

## National

## Kibria calls for investment in Khulna

KHULNA, Mar 3: Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria has called on the entrepreneurs to invest in Khulna to exploit its untapped potentials and thus expedite the country's economic progress, reports UNB.

He made the call while inaugurating the newly constructed bhaban of Janata Bank in city on Wednesday.

The bhaban was built at a cost of Tk 5 crore.

The minister said that investment opportunities in the region would increase further with the setting up of EPZ, construction of Rupsa Bridge and rising facilities at Mongla Port.

The function was also addressed by State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Talukdar Abdul Khaleque, NBR Chairman Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury and MD of Janata Bank MA Chowdhury.

The finance minister, also visited Sigma Sea Food of Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters' Association.

## Erosion devoured 50 villages in 28 yrs in Shariatpur

SHARIATPUR, Mar 3: Erosion by river Padma devoured 50 villages in three thanas of the district rendering several lakhs of people homeless in last 28 years, reports UNB.

Thirty educational institutions, 50 mosques, three cattle markets, 25 villages, bazars, five police camps and 10,000 acres of cultivable land went into the river bed during the 80 years.

The river also swallowed 60 km long Raita Moshikandi Flood Protection embankment constructed in 1972.

The villages devoured from 1971 to till February, 2000, included Dhalikandi, Munshikandi, Shikderkandi, Monirhossin, Baperikandi, Badhu-char, Rab Baperikandi, Latif-Bandarachirkandi, Mad-barerikandi, Takikandi, Ismail Baperikandi, Tapadirkandi, Hakimbari Kadi, Paikpara, Dulachar, Kalmirchar, Dase-mkhandi and Kalibarkerkandi.

Officials said people of these villages shifted their homes several times and many of them are now passing their days without shelter. The victims are engaged in different petty jobs or rendered beggars.

## Mushroom farming project launched

RANGAMATI, Mar 3: In a bid to popularise mushroom as a nutritious food item in the hill districts, Agriculture Extension Department (AED) has launched the mushroom cultivation project, reports UNB.

District council Chairman Ching Kue Rowaza formally inaugurated the project on Tuesday.

Official sources said 28,170 people will be imparted practical training on mushroom production during the five-year project.

AED will also set up 1,200 demonstration farms here. Besides, the department will give all necessary technical assistance and marketing facilities to the growers.

## Two murdered in Narsingdi, Mymensingh

Two persons, including a woman, were murdered in Narsingdi and Mymensingh recently, reports UNB.

In Narsingdi, a young housewife was murdered allegedly by her husband for dowry at Shilmadhi village in Sadar thana on February 21.

Villagers said Farid Miah, a worker of Silpaver Textile Mills, hit his wife Nurunnahar following a quarrel over dowry, leaving her dead.

A case was filed. A young man was stabbed to death by his rivals at the red-light area in Mymensingh town last week.

Police said Hazrat, 28, an alleged alcohol trader in the brothel area, was stabbed critically by Nantu, the first husband of his wife Hajera, and his associates at about 11 pm.

There was a bitter relation between Nantu and Hazrat centering Hajera, a Sardaani of Thakubari in the red-light area.

Hazrat was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Police arrested Nantu, 30, and Rasheed, 27, from the spot. A case was filed with Kotwali police.

## Illegal houses, shops demolished in Sherpur

SHERPUR, Mar 3: Shops and houses constructed by illegal occupants along the Sherpur-Jamalpur highway were demolished on Wednesday, reports UNB.

A mustard oil mill, three residential houses and some 30 shops and restaurants were demolished during the drive that will continue until the entire roadside is cleared from illegal occupants.

About 150 people were displaced on Friday by the eviction, launched by the Roads & Highway Department in aid of police.

Goods and valuables seized during the eviction were deposited with a first class magistrate.

Short supply of sugarcane  
Production likely to fall short of target in 15 sugar mills

NARAIL, Mar 3: Hoping a bumper production of sugarcane, country's 15 sugar mills set a big target to produce 1.73 lakh mts of sugar crushing 22.60 lakh mts of sugarcane this season. But the output seems to fall far short of the target, reports UNB.

Official sources said nine mills, out of 10 in the country's northern region, have already ceased sugar production before achieving their targets due to short supply of sugarcane.

The closed mills — Rajshahi Sugar Mills, Natore Sugar Mills, Pabna Sugar Mills, Joy-purhat Sugar Mills, North Bengal Sugar Mills, Shatabganj Sugar Mills, Thakurgaon Sugar Mills and Rangpur Sugar Mills — produced 60.09 mts sugar crushing 888.69 mts of sugarcane against the target of 110.80 mts sugar.

