

National

Nor'westers play havoc in districts

Massive relief drive in Netrakona

By Staff Correspondent

Nor'westers lashed different districts of the country killing one person in Kurigram, another in Mymensingh and injuring many others in Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Munshiganj, Faridpur, Rajbari and Jhenidah during the last few days.

Our Mymensingh correspondent says: Several nor'westers which lashed the villages of all 12 unions of Halaughat thana from April 18 to 28 caused a serious damage to Boro crops, watermelons and vegetables. Hundreds of dwelling houses, educational institutions and mosques were also damaged totally or partially.

Nor'westers hit different areas of the thana with heavy rain and hailstorm several times last month.

At least one girl was killed and over 25 people were injured during the storms.

The victim was identified as Kulsam, 7, daughter of Md. Shamsul Islam of village Biddora.

According to Thana Agriculture Office sources, Boro paddy on 13,950 hectares, watermelon on 1,200 hectares and vegetables on 510 hectares of land were damaged totally or partially. The loss was estimated over one crore taka.

A total of 52 educational institutions which include schools and madrassas were damaged totally and 58 educational institutions were damaged partially.

Some 31 mosques were also affected following the nor'wester.

Following heavy rainfall and hailstorm, Boro paddy and watermelon on a vast tract of land went under water and are being rotten causing serious loss to the growers.

The homeless storm victims were passing their days under the open sky without any relief. Local people also said that if the educational institutions were not repaired immediately education in the remote areas would be hampered seriously.

However, local Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources said, Boro paddy on 6,000 hectares of land were damaged totally and the loss was estimated at about Taka eight crore. Watermelon on 3,000 hectares of land went under water following heavy rainfall causing loss of several crores of taka.

DAE also said that 393.74 mm (15 inch) rainfall was recorded in April this year which was the highest rainfall

in comparison with those of last three years.

The storm hit people need adequate relief and construction materials to build their damaged houses.

Our Rajshahi Correspondent adds: More than 700 houses were destroyed and 5,000 houses partially damaged as nor'westers lashed about 100 villages in different parts of the district recently.

Standing Boro paddy on a vast tract of land was also damaged in the storms accompanied by hail and heavy rain.

Besides, banana, papaya and betel leaf, other main cash crops in the northern region, were also damaged, much to the frustration of farmers.

However, the storm-affected people are passing very hard days. Thousands of homeless people are living under the open sky. They even face food shortage.

The government has so far allotted only five tons of wheat and Taka 25,000 in cash for Bagmara and Mohanpur upazilas.

Member of Parliament from Bagmara-Mohanpur constituency Abu Hena at a press conference on May 2 demanded allocation of 1,200 tons of wheat and Taka 11 crore in cash for the victims.

Ex-minister Sardar Amjad Hossain also demanded five bundles of corrugated tin and Taka 5,000 for each affected family.

The devastating storm hit Bagmara and Mohanpur upazilas on last April 28 at about 8:30 am.

Within few minutes north-western clouds covered the whole sky, bringing in strong wind and slight rain, residents of Madya Doublatpur village in Shuva Denga union of Bagmara upazila.

Another nor'wester hit the areas for the second in the afternoon on the same day. According to witnesses storm lashed Bashupara, Bhabaniganj, Shuvodanga, Maria, Gaolkandi and Hamiskutsa unions.

A total of 20,313 people of 4,511 families were affected as the storm completely or partially damaged their houses. Besides, 12 educational and religious institutions were affected.

Boro paddy of 250 hectares of land, banana on 70 hectares, betel leaf of 12 hectares and pulse on 135 hectares were damaged completely. About 2,000 trees, including fruit

bearing ones were either uprooted or broken. The total loss in Bagmara upazila was estimated at about Taka 90.30 lakh.

The badly affected villages are Madya Doublatpur of Shuvodanga union, Kamnagar, Depnagar, Deola, Nondanpur and Sridharpur of Bashupara union, Shujapara and Dargahmaria of Bhabaniganj union, Hamirkutsa Purbapara, Kalupara, Raipur, Talgharia and Konabarlia of Hamirkutsa union, Telepur and Polashi of Gaolkandi union and Gangopara of Maria union.

