

150 children sent across border in a night?

KURIGRAM, Apr 3: One hundred and fifty children between the ages of 10 and 15, taken from impoverished families in shool areas by agents of an international child and women traffickers' chain are believed to have been sent across the border Wednesday night, reports UNB.

The children were gathered at Gauhar Park under the cover of darkness Wednesday night and taken to an unknown destination in trucks, residents said.

Sources said the traffickers, with the help of local agent Khalil of Pateshwari, Kurigram Sadar thana, lured the poor boys with promises of employment in factories in Chittagong. They were brought from Velakopa, old rail station para, Harikesh in the suburbs of Kurigram town and Chagram, Panchgachhi, Kadamtala, Jatrapur, Jodgha and Vogdanga char (shoal) areas across the Dhara river, in most cases without the knowledge of their parents.

The anxious parents were searching their children. They

caught Khalil when he went to Velakopa to collect more children on Friday. Khalil is reported to have told the villagers the children were sent to work in 22 thousand field factories and GR Steel Company in Shitalpur under Sitakunda thana. Khalil then fled Velakopa.

Identity of twenty-one of the children believed to have been shipped across the border was known. They are Tajul, Hakku Mia, Jalil, Minutu, Yeasin, Nazim, Lal, Mia, Mithu, Dukhu, Shukhu, Mizanur, Ashraf, Bipul, Noor, Shipan, Alam, Navan, Ayatul, Khurshed, Rafiqul and Mokbul.

Rafiqul Islam, commissioner of Kurigram Pourasava and a resident of Velakopa, said the children were kidnapped by taking advantage of their poverty.

The headmaster of Velakopa Primary School said three students have been missing since Wednesday.

Officer-in-charge of sadar thana, Sadul Islam, said he did not know anything about the incident.

3 die in Kushtia road accidents

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Apr 3: Three persons were killed and 25 others injured on Wednesday in three separate road accidents in the district.

A girl aged about 8 was run over by a minibus of Islamic University in the morning near Islamic University campus on Kushtia-Jhenidaha road. The accident took place when the girl, Shila, was crossing the road. The victim was the daughter of Barikuddin of village Harora under Shaalakupa thana of Jhenidaha district.

The university officials visited the spot immediately and settled the matter amicably with the guardians of the victim by paying compensation.

In another incident, a bicyclist was crushed under the wheels of a truck at Battail, three miles away from the district headquarters.

The victim was identified as Monsur Ali, 60, of village Kaburhat under Jagati union.

The victim was killed when the truck hit the bicyclist from behind. He died on the spot.

Police seized the truck. A case was filed with Kotwali police station.

In the third incident, a man was killed on the spot and 25

others were injured when a Meharpur-bound passenger bus fell into a roadside ditch near Khalishakundi on Kushtia-Meharpur Road.

The dead could not be identified. The injured passengers were admitted to hospital.

A case was lodged with Kushtia police station in this connection.

Another report says: Two people committed suicide in the district on Wednesday and Tuesday.

Ranu, 18, son of Ayub Ali of village Dhalnagar under Sadar thana committed suicide by taking poison on Wednesday. He was rushed to Kushtia General Hospital where he died. Family feud was stated to be the cause of the suicide. A UD case was lodged with police.

In separate incident, Azer Malitha, 35, son of Arzan Malitha of village Fakirabad under Bheramura thana committed suicide also by taking poison on Tuesday.

Family sources said the man took poison following altercation with his wife.

A UD case was filed with Bheramura police station in this connection.

Fish scarcity in Chandpur

From Our Correspondent

CHANDPUR, Apr 3: Acute scarcity of fish has been prevailing in Chandpur district causing great inconvenience to the consumers.

According to Chandpur Fisheries Department sources, the production of fish has fallen down by about 50 per cent due to the impact of siltation in major rivers.

Besides, drying up of canals, ponds, rivers and other water bodies have attributed to the fall of fish production. As a result 40 thousand fishermen have become jobless. They are passing their days in great hardship.

Fisheries experts opined that about 20 thousand ponds under seven thanas have been lying uncultivated due to dispute of ownership of ponds.

If these ponds are brought under fish cultivation, a huge quantity of fish worth about Taka 10 crore might be produced annually.

