

12 railway employees suspended

From Staff Correspondent
 SYLHET, May 14: Twelve employees, including an assistant stationmaster, of Bangladesh Railway had been put under suspension as an inter-city train reached the destination far behind the schedule.
 Official sources said the Parabat Express from Sylhet on April 27 reached Dhaka two hours and 45 minutes behind schedule without valid reason.
 On the day Dr SA Maleque, Political Advisor to the Prime Minister, and some other dignitaries of the ruling Awami League were travelling in the train.
 As the train reached the destination behind schedule, they lodged a complaint with the Bangladesh Railway authority. The authority put assistant stationmaster of Langla station and 11 others under suspension. The authority was to start a departmental inquiry.

Demand for dowry increasing in Kushtia

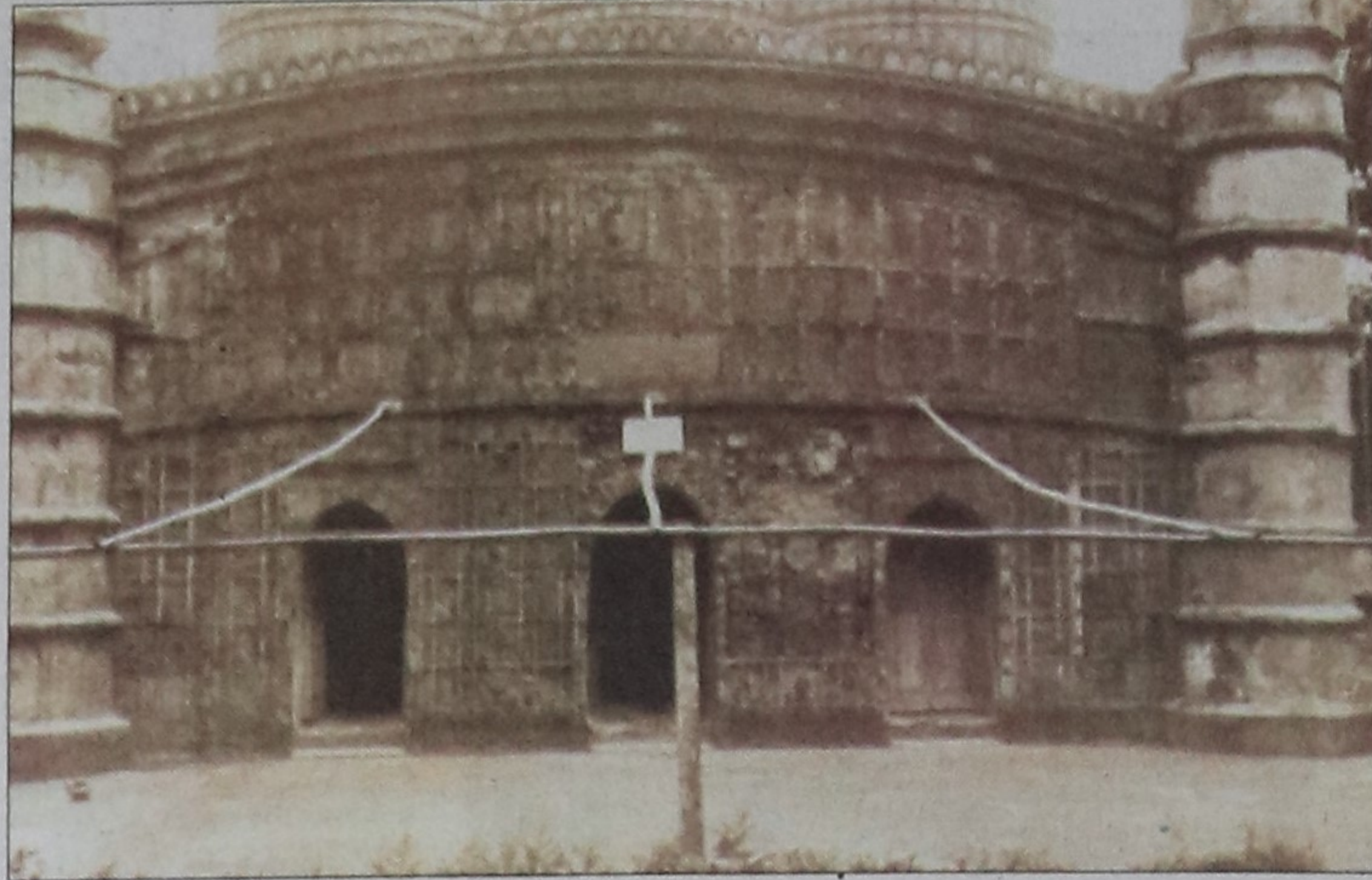
From Our Correspondent
 KUSHTIA, May 14: Parents of marriageable girls are facing problem to marry their daughters off as parents of grooms and sometimes grooms themselves demand dowry.
 Although anti-dowry law exists in the country, the trend to demand for dowry has increased over the years, much to the disappointment of poor parents and guardians.
 Nasiruddin of village Charpara under Daulatpur upazila said he could not marry his three daughters off only because parents of bridegrooms are demanding dowry. I am not in a position to meet all their demands, added Nasiruddin, a poor farmer.
 Local people said the problem will not be solved overnight by enacting laws. Social awareness among the people is needed to fight the problem.