To achieve the target, some 2.12 lakh acres of land have been brought under sugarcane cultivation in the region this season. But pest attack and flood have taken their toll on sugarcane production.

Crushing of sugarcane in unauthorised power crushers for production of molasses are also blamed for short supply of sugarcane to the sugar mills.

Mill-wise breakup of the targeted production: Pabna Sugar Mills — 8,000 mts, North Bengal Sugar Mills — 18,792 mts, Natore Sugar Mills — 16,842 mts, Kushtia Sugar Mills — 12,900, Keru and Company, Darshana — 12,270 mts, Mobarakganj Sugar Mills — 11,670 mts, Zeel Bangla Sugar Mills — 10,439 mts, Faridpur Sugar Mills — 11,820 mts, Joy-purhat Sugar Mills — 12,144 mts, Shyampur Sugar Mills — 7,850 mts.

Thakurgaon Sugar Mills — 10,444 mts, Rangpur Sugar Mills — 8,820 mts, Rajshahi Sugar Mills — 13,356 mts, Setabganj Sugar Mills — 9,144 mts and Panchagarh Sugar Mills — 9,396 mts.

An official of Ishwardi Sugar Research Institute said sucrose extraction from sugarcane in Bangladesh ranges from 5 and 8 per cent while 10-15 per cent in neighbouring India and Pakistan.

He suggested cultivation of high yielding variety of sugarcane to boost the country's sugar production.

Another report from Panchagarh adds: Panchagarh Sugar Mill produced 8,000 mts tons of sugar this season against 6,552 mts last year.

Officials said the sugar mill has already earned Tk 6 crore by selling sugar at Tk 24,000 per

metric ton.

The mill, which started production on November 12 last year, produced sugar worth about Tk 21.78 crore crushing 93,868 mts sugarcane till February 12. It produced sugar worth Tk 18 crore crushing 93,868 mts during the same period last year.

The officials said sugarcane growers received loan totaling Tk 8.23 crore through 31 sugarcane purchasing centres in 1998-1999 fiscal and the mill authorities have so far real sed Tk 3.20 crore from them.

Panchagarh Sugar Mill Workers' Union President Abdur Rahman and General Secretary Anwarul Haque hoped that the sugar mill, which incurred huge loss for years in the past, would soon emerge as a profit-making industry.

## Withdrawal of divisional commissioner demanded

RAJSHAHI, Mar 3: Rajshahi Sachetan Nagarik Kendra, a forum of general people, on Wednesday demanded withdrawal of Divisional Commissioner for his reported threat to file case under PSA against a local journalist, reports UNB.

Divisional Commissioner Khan Shahab Uddin reportedly threatened to file case under PSA against local Bhorer Kagoj representative and Press Club General Secretary Saidur Rahman.

Forum members from a rally at Saheb Bazar in the evening demanded withdrawal of the commissioner within a week.

They also announced to hold a rally at Shaheb Bazar Zero Point on Sunday (March 5).

Meanwhile, city unit JSD president Pradip Mridha, district BNP general secretary Adv Kamrul Monir, convenor of Natya Oikya Parishad Rafiqul Hasan Firoj and others in separate press releases protested the incident.

## Unauthorised factories threaten environment

SHARIATPUR, Mar 3: Unauthorised establishment of factories at road side and residential areas in all the six thana headquarters and in the town have posed a serious threat to the environment, reports UNB.

Local people complained that a number of factories were set up in residential areas and at roadside violating the relevant laws.

Taking the advantage of the negligence of the authorities concerned some unscrupulous people have established engineering workshops, welding shops, steel factories, flour mills and spice crushers near schools, public places and residential areas.

It is learnt that owners of the establishment did not take permission from the authorities concerned to set up enterprises.

Heavy noise and other types of pollution have been causing health problem and welding shops are damaging the eye sight of people.

## Arsenic related diseases attack 12 in Jessore

JESSORE, Mar 3: Amid growing arsenic panic across the country, waters of 2,166 tubewells out 2,306 in Keshabpur thana were found arsenic contaminated, thus creating a paucity of safe drinking water, reports UNB.

A recent survey conducted by Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) revealed that all the tubewells in the thana are arsenic contaminated except 43 deep tubewells.

Reports received so far said 12 people were attacked by arsenic related diseases in the thana, including four in Bakarsahi village.

