a population of about seven lakh will have to remain under threat of going under water for another year. This has been a prime concern of the city dwellers.

Another bid submitted by Sk Emdadul Haque Al-Mamun was also excluded from the lottery for being "responsive but not the lowest". The other four bids including that of Kh Mainul Islam were found to quote the same lowest amount of Tk 2,38,05,690 only which is five per cent below than the estimated cost. So the TC-M selected these four 'lowest responsive' bids for lottery.

UNB from Kurigram says: An ambitious flood protection and irrigation project, taken up by Water Development Board (WDB) some 27 years ago, could not yet be implemented due to administrative complications.

The Tk 36.54 crore project, undertaken in 1973, was scheduled to be completed in 1980-81 fiscal.

The project works included construction of 183-km embankment and 93 bridges, installation of 23 regulators and excavation of 254-km irrigation canals. But, the project works had been suspended after the 1975 changeover.

In 1980-81 fiscal, another scheme, Dharala Barrage Project involving Tk 181 crore, was merged with the project.

After the merger of the two projects, WDB had set up a 'barge division' for its rapid implementation. But the project work was again suspended after the assassination of President

ment near Chhemberkuti was washed away by floodwaters last year.

Although some works have been done on the embankment later, the Dharala Barrage Project never saw the light.

Meanwhile, the Barrage Division has been renamed as WB-2.

Our Satkhira Correspondent says: Erosion by the River Kacobandu-033, BARI cabbage, coal BARI-SEEM (shirking bean) and BARI-brinjal, have also gained popularity among the farmers.

During the last two decades thousands of families have already become homeless by such erosion. Seriously affected areas are Balia Bazar, Jathua Bazar, Mela Bazar, Magura and Rahimpur, all in Tala thana.

This year erosion by the river has rendered over 500 families homeless. More than 600 bighas of land, roads, trees, shops, bamboo gardens, and schools have gone under water.

Erosion is a common phenomenon in these areas, but no step has been taken so far to check the erosion.

The homeless people have taken shelter on roads. Most of them are passing their days in misery.

400 hectares under moog farming in Mymensingh

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Feb 14: A total of 400 hectares of land have been brought under moog cultivation in the district during the current season with a production target of 270 metric tons.

Moog, a variety of pulse, grows in the district abundantly.

According to thana-wise break-up supplied by local Agriculture Extension Department (AED) sources, 20 hectares have been brought under the cultivation in Sadar thana with a production target of 14 mt. 30 hectares in Muktagacha with a production target of 20 mt. 40 hectares in Phulbaria with a production target of 28 mt. 50 hectares in Trishal with a production target of 34 mt. 60 hectares in Gafargacha with a

UP chairman removed in Feni

FENI, Feb 14: Chairman of Amjadhat Union Parishad (No 9) in Parshuram thana Khorshed Alami Majumder has been removed on charge of irregularities, reports UNB.

Officials sources said 11 members of the union, out of 12, passed a no-confidence motion against the Chairman in April 1999, for his alleged nepotism, misappropriation of government money and misuse of power.

The chairman had filed a writ petition in the High Court against the move, which was dismissed by the court on December 12, 1999.

The Local Government Ministry passed the removal order on January 27, 2000. Khorshed Alami was elected chairman in 1998.

Farmers opting for vegetable cultivation

NETRAKONA, Feb 14: Farmers in the district are increasingly opting for vegetable cultivation as its demand has risen with the change of urban people's food habit, reports UNB.

Farmers said the demand for vegetables like cauliflower, cabbage, potato, brinjal, tomato, spinach, bean and pumpkin has multiplied over the last few years.

Besides, they said, it takes less time in harvesting these winter crops than many other traditional ones.

A farmer at village Kailati in Sadar thana said he planted tomato in October and started harvesting just from the next month. He had sold tomato at Tk 30 per kg at the beginning of the season.