Moreover, about 40 per cent ponds are under share ownership. Due to uncultivation, these ponds have been silted and dried up. Many ponds have been covered with water hyacinth making fish cultivation impossible. If a comprehensive scheme is not taken up by the authorities concerned a large number of ponds would be left derelict causing heavy loss to the owners.

Fish cultivation in the areas have also been affected due to various fish diseases. Fish diseases have broken out in epidemic form in different areas recently.

Salinity in water hampers cultivation in Barisal

BARISAL, Apr 3: The Agriculture Departments of six southern districts of Barisal division have been facing a severe deadlock due to heavy salinity in water and want of proper irrigation here, reports BSS.

About 5 lakh hectares of cultivable land would not be able to be brought under rabi crop cultivation programme in the districts of Barisal, Jhalakathi, Bhola, Pirojpur, Patuakhali and Barguna under this division in this season due to unusual presence of salinity and want of irrigational equipments. This type of land is over 50 per cent of the total cultivable land here in this division. Of the districts, the conditions of Patuakhali and Barguna districts are more acute in comparison to other districts. About 70 per cent of the total cultivable land of these districts could not be brought under rabi crop cultivation this year.

According to Barisal regional agriculture extension office sources, the total cultivable land in Barisal region is 8,16,523 hectares during the current season. Of the total 4,82,495 hectares could not be brought under rabi crop cultivation this year. The uncultivable land is about 60 per cent of the total cultivable land in the region. Of the total 93,228 hectares have been remaining idle in Barisal district, 60,228 hectares in Pirojpur, 31,297 hectares in Jhalakathi, 1,41,323 hectares in Patuakhali, 70,758 hectares in Barguna and 84,942 hectares in Bhola districts.

Most of the uncultivable land is in the districts of Patuakhali and Barguna. Hundreds of hectares are looking deserted in the districts.

The local people told this correspondent that this land could not be brought under rabi crops cultivation due to presence of heavy salinity during some years past. The total land is gripped with salinity and as a result, irrigation could not be possible there.

Meanwhile, Chief Whip Abul Hasanat Abdullah visited Patuakhali district and instructed the relevant authority to install deep tubewells in the areas for proper cultivation of the rabi crops in the districts.

Dinesh murder: Two held in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, April 3: Police arrested two outlaws on Friday night in connection with the murder of Dinesh Chandra Mondoa, leader of outlawed Bi-plabi Communist Party.

The arrested outlaws were identified as Anil, 24, and Prithi, 23.

Police said Anil and Prithi confessed their involvement in the murder of Dinesh.

Dinesh was killed on the night of March 29 at Dumuria. Party rivals were responsible for the killing, police said.

Expecting a good harvest of IRRI-boro, farmers of village Gangalia in Magura Sadar thana uprooting weeds from their fields.

— Star photo



David Watkins, vice-president of Unocal Bangladesh Ltd opening Syed Hatim Ali School in Sylhet on March 29. The primary school was built by the donation of Unocal in 1959 near Jalalabad Gas Plant. Photo shows vice-president of the school board Prof Syed Maksud Ali (Right) and its founding member Alhaj Advocate M A Haque (Left). Alhaj M A Minim, headmaster of the school, Syed Abu Raihan, president of the school committee, John Liput, production manager of Unocal, Harry Weatherspoon, Bob Wheeler, field managers, Afzal Hossain and AKM Nurul Huda, community relations managers were also present on the occasion. The school started with 48 students and now it has been emerged as the second largest school in Sylhet with 35 teachers and 1,700 students.

Medicines worth Tk 1 cr stolen from Rangpur Medical College Hospital in 10 years

From Mozammel Haq

RANGPUR, Apr 3: Six hundred-bed Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH), the biggest medical institution in greater Rangpur and Dinajpur zones is now hostage in hands of the leaders of hospital employees.

Now they are practically running the hospital at their own whim. Every day hundreds of ailing patients are rushing at the door steps of RMCH, but they are allegedly facing great sufferings. Stealing of medicines from the store rooms of the hospital is a regular feature. No effective measure has so far been taken against the culprits. This has encouraged the thieves to steal medicines worth Taka one crore during the last 10 years. Alleged misappropriation of funds worth Taka 33 lakh has been detected from the sale proceeds of tickets, cabine and ward rents, X-ray, urine, stool and blood tests.