In Mohanpur upazila, six unions—Dhuvoil, Ghasigram, Raighati, Meregachi, Bakshimol and Jahanabad—were hit by the storm, official sources said.

A total of 25,200 people of 5,600 families were badly affected in the upazila. 29 educational institutions were damaged.

Boro paddy on 1,275 hectares of lands was damaged either completely or partially. Among other crops, vegetables on 71 hectares and betel leaf on 19 hectares of lands were damaged.

The total loss of agriculture was estimated at about Taka 1.31 lakh in Mohanpur upazila.

The affected villages are Mohishkundi, Shamapur, Bakshimol, Shukoa, Barisha, Nakoil, Kesharhat, Hatra, Raighati, Dhurail, Dhanim, Naogaon, Jahanabad, Mardia, Gopail, Halidagachi, Gopalpara, Shinghama and Palsha.

State Minister for Women and Children's Affairs Zintunessa Talukder and other government officials visited the storm-hit Bagmara and Mohanpur upazilas.

Devastating storm hit Tanore, Charchat, Bagha, Durgapur and Puthia upazilas last week twice.

Accompanied by hail and heavy rains, the nor'wester caused massive damage to the standing crops in the areas.

More than 150 houses were damaged either completely or partially in Tanore upazila. Azizpur, Balika, Kandar, Shankarpur, Dargadanga, Pachcudar and Amgho villages were badly hit by the storms.

About 100 houses were damaged in Charchat and Bagha upazilas. The affected villages are Aripur, Naotika, Bausha, Tetulia and Arani of Bagha and Belgharia, Kakalkati, Boduria, Mukterpur in Charchat upazila. Out of the crops, mango was severely damaged.

A number of educational institutions, including Komorhang High School, Charchulbari Secondary School, Jadurchar and Char Shoulmari colleges were razed to the ground.

The most affected areas included Badjanalpur, Gobardhan, Kuti, Balatari, Kalarbhita, Bamandanga, Kaliganj and Madarganj in Nageshwari, Astamirchar, Natarkandi and Datirchar in Chilmari and Mirzapara, Dublabari and Karakandi in Roumari upazilas.

About 50 houses were razed to the ground and a large number of trees uprooted at Amghata village in Mollakandi union under Sadar upazila of Munshiganj district when a tornado lashed the area on Tuesday night.

According to police sources, the tornado hit the village at around 11 pm and lasted for a few minutes.

No casualty was, however, reported.

At least 20 people were injured, a large number of kutcha houses were affected, huge number of trees were uprooted, standing crops on a vast tract of land were damaged when a severe nor'wester swept over four



Alarming indeed!

The protection fence around Bangabandhu Bridge was uprooted by a nor'wester which swept over the area recently threatening security around the 11th largest bridge of the world. The protection fence was built by the government at a cost of huge amount of money. The picture was snapped by a correspondent in Tangail.

In Durgapur, about 200 houses and crops including Boro paddy, betel leaf, banana and papaya were damaged.

Naohata, Bargachi, Darshanpara and Parila unions of Paba upazila were mostly affected by last week's storms.

Agencies report: Nor'westers coupled with hailstorms lashed four upazilas of Kurigram district killing a man and injuring 15 people in last few days.

The dead was identified as Mattur, 14, of Mughalbaria union in Sadar upazila. He was killed by lightning while returning home during rain.

Six of the injured were identified as Saleha, 38, Joyuddin Dewani, 50, Mattur, 7, Abul, 5, of Newashi village, Hamida, 57, of Berubari village and Hossain, 45, of Kaliganj village in Nageshwari upazila.

The storm swept 23 villages in Nageshwari, Sadar, Chilmari and Roumari upazilas causing extensive damage to standing crops on 300 hectares of land.

Some 4,000 thatched and semi-pucca houses were damaged and 5,000 trees uprooted by the tropical storm.

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thanas of Faridpur district yesterday.