A farmer, he said, could fetch up as much as Tk one lakh from an acre of land by cultivating "early variety" of tomato.

Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI) has developed "early variety" of tomato-4 and tomato-5, officials said.

Meanwhile, some other vegetable seeds, including BARI-ground-033, BARI cabbage, coal BARI-SEEM (shirking bean) and BARI-brinjal, have also gained popularity among the farmers.

Private tuition common feature in Netrakona

From Our Correspondent

NETRAKONA, Feb 14: Private tuition offered by teachers of schools and colleges, both government and non-government, has become a common feature in the district.

Guardians allege that the teachers are not sincere enough in imparting lessons in classrooms, forcing the students to visit their houses for private coaching in batches.

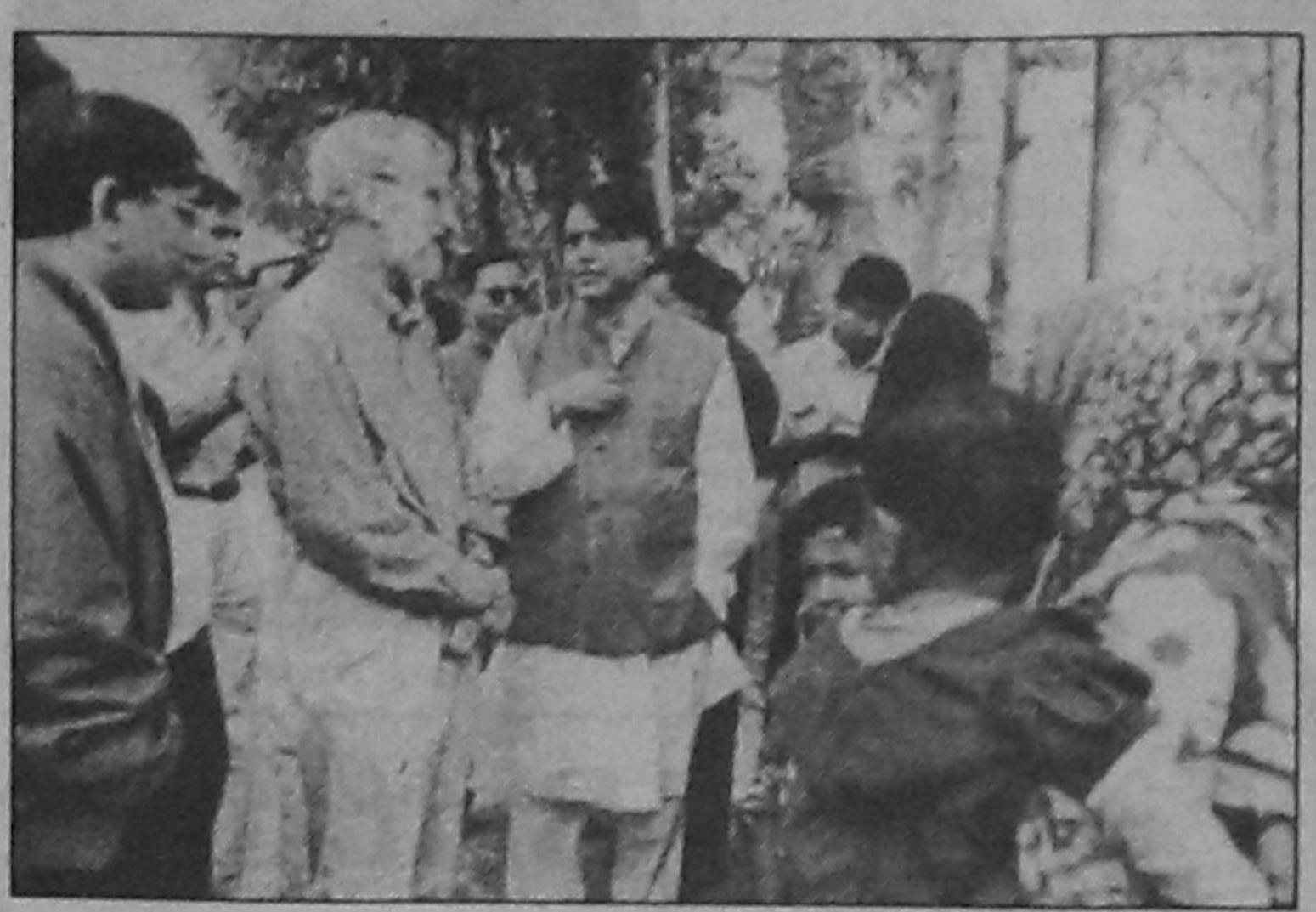
Teachers of science subjects, besides English earn handsome amount of money by doing private tuition, guardians said.