To avoid arsenic problem, PHED has been suggesting people to use water of surface and deep tubewells. Only 117 deep tubewells have been allocated for the thana.

According to the government rule, the users of deep tubewells have to deposit Tk 4500 for each to PHED and people deposited money for 48 tubewells only.

The PHED set up only three deep tubewells to ensure the public health.

When contacted an official of PHED told the news agency that the contractors could not set up the tubewells due to shortage of materials.

## 28 houses gutted in Sherpur

SHERPUR, Mar 3: Sixteen families were rendered homeless following a devastating fire that gutted 28 houses at Sahabdirchar Madhyapara under Sadar thana on February 22, reports UNB.

Residents said the fire originated from the kitchen of Mozaffar Hossain in the afternoon that soon engulfed the nearby houses.

The victims said they have lost their tin-shed and cutcha houses, a power tiller, paddy, straw, mustard seeds and cash money kept inside their houses.

The loss was estimated at about Tk 10 lakh.

Five lakh hilsha fries netted everyday from Jamuna  
Fish disease breaks out in Thakurgaon

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 3: Defying the government ban, a section of unscrupulous fishermen are fishing a huge quantity of hilsha jatka, or fries, from the river Jamuna.

The fishermen are fishing in the river indiscriminately, but the members of law enforcing agencies are not taking action against them, local people said. Officials of Fisheries Department are also reluctant to take action against the lawbreakers.

Fishermen now net more than five lakh hilsha fries from the Jamuna everyday, posing threat to hilsha fish production, an unofficial estimate said.

Fishermen told this correspondent about 60 per cent of the catches are hilsha. Most of the hilsha fries are netted at Sirajganj Ghat point in the river, fishermen said.

Fish traders in the district headquarters said they are compelled to buy fries from fishermen and sell in retail markets as acute fish crisis prevails. Supply of big size hilsha is not adequate, so we have to purchase fries from the fishermen, said Panu, a fish trader in the main fish market of the town.

Hilsha is found at Nagarbari, Fulchhari, Sirajganj Ghat and Jagannathganj Ghat points in the river Jamuna. However, hilsha is found abundantly in the southern region of the country.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take immediate measures to stop fishing of hilsha fries.

Meanwhile, UNB from Thakurgaon says: Fish disease has broken out in epidemic form in different ponds and water bodies in the district.

In this year the intensity of the disease is more than that of

last year. The ponds of Syed Naimul Hossain, Jafrullah, Shahidul Islam, Nurul Islam of village Dakshin Batina, Tasiruddin Ahmed of village Baikhunthapur, Nazmul Hasan of College Para, Thakurgaon all under Thakurgaon sadar thana have been attacked with the disease.

The disease generally called 'fish cancer' breaks out at the onset of the winter season. The general symptoms of the disease are the development of different types of 'ulcers' on different areas of the body of the fishes. As the time passes the 'ulcers' become more intense

and ultimately the fishes die. The varieties of fishes attacked with the disease were Ruhi, Mrigel, Koti, Magur, Shingi, Shoul, Puti, Gachi, Taki and Tengra.

According to the fishery experts, the life span of the disease in a particular area is five years. In 1993-94 the disease broke out in epidemic form in different areas here. By the time seven years have passed but the disease is yet to be cured.

The particular cause of the disease is unknown. The fishery experts termed the disease as 'ulcerative syndrome'. Experienced sources said indiscriminate use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers, presence of excessive iron and absence of calcium and fluorine in water are the causes of the disease.

The fishery department suggested to use lime in the pond and salt bath of the disease fishes as remedy for the disease.

But pisciculturists said this treatment alone cannot control the disease. They demanded some effective measures to control the disease. They also demanded that pisciculturists should be given special training and effective medicines should be supplied to combat the disease.



Hilsha fries on sale in a fish market in Sirajganj town. The picture was taken last week. — Star photo

## Maximum fund for development activities in CHT: Matia

ADRAKCHHORA (Rangamati), Mar 3: Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said here on Sunday that the present government had undertaken the Chittagong Hill Tracts Integrated Agriculture Development Project (CHTIADP) at a cost of Tk 30 crore, reports BSS.

The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is allocating maximum fund for carrying out development activities in Chittagong Hill Tracts in bid to pay back the 21 years' dues of the insurgency-battered people of the CHT, she said.

She was addressing a meeting as the chief guest here immediately after inaugurating a water control structure constructed by CHTIADP at

Adrakchhara in Langadu thana, an inaccessible hamlet, about 100-kilometre north-east from the district headquarters.