According to eyewitnesses, some areas of Nagarkanda, Madhukhali, Boalmari and Sadar upazila were hit by the nor'wester. According to Police Super of Faridpur some kutcha houses were damaged. One of the semipucca tin-shed of Nagarkanda thana staff quarters was also partially damaged.

The uprooted trees on Dhaka-Khulna highway under Madhukhali upazila were creating obstacles for the long-route buses.

The worst affected area was Moyendia Bazar under Boalmari upazila. Many people were injured, about 50 shops were damaged and a large number of trees were uprooted due to nor'wester there.

A violent storm lashed 12 unions in Pangsha and Ballakandi thanas of Rajbari district damaging standing crops on a vast tract of land and 1,000 thatched houses on Tuesday night.

The nor'wester also damaged some mosques and educational institutions during its fury apart from toppling a large number of trees and cutting off power supply and telephone connections in the areas.

The affected unions are Islampur, Ballakandi, Baharpur, Nababpur, Jangal, Narua, Jamalpur, Sarisha, Pangsha, Kalukhali and Nalia.

An extensive damage was caused to standing crops and banana trees by a nor'wester which lashed over two thanas in Jhenidah district for two hours on Saturday.

Rain accompanied by severe stormy wind that began at 3 pm also damaged kutcha houses and snapped power supply in Harinakunda and Shailakupa thanas.

The extent of losses of property and crop could not be ascertained immediately.

Over 60,000 and 37,000 hectares of land had been brought under Boro paddy and banana farming respectively this season.

Meanwhile, a report from Netrakona says: State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed recently said the present government under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is always ready

to stand by the distressed people.

With that mission in mind, a massive relief and rehabilitation programme has been taken in the tornado affected areas of Netrakona at the directives of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he said.

The State Minister was addressing a meeting of district level officers and local elite in the conference room of the deputy commissioner. Presided over by Deputy Commissioner Mohammed Qudus Khan, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Fazlur Rahman Khan MP, Vice President of Netrakona District Awami League Shamsuzzoha, President of Netrakona District Krishak League Kashiob Ranjan Sarkar, Deputy Director of Netrakona District Agriculture Extension Department Qamrul Huda, District Information Officer Yakub Ali, Deputy Civil Surgeon Netrakona Dr Abu Ishak and General Secretary of Netrakona Press Club Shamolendu Paul.

Netrakona district administration organised the meeting to brief the minister about the loss caused by the tornado which lashed over five upazilas of Netrakona on April 21 last.

The State Minister said the tornado affected people will not be allowed to suffer any more as the government has already started supplying rice and wheat through Open Market Sale (OMS) and Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programmes. Besides assistance for agricultural rehabilitation, house building and repair of education institutions are being undertaken, he added.

The minister emphasised the need for ensuring proper distribution of relief materials and smooth implementation of rehabilitation programmes. He urged the government officials to discharge their duties with utmost sincerity and honesty for speedy mitigation of the sufferings of the distressed humanity.

Referring to past performances of the government in facing natural calamity, the State Minister mentioned that despite massive damage to food grains in the worst flood of 1998, none died of starvation.

The minister exchanged views with local journalists and laid stress on objective reporting.

News snaps

Body recovered

MANIKGANJ, May 8: Police recovered the body of an unidentified man hanging from a tree at Ghior upazila near Banajori bus stand on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Being informed by a pedestrian, police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Dacoits hurt villagers

MUNSHIGANJ, May 8: Dacoits injured two people and looted 30 tolas of gold ornaments and Taka 13,000 in cash from a house at Hoglakandi under Sadar Upazila early Saturday, police said, reports BSS.

They said a gang of 10 to 12 bandits broke open the door of the house of Karam Ali Munshi at 1 am and decamped with the booty worth about Taka 250,000. Before fleeing, the bandits hit villagers Nannu Mia, 50, and Siraj Mia, 40, who tried to resist the gang along with fellow villagers, with sharp weapons, injuring them critically.

Two kidnapped by tribals

RANGAMATI, May 8: A tribal group opposed to CHT peace accord has kidnapped two construction workers at Barokel for refusing to pay illegal tolls and threatened to kill them if a ransom is not paid by Friday, reports UNB.