News snaps

Worker killed in roof collapse

COMILLA, Feb 14: A construction worker was killed and six others were injured when the roof of an under-construction building of Army collapsed at Dakhin Kachar village in Sadar thana on Friday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Shahid, 25, son of late Abdul Ali of the village, died on the spot as the roof broke down when he along with his co-workers was working inside the under-construction building. The injured were admitted to Comilla Combined Military Hospital. The body was sent to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. A local contractor under the supervision of Army was constructing the building.



Canadian High Commissioner in Dhaka David Preston visiting a development project of Proshika in Manikganj district recently. Proshika president Dr Quazi Faruque Ahmed and senior vice-president Mahbubul Karim are also seen.

— Proshika photo

Boro farming on 1.78 hectares

COMILLA, Feb 14: Some 1.78 lakh hectares of land in 12 thanas will be brought under Boro crop cultivation with an output target of 6.5 lakh mts, reports UNB.

Agriculture officials said local and high yielding varieties of paddy will be cultivated on over 1.06 lakh hectares of land while wheat, potato, mustard seeds, sweet potato, chilli, pulse and other vegetables on 72,000 hectares. To achieve the target, Agriculture Extension Department is providing training to farmers while BADC supplying seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and other agri-inputs to them. Bangladesh Krishi Bank and other commercial banks are also providing soft-term loans to the farmers. But many farmers said the output target of wheat and other winter vegetables might not be achieved due to water logging on a large track of land.