The hospital remains jam packed beyond its capacity. Everyday at least 200 to 250 extra patients are being admitted in different wards, it is widely alleged. The extra patients have to do flooring in absence of proper accommodation. All the beds remain filled-up most of the time.

Meanwhile, everyday 300 to 500 patients rush to the outdoor wing for treatment. Besides, over 100 patients usually come to the emergency ward everyday. But it is most painful that such huge number of ailing patients who throng at the doorstep of RMCH from remote places across the region are being deprived of treatment, the victims alleged.

Thyroid hormone study cannot be possible in the Nuclear Medicine Department of the hospital due to lack of required amenities. Thyroid affected patients are compelled to go to Dinajpur for this test by spending a huge amount of money and facing hazards.

A Cobalt machine imported from China in 1994 at a cost of Taka 3 crore and 50 lakh has not yet been installed, but before its installation it was found almost completely invalid due to negligence since 1994. The machine was imported by the government and sent to RMCH for installation in its Radio-Therapy Department for cancer treatment.

The sanitation system here is totally hopeless as most of the wards, toilets, latrines and beds remain unclean. There are 189 safety tanks in RMCH, out of which 158 have no cover. All the drains and open spaces in the backward of the hospital are filled up with wastes and night soil. Those overflow from the safety tanks emitting bad smells around the hospital campus causing great inconvenience to patients and visitors.

Most of the lifts are open having no doors. Patients and their attendants and others use it risking life.

The hospital is running short of doctors. At present there are 122 doctors. The post of 24 professors, out of 27 are now vacant. The post of the Nurses' Super is lying vacant since the inception of the hospital, deputy superintendent of RMCH told.

The hospital was renovated about two years back, but due to faulty works it requires renovation again.

All the eight units at the outdoor wing of the hospital patients are not getting proper medicare service. Hundreds of patients coming from remote areas across the region have been subjected to harassment.

When contacted with the RMCH director, he told The Daily Star that he had been trying his level best to render required medicare service to the ailing patients despite all odds.

55-km Bonapara-Nalka road linking Bangabandhu Bridge progressing

NATORE, Apr 3: Construction work on Bonapara-Hatikumrul-Nalka road connecting Bangabandhu Bridge has made a remarkable progress, reports UNB.

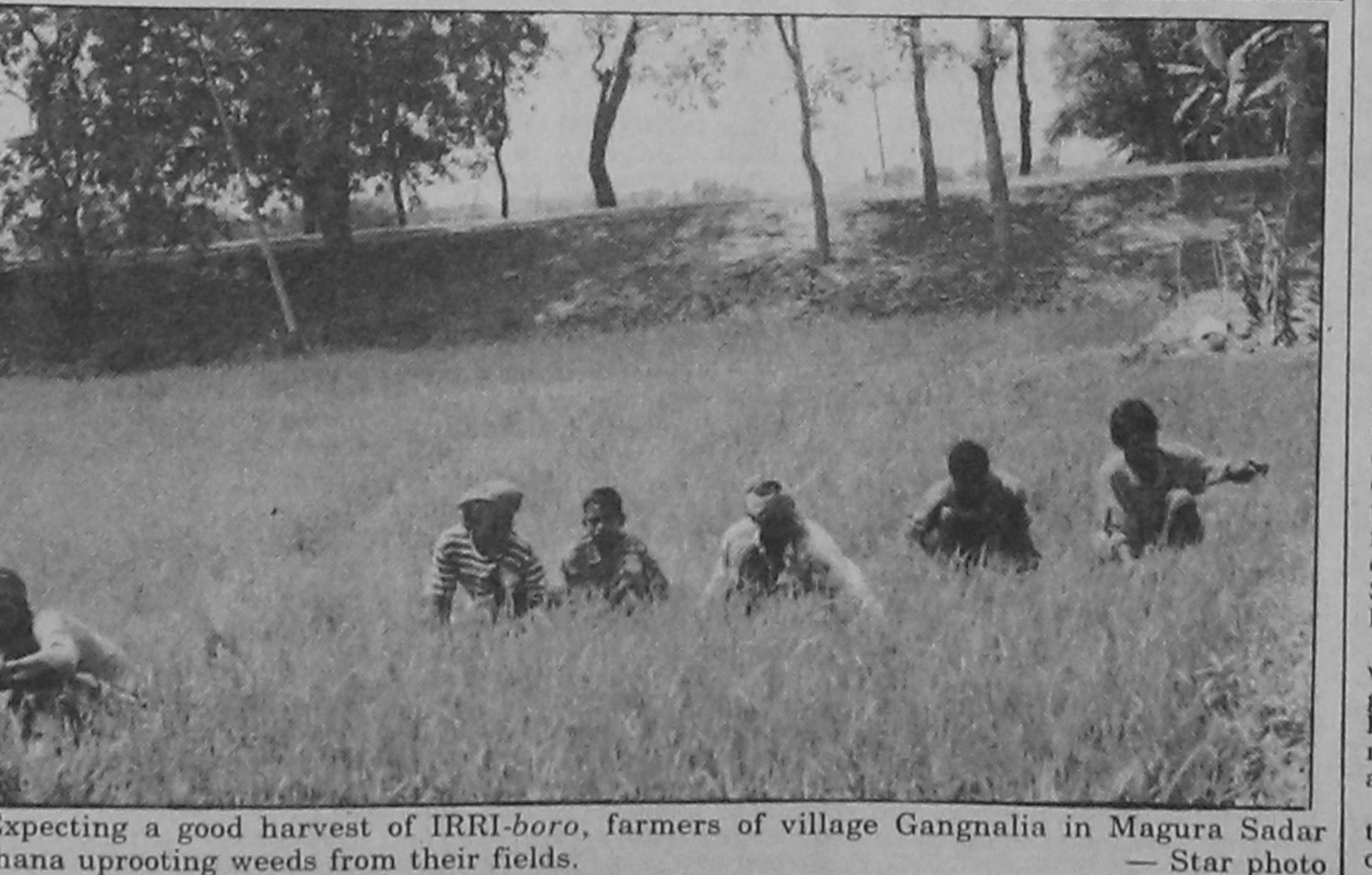
The 55-km road is being constructed to shorten the distance between the Bangabandhu Bridge and south western districts, including Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, Natore, Pabna, Kushtia, Jessore and Khulna.