The kidnappers lifted Tofazzal Master, 35, and Ratan Barua, 32, on Thursday as contractor of Barunachhari bridge now under construction at a cost of Tk 9 lakh by the CHT Development Board denied tolls. Ratan Barua was however released on Friday and conveyed the demand of ransom through him. Police confirmed the incident.

NGOs urged to help poor

LOUHAGANJ (Munshiganj) May 8: Home, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim on Saturday urged the non government organisations to be not possible in the aid of the suffering humanity because it is for the good of the government alone to remove poverty, reports BSS.

He was addressing as the chief guest at the opening of a project for the shelterless by a non-government organisation. A Scottish organisation "Bangladesh Flood Victims Appeal Fund" provided the necessary fund. Mohammad Nasim said the government is sparing no efforts to mitigate the sufferings of the people but it is necessary that the people must come forward to accomplish the gigantic task.

Trend of suicide up

NAOAGANJ, May 8: The trend of suicide has marked an alarming rise in the district for various reasons including poverty and frustration, reports UNB.

According to a recent survey conducted by an NGO, nearly 400 people, mostly women, committed suicide here last year. The survey attributed the rising trend of self-murder to family feud, poverty, unemployment and mental illness. According to a government rule, one needs to show license from Agriculture Department for buying pesticides. But the shopkeepers have little respect to the law. Pharmacy owners are no exception. They also sell seductive pills to the people having no prescriptions from registered physicians.

Because of negligence of duty

JESSORE, May 8: A court here has sentenced four railway staff, one of them a station master, to five years in jail for negligence of duty, reports UNB.

The court also fined the convicts — station master of Singha Station Jahangir Alam, point man Alamgir Hossain, driver and assistant driver of Parbotipur Rocket Mail — Tk 1,000 each, in default, to suffer three months more jail. According to prosecution, a Parbotipur-bound mail from Khulna collided with another train coming from opposite direction due to reluctance of the accused on Oct 11 1997, leaving 10 people dead and 50 injured. After examining the records and witnesses, the Additional District and Session Judge delivered the judgment on April 30.



Gambling in name of fair

Gambling in the name of Baishakhi Mela (A fair welcoming Bangla New Year) going on unabated in front of the very nose of the members of law enforcing agencies at Kandapara near Sirajganj Police Station. The fair actually lasted for two days, but the gambling goes on for an indefinite period. Especially young people get ruined due to this bad practice. But who cares? — Star photo

Alleged dacoit arrested

BANDARBAN, Apr 8: One alleged dacoit was arrested by sadar thana police on Friday, reports BSS.

The arrested was identified as Mizan Uddin. He was arrested from Daneshpara (Caiga) under sadar thana in connection with dacoity at Bandarkan College hostel. A case was filed with Ruangchhari thana in this connection.

Hemp recovered

NARAYANGANJ, May 8: Police in a predawn drive on Saturday recovered 9 kgs of hemp from a house in Fatulla thana and arrested two people in this connection, reports UNB.

Police said they raided the house of Kana Sikandar, 45, at Pagla Shahi Mohalla and arrested him and his associate Muslim, 40, along with the contraband.

26 shops gutted

PIROJPUR, Apr 8: Twenty-six shops and a house were burnt to ashes in a devastating fire recently at Dakkhin Bazar in Kaokhali thana, reports UNB.

Fifteen people sustained injuries while putting out the blaze that damaged property worth nearly Tk 1 crore. Local people said the fire originated from "short circuit" in a tobacco factory at about 3 am. It soon spread to other shops and a house in the vicinity.

Body recovered

GAZIPUR, Apr 8: Gazipur police on Wednesday retrieve the body of an unknown young man from Dhaka-Gazipur Highway near the National University here, reports BSS.

Police said they recovered the bloodstained body of the young man, 22, from Board Bazar on the highway in the morning. The body was sent to Gazipur Sadar Hospital for autopsy. Police suspect that the victim was killed in a road accident at midnight on the previous night. A case was registered with sadar thana in this connection.

Uplift project approved

KHAGRACHHARI, May 8: Government has approved a development project for the proper preservation of forest resources in three hill districts, reports BSS.