The water control structure built at a cost of Tk 12 lakh will bring about 100 acres of land under irrigation including sufficient provision of pisciculture and duck culture.

Chairman of the task force on Repatriated Tribals and Internal Refugees Rehabilitation Affairs Dipankar Talukdar MP, Atiqur Rahman Atiq MP, Director General of Agriculture Extension Directorate M Enamul Haque and local UP Chairman Uzzal Kanti Chakma spoke in the meeting while Chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council Ching Kew

Roaza was in the chair.

Matia Chowdhury said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is determined to ensure overall development of CHT, specially communications and agriculture sectors.

The Agriculture Minister urged the people to raise horticulture, vegetable gardens besides cultivation of paddy and plant trees to bring a positive change in their socio-economic condition.

She warned the officials of her ministry that stern actions be taken against those who would be found negligent in rendering services to the farmers.

Matia Chowdhury assured

the people that necessary steps would be taken to resume supply of food grains through VGF cards to them whose lands have been lying under water due to preservation of water in the Kaptai Lake. A good chunk of fringe land could not be brought under cultivation as water level in the lake remaining high in comparison with the last year.

Adrakchhara, the inaccessible tribal hamlet wore a festive look on Sunday on arrival of the minister for the first time in that locality. People of different ages welcomed the agriculture minister warmly.

Matia Chowdhury urged all tribal and non-tribal to work unitedly for development of the three hill districts.

## Poultry farm, houses gutted in 2 districts

Fire gutted a poultry farm and houses in Rangamati and Khulna recently, report agencies.

Some 200 chickens were roasted alive and four houses gutted in a fire at a poultry farm in Sadar Hospital area in Rangamati Saturday night.

Fire brigade sources said the fire originated from a short circuit at midnight and raged through the nearby four houses burning down valuables worth of Tk 2 lakh.

Firefighters put out the blaze after an hour of hectic efforts. Locals suspected that it was an act of arson to destroy the poultry farm.

In Khulna, at least 15 houses were gutted in a devastating fire at Nayabati under Khalishpur thana of the city recently.

According to the fire service, the fire originated from a house of one Zillur Rahman and immediately spread to other houses.

None was seriously injured

in this incident.

Mayor of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) Sheikh Tayebur Rahman along with other concerned officials visited the area.

Another report from Thakurgaon says: The Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS), a local NGO, distributed relief materials worth about Taka 50,000 among 56 fire victim families of village Gariail under Bara Palashbari union of Balladangi thana in the district recently.

The relief materials included sarees, lungis and utensils.

The families were affected in a devastating fire in December last year, which completely burnt their houses to ashes.

Dabirul Islam MP, Chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Social Welfare, Hasna Hena Khan Project Co-ordinator, RDRS, Thakurgaon and TNO of Balladangi were present on this occasion.

## 10 held on various charges in districts

Ten people, including five students, were arrested on various charges in Mymensingh, Cox's Bazar, Narayanganj and Gazipur districts in recent days, report agencies.

In Mymensingh, five students of Ananda Mohon College were arrested from Mominunnesa Govt College on Saturday on charge of terrorism.

The arrested were identified as Russell, Abu Sayed and Towhid Bhuiyan of Political Science department, and Mahfuzur Rahman Asad and Tariqul Islam Roni of Accounting department.

A young man was arrested along with two firearms from Damdamia check-post in Teknaf thana under Cox's Bazar district on Saturday.

Police said BDR jawans arrested Moshataque Ahmed, 25, of Digdhila Beel village in the thana from a Cox's Bazar bound bus along with a foreign-made revolver and a local-made pistol.

In Narayanganj, a man was arrested along with a live cocktail after a brief gunfight with a gang of robbers on Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Madanpur recently.

Police said a group of armed dacoits, who blocked the highway with logs for committing robbery in passing vehicles, opened shots at the police as they swung into action to thwart their robbery attempt at about 2:15 am.