Two project offices have been set up at Bonapara in Natore and Sirajganj to monitor its progress works by Roads and Highways Department.

A local construction firm, Mir Akhter Hossain Ltd, is implementing the project and it has already completed 90 per cent work on 4 kms from Nalka to Hatikumrul while earthwork is going on 350 acres of acquired land.

Official sources said China Road and Bridge Corporation will construct a 15-km road from Hatikumrul to Bilbaspur at a cost of Tk 164.50 crore. Another Chinese Company, "China Engineering Company," is constructing 14km road from Bilgaspur to Roina crossing while the rest 12 kms from Roina crossing to Bonapara will be constructed by Mir Akhter Hossain Ltd.

Upon completion of the project, people of Natore, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Pabna and other southern districts will be able to avail themselves of full-scale benefits of the Bangabandhu Bridge. It's likely to be completed by 2002.



Expecting a good harvest of IRRI-boro, farmers of village Gangalia in Magura Sadar thana uprooting weeds from their fields.

— Star photo

Japanese envoy visits Khulna, Mongla

From Our Correspondent

KHULNA, Apr 3: The Ambassador of Japan in Bangladesh Kujioishi Urabe called on city mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman on Sunday.

He also met the chairman of Mongla Port Authority and discussed with him various aspects of Rupsha Bridge. The Japanese envoy visited several places in the city and at Mongla to see the proposed sites of by-pass roads connecting Rupsha Bridge.

Film festival in Ctg

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 3: The recent Documentary Film Festival organised by Chittagong Film Centre began here in the city on Saturday.

The festival, first of its kind in the country held at the Alliance Francaise auditorium was inaugurated by elderly folk-artist Binoy Banshi Das.

The inaugural ceremony was presided over by the festival council chairman Bidhan Barua.

Liberation war memorial in Gaibandha

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Apr 3: A War of Liberation memorial is being built in Gaibandha Public Library premises.

The construction work of monument was formally inaugurated on March 31.

On the occasion Principal Abdul Ahad Chowdhury, Chairman of Bangladesh Muktehdha Sangsad, an organisation of freedom fighters, was present as chief guest in the inaugural function.

Presided over by Mahamudul Huq Shahajada, convener of the memorial construction committee, the function was addressed, among others, by Sarafuddin Ahmed, Deputy Commissioner of Gaibandha; Rowshan Ara Begum, Police Super; Lutfar Rahman; Mohammed Khaled; Anwarul Hasan Sabur; Monwar Hossain and Abu Bakker Siddique.