The project will cost Taka 10 crore. Of the approved money, government has already released Taka five crore. Official sources said, the work of the project will be continued till 2001. The main aim of the project is to preserve hilly gardens and to protect reserved forests in CHT.

Schemes progressing

MEHERPUR, May 8: Meherpur Zilla Parishad has taken up 11 road development schemes at a cost of Taka 33 lakh under the Rural Road Development Project (RRDP) in the current fiscal, reports BSS.

The schemes include HBB work of seven roads and carpeting of four roads in three thanas. After completion of the schemes, people of the areas will get better road communication facilities.

Unabated copying in Moulvibazar HSC exam centres

From Rajat Kanti Goswami

MOULVIBAZAR, May 8: Most of the examinees in several centres in the district are adopting unfair means in the ongoing HSC examinations.

Activists of various student organisations are backing the corrupt students, local people said.

In upazila colleges, unruly examinees and activists of student goon rampage. They also often threaten on duty invigilators.

A total of 39 examinees were expelled from different centres in the district till April 30, official sources said.

According to official sources, 3,655 students enlisted themselves for the examinations this year.

Of them 1,277 candidates including 263 females enlisted from Moulvibazar Government

Stolen goods recovered

From Our Correspondent

CHITAGONG, May 8: Stolen electronics and sanitary goods worth about Tk 5 lakh were recovered in the city on Thursday.

Police also arrested six people in this connection.

Police in a 60-hour drive that ended Thursday evening recovered the goods from different warehouses and sanitary shops at Hazipur, High Level Road, Kancho Raster Matha and Jubilee Road area.

Three-day Rabindra Joyanti programme at Shahjadpur From Akhteruzzaman

SIRAJGANJ, May 8: A three day befitting programme has been arranged at Shahjadpur Rabindra Kuthibari by Sirajganj district administration to celebrate Rabindra Joyanti.

The programme starts at 4 pm which includes cultural functions (recitation, music, dance and drama) by Shahjadpur Sammilito Sangskritik Jote on May 8.

A drama "Taltali Math", an adaptation from the original story of Rabindranath Tagore, directed jointly by A K Ajad, Anu Islam and "Shapmochon", a musical drama of Rabindranath Tagore and directed by Laurence and Papri will be staged at 7 pm on May 9. Both the programmes have been arranged by Sirajganj Shilpakala Academy. Discussion on life and works of the poet will be held on May 10.

Dr Mazharul Islam, noted educationist and former Vice-Chancellor of Rajshahi University will chair the discussion meet. The main discussant will be Karuna Rani Saha, Assistant Professor of Sirajganj University College and it will be discussed among others by Dr Chowdhury Jullioar Matin, Professor of Bangla Department of Rajshahi University and Dr Saifuddin Chowdhury, Director, Barendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.

The inaugural session will be presided over by Deputy Commissioner (DC), of Sirajganj AFM Saiful Islam and it will be attended by Prof Abu Sayeed State Minister for Information and local MPs.