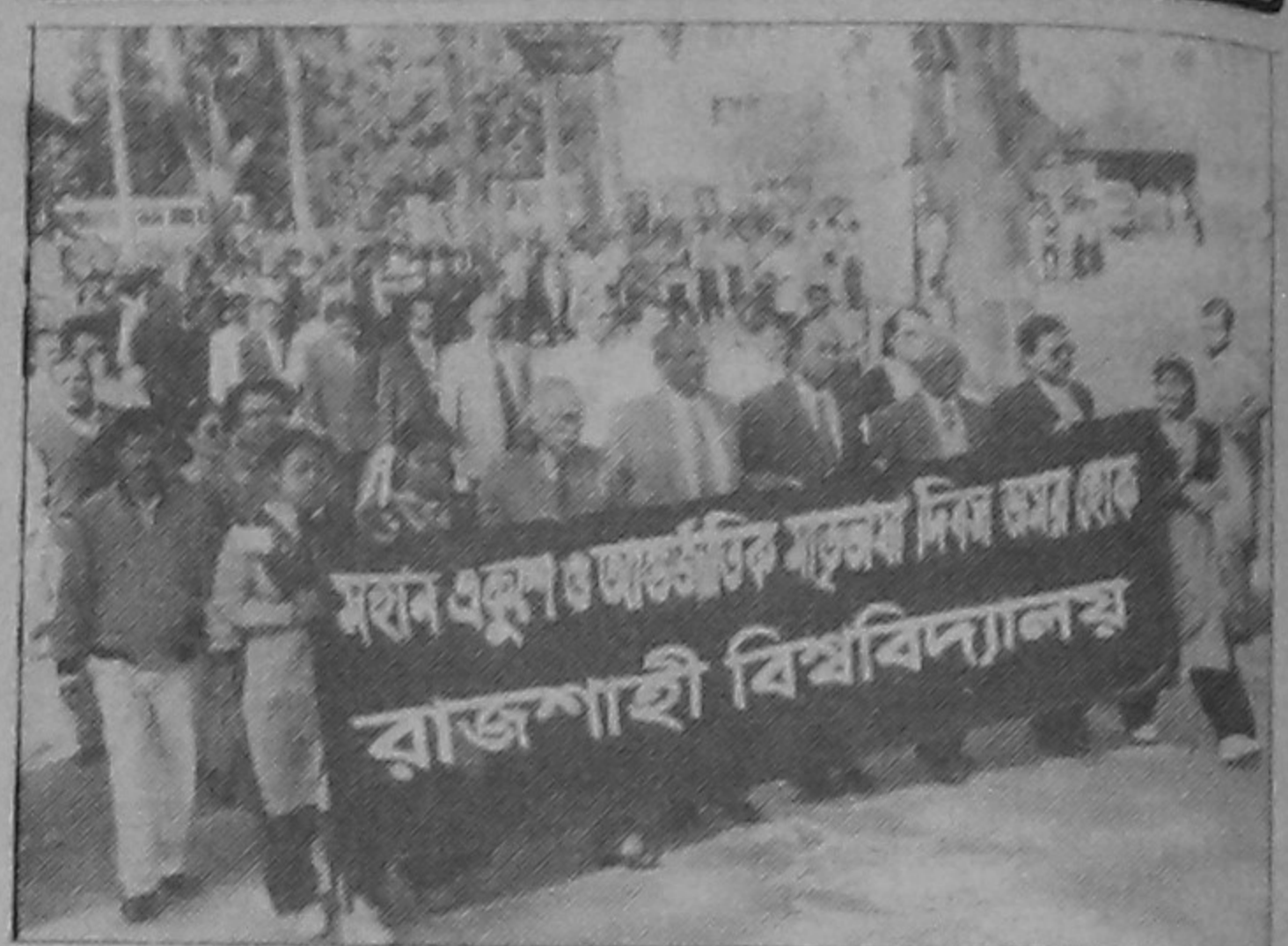
However, police overpowered them after a brief gun battle and nabbed one of the bandits identified as Nuruzzaman.

In Gazipur, police arrested three bandits from village Kewa in Sripur thana recently.

Police along with villagers chased away a gang of robbers and nabbed three of them as they tried to steal construction materials of and R&H bridge in the area.

They also seized a truck-brought by the muggers to carry the construction materials.

## News snaps



A procession was brought out on Rajshahi University campus on the occasion of Shaheed Day and International Mother Language Day. Teachers and students led by the university vice chancellor, Professor Sayeedur Rahman Khan, joined the procession. — Star photo

## Use of power tiller increasing

PANCHGARH, Mar 3: As the use of power tiller gained popularity here, tilling of soil with traditional plough and bullocks is passing away, reports UNB.

To cultivate in scientific method and increase the production government had decided to import power tillers from China in 1989-90. The farmers became interested in it as the import was free from duty. Besides, the power tillers take less time and cultivate the land properly than the traditional plough. As a result the farmers are now preferring the power tillers for cultivation. The use of power tillers increased substantially in greater Dinajpur district including Panchagarh after 1992.