Bridge over Meghla lake opens in Bandarban

BANDARBAN, Apr 3: A bridge over the Meghla lake, a popular tourist spot here, was inaugurated on Monday, reports BSS.

Chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHITDB) Bir Bahadur MP formally inaugurated the bridge, about 5 km from the town.

Chairman of Bandarban Hill District Council Thwaing Cha Prue Master, Deputy Commissioner Mohsin Ali Sardar, Bir Pratik and executive engineer of the development board Satyajit Chowdhury, among others, spoke on the occasion.

The bridge, constructed at a cost of Tk 10 lakh is expected to draw a large number of local and foreign tourists.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman of the CHITDB Bir Bahadur said the primary works for development of the two tourist centres at Kha-grachhari and Bandarban hill districts have already begun with an expenditure of Tk 10 crore.

Gang leader of dacoits beaten to death

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 3: One alleged dacoit gang leader was beaten to death at Anowara thana area here in the early hours of Sunday.

The victim identified as Md Shahjahan, 35, reportedly, alongside his 20 to 30 accomplices, raided a market of Wahidpur under the thana at around 3:30 am and looted several shops of the market.

The dacoits also injured five persons. While escaping the gang leader of the dacoits was caught by the people of the market and was beaten to death.

BSS from Bagerhat reports: Kachua police on Sunday arrested a leader of an inter-district dacoit gang and one of his accomplices after a brief gunfight from a village of the thana.

Police said they raided a house of Chandra Para village under Kachua thana to nab Amir Sikder, an accused of 11 murders and ringleader of an inter-district dacoit gang. Police led by Officer-in-Charge of the thana Mihir Kumar Das cordoned off the house from all directions to arrest him. But the ringleader along with his accomplices took shelter in a betel-nut garden sensing the presence of police. The dacoits opened several rounds of fire towards police for escaping from the place. But police countered them and Amir Sikder and his accomplice Rezaul suffered bullet injuries.

Police later arrested them with a revolver, a country made gun and several rounds of bullet. Both the eyes of the ringleader were severely damaged in the police firing.

Later he was taken to local thana health complex. Two cases were lodged with Kachua thana in this connection.

News snaps

Poverty alleviation programme

PANCHAGARH, Apr 3: Social Welfare Department, Panchagarh has under taken a massive small credit scheme in order to uplift the social economic condition and for self employment under special Poverty Alleviation Programme, reports BSS.

A total of Taka 99 lakh and 80 thousand has been distributed among 63,291 persons in 9,821 projects of small credit help for self-employment of poor and helpless people of five upazila and municipal area under this programme. This loan has been given to run small business, cattle and poultry farming, harvesting and for many other money generating activities. Deputy Director of the Social Welfare Department informed. This credit programme is playing a vital role to alleviate poverty and to uplift the socio-economic condition.

Construction of hostel starts

SHERPUR, Apr 3: The Facilities Department of the Ministry of Education has just started the construction of hostel building at Sherpur Government College, reports BSS.

The hostel consisting of 50 beds will be implemented at a cost of Taka 66 lakh. The construction work will be completed in the current fiscal.

Rare moment for hapless boys

FARIDPUR, Apr 3: It was a rare moment for the hapless boys when all the top officials watched them undergo the ritual of a lifetime. Some 63 orphans had their ceremonial circumcision, reports UNB.

The mass circumcision was arranged at Arambagh Orphanage in Beilmamudpur of Sadar thana on Sunday. The management of the orphanage arranged a doa function at the orphanage in the morning to mark the occasion of circumcision, ever biggest in the district. Present among others were the Deputy Commissioner, the Police Super, the Civil Surgeon and the municipal Chairman.

Policeman killed in road mishap

JOYPURHAT, Apr 3: A policeman was killed in a road accident on Joypurhat-Bogra road near Bagichapara on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Police said constable Habil Uddin, 37, of Bagichapara died on the spot when a truck knocked him down while he was returning home from the district police lines. In another incident, a man was arrested from Puranipol Bazaar in Sadar thana on Saturday under Public Safety Act on charge of mugging. Police said a group of terrorists snatched Tk 2.48 lakh from Yasin Ali at Belama at gunpoint on Friday. Later, police arrested Mozammel Haque, 42.