40 shanties damaged in landslide

From Our Correspondent
 RAJSHAHI, May 14: At least 40 shanties on the bank of the river Padma in the city were damaged in a landslide on Monday morning.
 However, no one was injured in the incident.
 Witnesses said as the accident occurred in the morning, no one was injured.
 Dargapur slum is situated along the Rajshahi Town Protection Embankment.

Appeal for help

Md Nizam Uddin, 25, son of Md Obaidur Rahman, an employee of T Board is suffering from Aplastic Anaemia, says a press release.
 He needs a bag of blood and numerous medicine costing about Tk 1500 each day to stay alive. A more permanent course of treatment available in India will cost about Tk 3 lakh, which he cannot afford.
 Nizam's father has appealed to the generous section of the society for help for his son's treatment. Those interested have been requested to make donations to Savings Account No. 5758 of Janata Bank, Bangla Motor Branch, Dhaka.



Preserving our heritage Front view of famous Atia Mosque.

Atia Mosque of Tangail remains neglected

From A Correspondent

The portrait of historic Atia Mosque of Tangail on ten taka note made the Bangladeshi currency note much more attractive.
 The artistic work of Atia Mosque was a symbol of wonderful and beautiful archaeological design of Mughal Empire.
 The mosque was built in 1609 during the period of Mughal Empire. The founder of the mosque was Zamindar Syed Khan Ponee of Atia. The red coloured mosque having big domes stands for the last 391 years as the evidence of uncommon structural design and unparalleled fame of Mughal tradition.
 The mosque was established at Atia village, 12 kilometers away from the district headquarters. The building of the mosque having a length of 70 feet and width of 45 feet stands on heavy stone arch.
 A toll spire (Minar) made the mosque at-

tractive. The engraved letter in Persian language on stone plate setting on the entrance of the mosque indicates the brief history of the mosque. While contacted the imam of the mosque Moulana Sariful Islam told that about 500 Muslims used to come from different areas for Juma prayers every Friday.
 A large number of visitors from different parts of the country and abroad visit the mosque every day and year, he added. The mosque was facing manifold problems including shortage of fund.
 The mosque management had no source of income for its maintenance except the income from one pond. The monthly salaries of Imam's and Moa'zeem had been paid from the fund.
 The mosque management committee appealed to the government and concerned authorities for financial support immediately.

Houses of landless people torched in Rangpur village

From Mozammel Hoq

RANGPUR, May 14: Over one hundred landless families at Char Hajirhat village under Mornia union in Gangachhara upazila of the district have been passing their days virtually under open sky after a gang of hoodlums equipped with firearms and sharp weapons, attacked them and torched their houses on April 18.
 The landless people were rehabilitated in government khas land in January this year. 104 landless families built their houses on 79 acres of khas land.
 The victims said a gang of hoodlums raided the area and let loose a reign of terror on April 18. The terrorists raided their houses, looted their belongings and torched the houses.
 At least 50 people, including women and children, were injured in the attack. Police had so far arrested 7 in this connection. The main accused persons are yet to be arrested.
 The local people said the attack was aimed at evicting the landless people from their residences.
 The terrorists attacked us only to grab the land, a victim said seeking anonymity.
 Locals said the terrorists were backed by influential peo-

ple like Hasrat Mohini and his brother Haider Ali. They only want to grab the khas land, they added.
 A few days back the district administration distributed plastic sheets among shelterless people for making temporary shelters.
 The district administration had set up a police camp at the village. The landless people apprehend that the terrorists may attack again to evict them from the land. Tense situation was prevailing in the area.