Deputy Director Yasin Ali of the District Agriculture Extension Department said though the use of power tiller started in the region later but during the current season the traditional plough are hardly seen in the field.

## Bid to enhance bamboo output

SHARIATPUR, Mar 3: A new measure to create bamboo clusters on low lands along the roads has been taken up to increase bamboo production that is on the decline, reports UNB.

Agriculture Extension Department said the 10-year project will also help in meeting the domestic demand and earning foreign currency by exporting bamboo products. A feasibility study found that the roadside low and is suitable for bamboo cultivation. It will also help in bringing fallow land under use. The project has created enthusiasm among the local people who find the venture profitable.

## Mothers given tetanus injection

PIROJPUR, Mar 3: Some 25,000 child expecting women were given tetanus injection while 106,605 children vaccinated against various diseases in 1999, reports UNB.

Of the total children, 20,634 were vaccinated in Sadar thana, 25,138 in Mathbaria, 20,240 in Nesarabad, 20,209 in Bhandaria, 7,580 in Kowkhal, 15,296 in Nazirpur and 3,712 children in Pirojpur Municipalities. Under the Extended Programme of Immunization (EPI), District Health Department provides BCG, DPT and Polio vaccines to under five children of the six thanas and a municipality, officials said.

## Workshop arrangement

RANGAMATI, Mar 3: A day-long workshop on safe road arrangement was held here on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Institute of Media Communication and Training (IMCT) on behalf of National Road Safety Council arranged the workshop at the Deputy Commissioner's conference room. A total of 27 people, including government officials, newsmen and leaders of bus owners and workers' association, took part in the workshop. The workshop focussed on how local administration, common people and drivers could play a vital role in ensuring safety of passengers and pedestrians.

## Confce on 'Nursing Research'

SATKHIRA, Mar 3: A conference on 'Nursing Research' was held here in the Nursing Training Centre (NTC) auditorium recently, reports BSS.

It was presided over by civil surgeon of the district Dr S M Mostafa Anwar. Deputy Commissioner of the district Saiful Alam attended the conference as the chief guest. It was addressed, among others, by officer-in-charge of NTC Khaled Khanom, a trainer of NTC Horidash Audhikary and ward-in-charge of Sadar hospital Rehana Begum and Selina Khatun.



MA Gafur, Chairman of Red Crescent Society, Chandpur unit, distributing blankets among the members of community police in Chandpur recently. — Star photo

## BKB loan disbursed

JHALAKATI, Mar 3: Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) has disbursed over Tk 4.45 crore farm loan in four thanas here in the last eight months of the current fiscal, reports UNB.

Officials said the bank disbursed the loan through its 12 branches in Sadar, Nalchiti, Kathalia and Rajapur thanas till February this year against its target of Tk 11.68 crore. The farmers are utilising the loan in farming paddy, mustard, wheat and vegetables and investing in poultry and dairy farms. The bank also recovered Tk 5.45 crore outstanding loan from farmers against its total outstanding loan of over Tk 11.81 crore during the period.

## Barisal Bar Council poll

BARISAL, Mar 3: The election of the District Bar Council was held here at its premises recently, reports BSS.

Masudul Huq and Kamrul Ahsan were elected as president and general secretary respectively for the year 2000. Abudulaziz Sajid and Abdul Wahab were elected vice presidents of the council. Sajid Chakrabarty Humayun Kabir Prince, Syed Golam Masud were elected joint secretaries of the bar. Other members are Mosleuddin Ahmed Kabir, Sheikh Tipu Sultan, Selina Parvin and Abdul Kalam Azad.

## 10-yr RI for possessing arms

CHUADANGA, Mar 3: A court here has convicted a man and sentenced him to 10 years rigorous imprisonment (RI) in an arms case, reports UNB.

According to prosecution, police arrested Zahurul Islam, son of Miazan Sheikh of village Joyrampur in Damurhuda thana, with a local made pistol on November 5, 1998. After examining the witnesses and records, the additional district and sessions judge handed down the judgement on Wednesday.

## Seminar

RANGAMATI, Mar 3: A seminar on socio-economic condition and healthcare facilities for the people of the hilly countryside was held at the District Council auditorium on Tuesday, reports UNB.

CHT Regional Council Chairman Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Lama attended the seminar as chief guest while the chairman of three hill district councils as special guest. A good number of participants, including government and non-government officials, journalists and local elite, were present in the seminar.