Wheat sanctioned

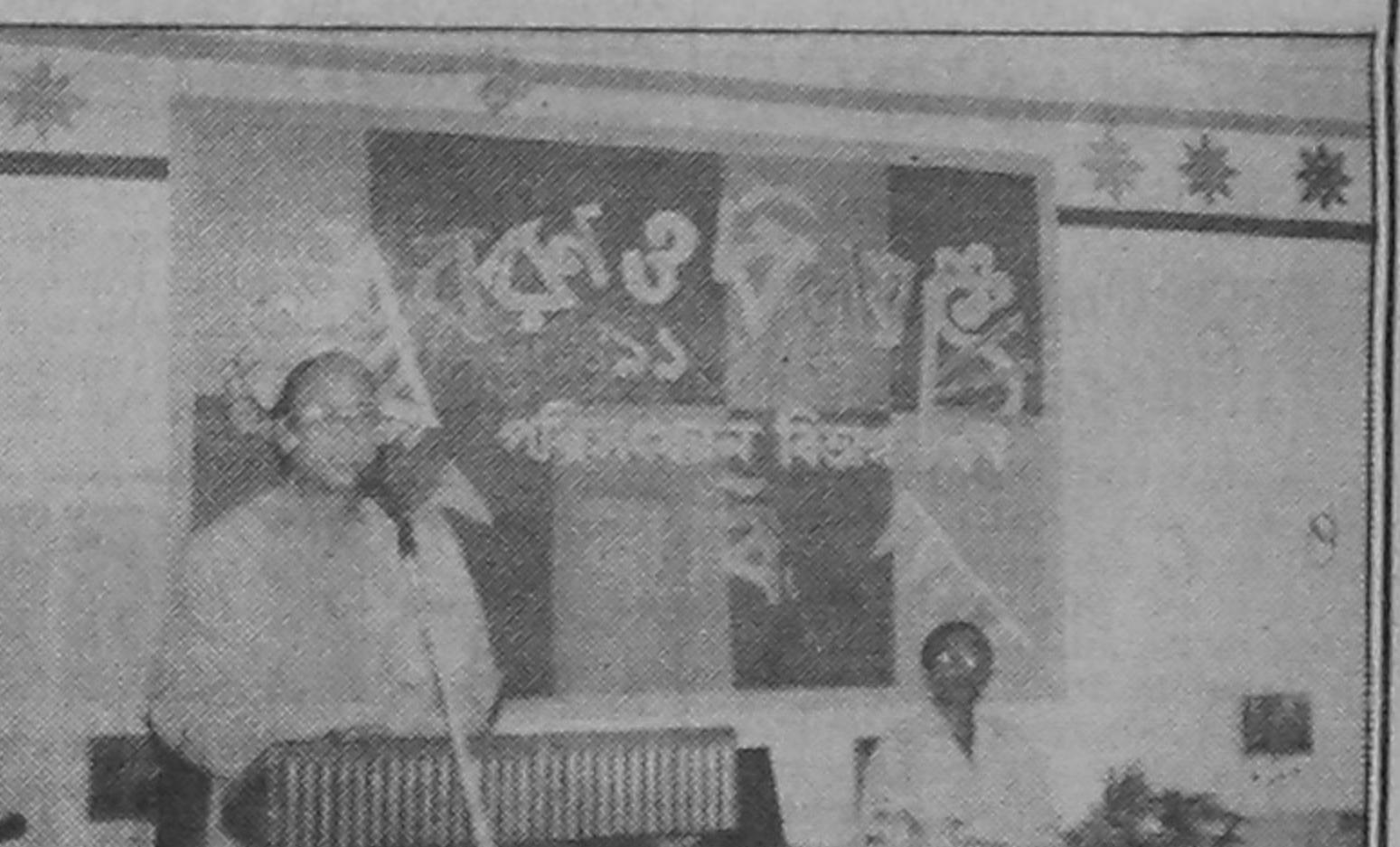
KISHOREGANJ, Feb 14: Relief and Rehabilitation Department here has sanctioned 1726.577 metric tons of wheat to implement 201 projects in 13 thanas, reports UNB.

The projects are being implemented under Post-Flood Rural Infrastructure Renovation programme of the department. Meanwhile, 89 per cent works on the projects have been completed.

Training programme

FARIDPUR, Feb 14: A two-day training programme for the trainers of Biogas Technology under Production and Uses of Biogas and Organic Fertiliser for Maintaining Environmental Balance Project concluded here on Monday, reports UNB.

Fifty trainers, including assistant engineers and thana engineers of LGED from Faridpur, Meherpur, Madaripur, Shariganj, Kushtia, Gopalganj, Chuadanga and Rajbari districts took part in the training. Civil Surgeon Dr Motur Rahman formally inaugurated the training programme at the auditorium of RESP at Badarpur on Sunday.



Rajshahi University Vice-Chancellor Prof Sayeedur Rahman Khan addressing at a freshers' reception and farewell ceremony at the Department of Statistics. — Star photo

Open sale of non-iodized salt

SHARIATPUR, Feb 14: Non-iodised salt, which is largely blamed for goitre disease, are openly being sold in different markets, reports UNB.

A large number of people are suffering from various diseases like goitre, deafness, dumbness, physical handicap and mental retardation caused by iodine-deficiency. A section of unscrupulous traders, defying the government ban on sale and storing of non-iodised salt, are selling non-iodised and adulterated salt, giving a rise to the diseases. As non-iodised salt is cheaper than the iodised one, rural poor prefer the non-iod