Foul play indeed Some distressed women of Char Hajirhat in Gangachhara upazila of Rangpur district who became shelterless recently due to an attack by terrorists. — Star photo

1st phase work on Pabna EPZ nearing completion

PABNA, May 14: The first phase work on the Pabna Export Processing Zone (PEPZ), expected to be inaugurated in June next, is nearing completion, reports UNB.
 Officials said 95 per cent of the first phase work of the EPZ at Pakshi in Iswardi thana has been completed while the rest will be completed by the current month.
 The works that have so far been completed include construction of roads, boundary wall, office building and police camp, and installation of electricity lines, transformer, water supply and telephone lines.
 Officials said 52 plots have already been prepared and those will be distributed among the entrepreneurs after the inauguration of the EPZ. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to open it.
 The EPZ is being built on 308.97 acres of land on the bank of river Padma, some 6 km off the town, with an initial allocation of Tk 73.41 crore.
 A total of 166 plots will be prepared in the zone on 41.25 decimals of land each.
 Local and international investors are showing keen interest to set up industries in the EPZ, particularly after the government's decision to provide gas connection to the project.
 Majority of the intending foreign entrepreneurs are from South Korea and Japan. They are mainly interested to set up textile mills and garment and leather factories, they said.
 Meanwhile, BEPZA Executive Chairman Brigadier (ret'd) ABM Siddique Talukdar visited Iswardi Airport so that it can be reopened soon.
 He told local newsmen that he would seek cooperation of the Prime Minister in reopening the airport, as it would be the easier mode of communication for the investors.

Army medical assistance to chicken pox victims

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Army despatched a medical team to provide medical assistance to the Chicken Pox affected people at Taranipara under Ali Kadam Upazila in Bandarban district on Wednesday, according to ISPR.
 The local Army units on receipt of information of the disease earlier despatched a medical unit and informed it to the army and civil authorities at Bandarban.
 Meanwhile, the army personnel constructed a helipad in the most accessible hill region that enabled to despatch two more medical teams comprising of both army and the local medical authorities by helicopter.
 The army medical team has been directed to continue the medical assistance programme till the affected people are cured.
 Meanwhile, Polio and tetanus vaccination programme of Bangladesh Army continued for the 7th day on Wednesday in the remote and inaccessible areas of Bandar-

Cane, bamboo based cottage industry waning

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, May 14: The cottage industry based on cane and bamboo made articles is on the verge of extinction for want of proper marketing facilities, lack of working capital and patronisation.
 Hundreds of skilled persons engaged in manufacturing various kinds of cane and bamboo made furniture are facing economic hardship.
 Most of the artisans gave up their ancestral profession and took up other alternative jobs for earning a living. A group of cane made artisan families is running the ancestral profession and struggling hard to survive.
 Subash Chandra Das, an artisan of Khoksa village with his six family members struggle very hard to maintain his family. He sticks to this profession finding no other alternative. Similarly other artisans scattered across the district are facing competition with machine made goods. In the past cane and bamboo made articles like chair, table, bowls and pots had a good demand.
 With the extensive use of steel, aluminium, iron, wood and plastic made articles, furniture and utensils, it has lost its demand. The dearth of capital has aggravated the situation.
 The cultivation of cane plants has decreased as there is less demand of these articles in the local markets.
 Besides, indiscriminate cutting of cane and bamboo trees is a major cause for the decrease of acreage though there is a great demand of these products in the world market.
 Subash Chandra informed that if they take loan from money lenders they are unable to repay their loans in time due to high rate of interest.
 The artisans of this industry urged the authorities concerned to sanction loan on easy terms and provide proper marketing facilities.

News snaps

Chandpur Bar Assoc polls
 CHANDPUR, May 14: BNP-supported panel captured two top posts of president and general secretary at district bar council election held here recently, reports UNB.
 Advocate Iqbal Bin Bashir was elected president and Jahangir Alam general secretary. However, Awami League-backed panel captured all the remaining 13 seats on the 15-member bar executive committee. At the election, some 189 voters, out of total 196, gave their mandate.