Bumper output of IRRI-Boro paddy expected in Chandpur

From Our Correspondent

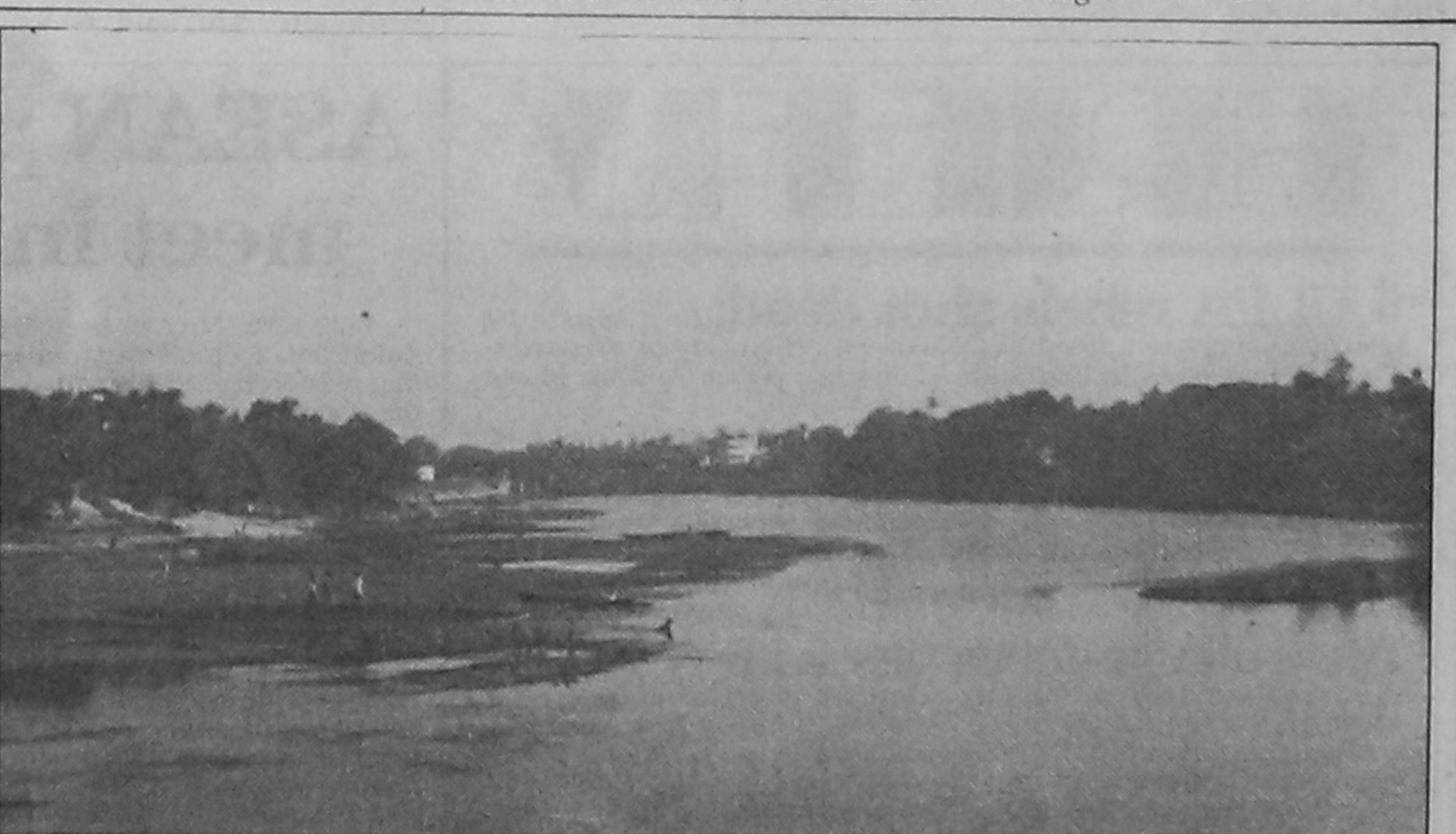
CHANDPUR, May 8: Bumper production of IRRI-Boro paddy is expected in both Chandpur and Matlab Meghna-Dhanagoda Irrigation projects during the current season.

According to Agriculture Extension Department sources, initially a total of one lakh 10 thousand hectares of land have been brought under IRRI-Boro paddy cultivation under the

projects. Later the cultivation target was increased to more 10,000 hectares of land to achieve the production target of 3,20,500 metric tons of paddy. Because of growing interest among the farmers the cultivation target was exceeded in both the projects of Bangladesh Water Development Board. Out of a total of 1 lakh 20 thousand hectares of land, 60 thousand

hectares were brought under high yielding variety (HYV) and the rest were cultivated with the local varieties.

Because of favourable climatic condition and availability of agricultural inputs, IRRI-Boro cultivation was enhanced. Farmers are expecting a bumper production of IRRI-Boro paddy during the current season.



Once upon a time...

The River Naboganga which was once a mighty river, virtually now a dead one. This happened due to drastic fall in water level resulting in loss of navigability. Many fishermen also turned jobless.

— Star photo by Hossain Seraj