Ansars arrested

COX'S BAZAR, Apr 3: Police arrested a dozen Ansar members for detaining 10 UP Chairmen in a rubber garden and firing on villagers in Ramu thana on Sunday, reports UNB.

Two people suffered bullet injuries when the Ansarmen guarding Ramu Rubber Garden opened fire on villagers who went to rescue a vendor, a college student and the 10 Chairmen detained in their barrack, police and witnesses said. They said the Ansar beat up betal vendor Kajol at noon over a trivial matter and also roughed up college student Aziz who came in aid of him. The two were detained in the garden. The 10 UP Chairmen went to rescue them. Injured Mujibur Rahman, 24, and Nurul Kabir, 18, of Zorainala village were admitted to Ramu Hospital.



Mijanur Rahman Minu, mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation inspecting the corporation's cleanliness drive recently in the city.

— Star photo

Workshop concludes

COMILLA, Apr 3: A three-day workshop on "Democracy and Human Rights" organised by News Network Organisation (NNO) concluded here on March 31, reports BSS.

Among others, Bangladesh Bureau Chief of Associate Press (AP) Farid Hossain and NNO Editor Shahiduzzaman were present at the concluding ceremony. The workshop was inaugurated by Editor of local Daily Rupashi Bangla Prof Abdul Wahad while it was addressed, among others, by municipal chairman of the district Kamal Uddin Choudhury and Superintendent of Police Abu Musa Mohammad Fakharul Islam Khan.

Mass beating: Teacher killed

MYMENSINGH, Apr 3: A madrasa teacher was killed and another man critically injured in a mass beating at Binpara near the town on Saturday night, reports UNB.

Witnesses said villagers caught teacher Nabi Hossain, 45, and Jamsheed Ali, 40, suspecting them dacoits while they were fishing in the River Brahmaputra and gave them a good beating. They were taken to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, where Jamsheed succumbed to his injuries. A case was filed in this connection. Meanwhile, police recovered the decomposed body of an unidentified young man from a pond in the town on Sunday morning.

Rivals' clash leaves 4 hurt

SATHIRA, Apr 3: A clash between two rival groups of people over the possession of a khas land at Benadama in Kalliganj thana left four people injured on Friday, reports UNB.

Police said a UP member was among the injured. The injured were admitted to the health complex. A case was filed with the local police and they arrested a man in this connection.

3 smugglers with country liquor held

RANGAMATI, Apr 3: Kaptai thana police rounded up three alleged smugglers from Chandraghona Jetty ghat in Kaptai thana while they were in a bid to smuggle out country liquor in a microbus, reports BSS.

Police recovered about 700 litres of locally made liquor from their possession and seized the microbus they were travelling in, police said. The arrested were identified as Rezaul Karim, Mohammad Ayub and Mohammad Yousuf. A case was lodged with Kaptai thana in this connection.

Smuggled goods seized

CHUADANGA, Apr 3: Smuggled goods worth Taka four lakh and 72 thousand were seized by the BDR personnel of 28 Battalion stationed at Chuadanga in two drives during the last week, reports BSS.

The seized smuggled goods include 150 quintals of Indian sugar, 350 bottles of phenisidyl and 23 bottles of Indian whisky. According to BDR 28 Battalion sources, the BDR personnel acting on a secret information, seized the said smuggled goods searching two passenger trains, one at Chuadanga Railway Station on Tuesday and another at Joirampur Railway Station on Sunday last.

3 smugglers arrested

RANGAMATI, Apr 3: Kaptai Thana Police rounded up three alleged smugglers from Chandraghona Jetty ghat in Kaptai thana while they were going to smuggle out country liquor in a microbus, reports BSS.

Police recovered about 700 litres of locally made liquor from their possession and seized the microbus, the were travelling in, police said. The arrested were identified as Rezaul Karim, Mohammad Ayub and Mohammad Yousuf. A case was lodged with Kaptai thana in this connection.

Girl drowns

BAGERHAT, Apr 3: A girl drowned in a lake near railway station in the town on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Family sources said Smriti Saha, 7, daughter of day labourer Bipul Saha, drowned while she was having bath in the lake at 11 am. Her body was recovered at 1 pm and sent to the hospital.