Training for farmers
 BARISAL, May 14: A training programme on sapling distribution for farmers was held here recently in South Chandshi Government Primary School premises under Gournadi upazila of the district, reports BSS.
 A function was arranged on this occasion. Presided over by A Saifur, Additional Director of Agriculture Extension Department, the function was attended by Shahana Abdullah, Member of National Women Parliament, as the chief guest and Shahabuddin Ahmed, Project Director, as the special guest.

200 widows get monthly pension
 JAMALPUR, May 14: The monthly pension, at the rate of Taka on hundred per head, was distributed among 200 old and distressed widows of Bakshiganj upazila recently, according to Upazila Samaj Seba Office (Upazila Social Service Office), reports BSS.
 A meeting was held on this occasion at the Upazila auditorium. Upazila Nirbahi Officer (in-charge) of Bakshiganj presided over the meeting. Abul Kalam Azad, MP, Chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting, was present in the meeting as the chief guest and distributed the pension money to the widows.

Body recovered
 KHULNA, May 14: Police recovered the body of an accused person of a murder case from an abandoned toilet near Commerce College in the town recently, reports UNB.
 Abdul Kuddus, 40, of Jyogachhi Raghunathpur village in Bagerhat was involved in various crimes including murder. Police said the hoodlums called Abdul Kuddus from his rented house at Munshipara and stabbed him with a sharp weapon. They left the body in the toilet at midnight.

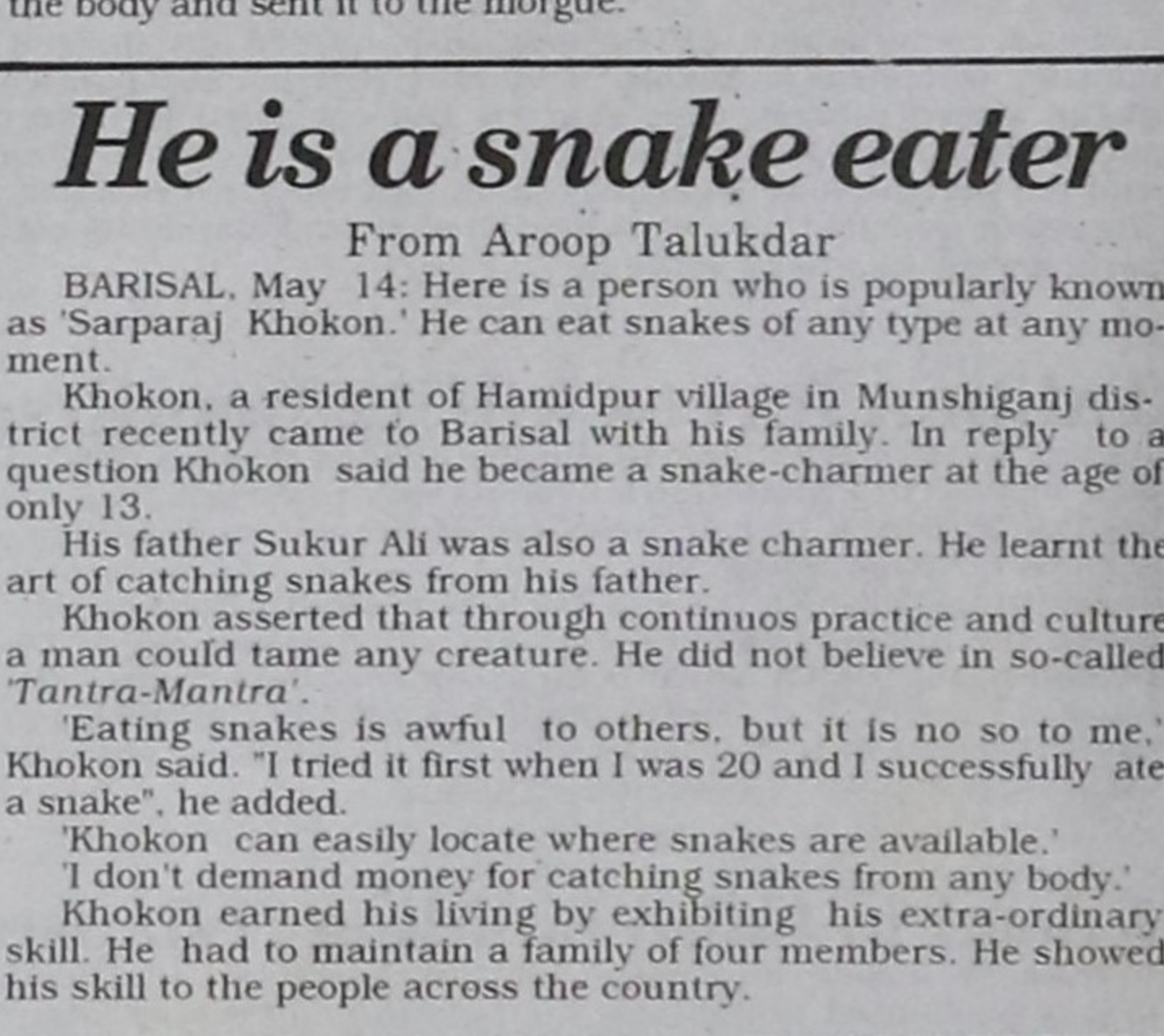
30 pedestrians robbed
 THAKURGAON, May 14: A gang of robbers looted valuable from nearly 30 pedestrians one after another at a road near south rail gate of Thakurgaon Rail Station recently, reports UNB.
 Sources said about 20 robbers ambushed under a bridge swooped on the pedestrians who were passing the road and looted Tk 50,000 and 12 bicycles during the three-hour long raid. The gang during the robbery tied up watchmen Hekmat Ali and Shukur Ali engaged in patrolling the area. Police arrested Jalal of Harinarayanpur village in this connection.

Timber seized
 RANGAMATI, May 14: Officials of Chittagong Hill Tracts South Forest Division (CHTSFD) recovered illegally extracted 22,000 cubic feet of costly timber including 15,000 cubic feet of teak, worth over Taka 80 lakh, during the last month, reports BSS.
 The raids, ended last week, were conducted at different saw mills in Rangamati town, Rangamati-Chittagong Highway, Kaptai Lake, Kaptai Jetty Ghat, inaccessible hilly areas of Borkal, Alkhingon and Razasthali. The recovered timber were extracted illegally from different government reserved forests in the district.

31 schemes progressing
 COMILLA, May 14: Work on 31 development projects, taken up by the Local Government Engineering Department in the district, is progressing, reports BSS.
 The projects involving Tk 2.28 lakh included construction and re-construction of rural roads, bridges and culverts. Official sources said 50 per cent of the work has been implemented and the rest work is expected to be completed by June.

Body recovered
 BARISAL, May 14: Police recovered the body of an unidentified old man who died on the deck of a passenger launch coming here from Barguna on Friday, reports UNB.
 Sareng of the launch told police that the man suddenly fell sick and died at 3:30 pm when the launch was crossing Rupatoli area. When the launch reached here at 4:30 pm, police recovered the body and sent it to the morgue.

He is a snake eater
 From Aroop Talukdar
 BARISAL, May 14: Here is a person who is popularly known as 'Sarpaparj' Khokon. He can eat snakes of any type at any moment.
 Khokon, a resident of Hamidpur village in Munshiganj district recently came to Barisal with his family. In reply to a question Khokon said he became a snake-charmer at the age of only 13.
 His father Sukur Ali was also a snake charmer. He learnt the art of catching snakes from his father.
 Khokon asserted that through continuous practice and culture a man could tame any creature. He did not believe in so-called Tantra-Mantra.
 'Eating snakes is awful to others, but it is not so to me,' Khokon said. 'I tried it first when I was 20 and I successfully ate a snake', he added.
 'Khokon can easily locate where snakes are available. I don't demand money for catching snakes from any body.'
 Khokon earned his living by exhibiting his extra-ordinary skill. He had to maintain a family of four members. He showed his skill to the people across the country.

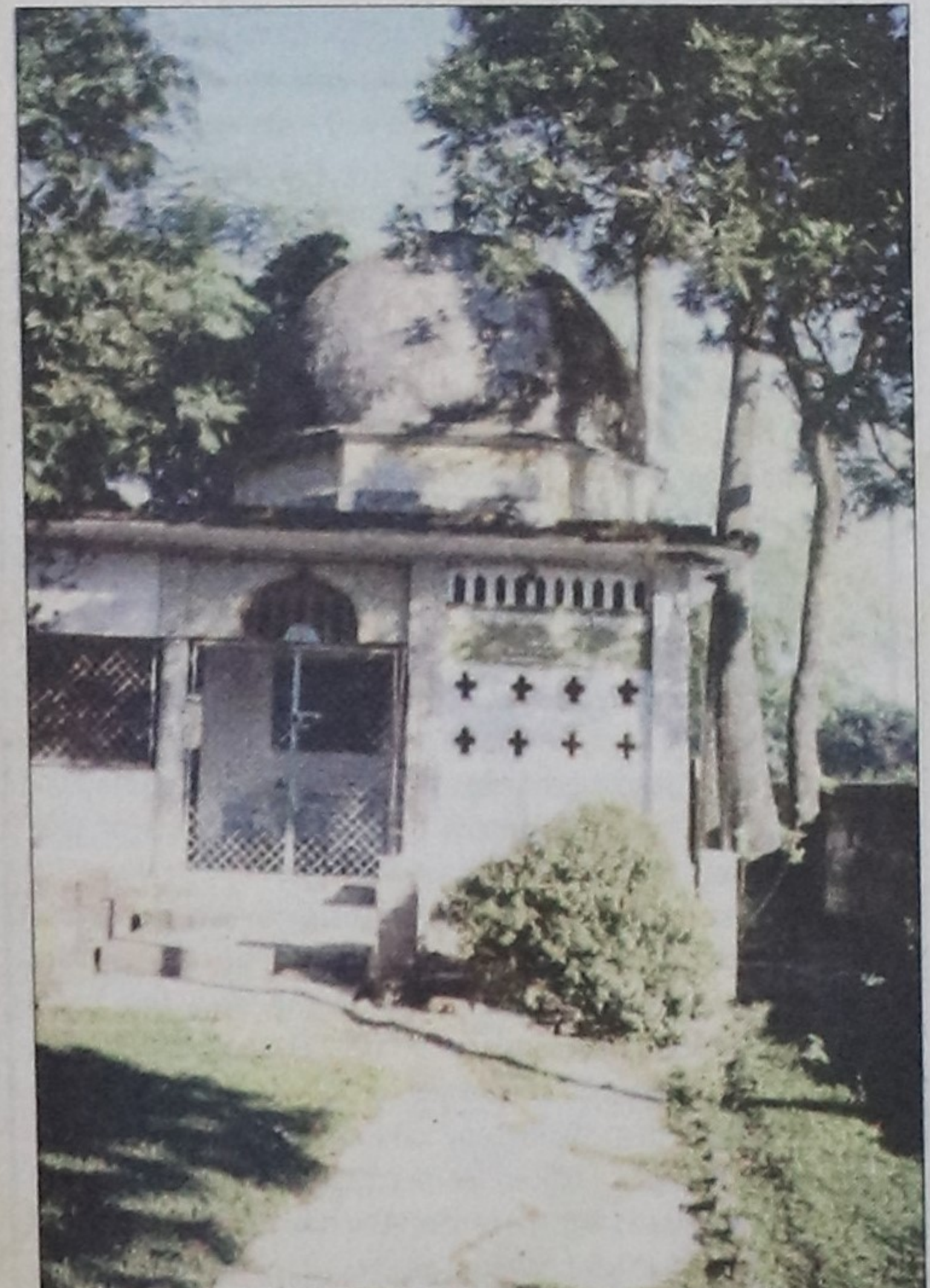


Believe it or not!
 'Snake eater' Khokon poses for a snap by our staff reporter with one of his 'pet' snakes. — Star photo

Sirajee inspired people to rise against British rule

From Akhteruzzaman Bablu

SIRAJGANJ, May 14: The name of Ismail Hussain Sirajee remained everfresh in memory of the freedom loving people of Indo-Bangla-Pak sub-continent for playing a pioneering role in the freedom movement against the British rule.
 He suffered imprisonment several times for awakening the freedom loving people, especially the backward Muslim community of this sub-continent. He awakened people through his ardent writings. He was poet, novelist, essay writer, historian, politician, journalist and above all a fiery speaker.
 Maromi Kabi (Sympathetic poet) Sirajee came from village Diardhangara under Sirajganj Municipality. He was born on July 15 in 1879. His father was Shah Syed Abdul Karim and mother was Nurjahan Khanom. Both of them came from noble families.
 Sirajee sacrificed the golden period of his life in anti-British movement. He marched forward despite various odds.
 He became inspired reading a poem by our national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. He sent Taka 10 to the national poet to express his gratitude to him. He wrote to the national poet 'I am sending you Taka 10 only to express my heart-felt thanks to you. Please do not return it back. If you send it back, I shall get hurt.'
 This versatile personality got himself admitted in Anandadani school in 1888. He completed his primary schooling at his native home. He was a regular reader of The Weekly Sudhakar which was first published in 1691. His literary pursuit began from this weekly. He began to write poems and essays from his school days.
 In 1895, he set for Turkey which was then a centre of Islamic education. On way he met with journalist and literateur Rezauddin Ahmed who lived at 4 Korea gorosthan Road in Calcutta. He also advised him to go to Turkey. But after some time he came back home and engaged himself in writing poems and essays fully.
 In 1899, famous social reformer and writer Munshi Muhammad Meherullah came to attend a meeting at Sirajganj from Jessore. Sirajee recited his immortal 'Anal Prabaha' including other poems written by him at the meeting venue. Munshi Meherullah became very impressed at his performance. With a view to inspiring Sirajee, Munshi Meherullah published the first edition of 'Anal Prabaha' of Sirajee and 11 other poems written by him in 1307 Bangla year. His poetries and writings created wonder. The freedom loving people got inspired by his writings and they rose to the occasion. Then the British government banned 'Anal Prabaha' when its second edition saw light. The British Government sentenced him to two years' imprisonment on charge of so-called subversive acts against the state.
 Sirajee was freed from jail on May 14 in 1912. At that time All India Medical Mission led by Dr Mokhter Ahmed ansary was formed in Delhi with a view to assisting the Balkan War. As a member of the mission he came back home on July 15 in 1913 with the title of Gazi-e-Balkan given by the Sultan (ruler) of Turkey on december 2 in 1912. He again engaged in his holy mission of awakening the freedom loving people through his fiery speeches.
 Moulana Abdur Rashid tarkabagish, one of his ardent followers spoke highly of him. Sirajee appealed to the Muslims of the sub-continent to get themselves educated keeping pace with modern time. He exposed the stories of torture and exploitation on our people by the British government. Sirajee opposed vehemently against keeping women away from the mainstream of society. He also opposed the traditional veil system, especially among the Muslim women. Sirajee edited first The Monthly Noor from 33/A Bonpukur road in Calcutta in February, 1920. At that time the British rulers banned the magazine 'Muhammad' and imprisoned Moulana Muhammad Akram Khan in 1922. Then Sirajee was engaged in organising public opinion against the British tyranny. He actively participated in the Khelafat Movement in 1921. He also worked in The Weekly Soptan which was edited by Moulana Muhammad Muniruzzaman Islamabadi in 1922.
 Sirajee presided over the reception committee of the Muslim Conference in Sirajganj in 1923. He also presided over the All Bangla Activists' Conference in Calcutta Albert Hall on August 15 and 16 in 1923. He contested in the Bengal Provincial Council election in 1929. Again he was imprisoned for joining the civil disobedience movement.
 In prison his health broke down and he breathed his last on July 17 in 1932 at the age of 52 only.
 Later on our national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam paid rich tributes to this great son of the soil at a meeting at Sirajganj. A simple monument was erected on his grave and a road was named after him at Sirajganj town, but none remembered him by chalking out befitting programmes.
 His immortal works were (Poetry): Anal Prabaha, Moha Shikkhya Kabbyo, abodhon, Nabo Uddipon, Uchhash, Spain Bijoy Kabbyo and Pramanjalee. His famous novels were: Rainandini, Nur Uddin, Firoza Begum, Bangla Biswakosh and Tarabain. Adab Kaita Shikkhya, Saclinta, Stree Shikkhya, Naree Jeebon and Swajatee Prem were his noteworthy essays, while Turoskha Bhramon was a most favourite travel story written by him.



A view of the majar of Syed Ismail Hossain Sirajee, located on Sirajee Road near Sirajganj Police Station. — Star photo