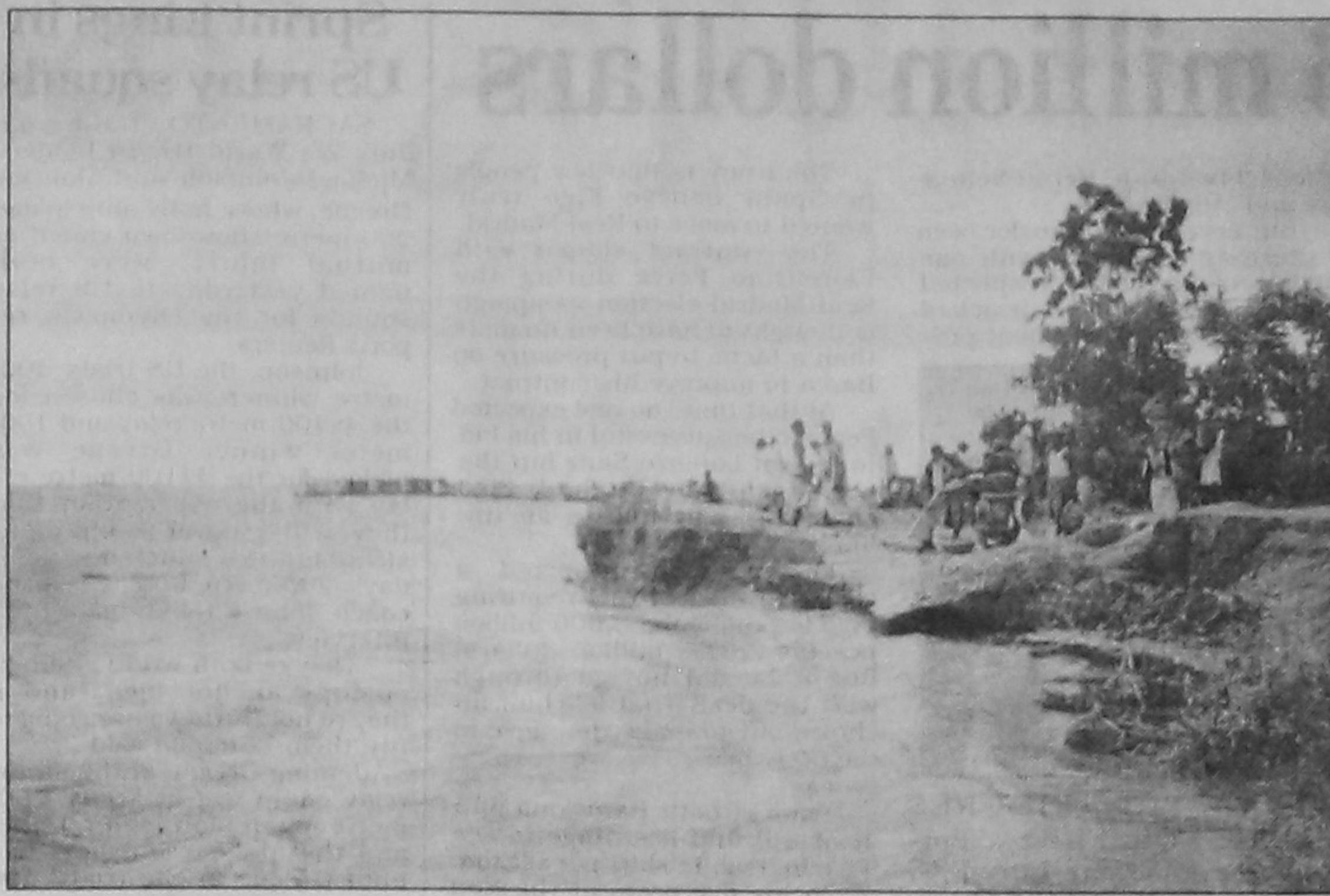


National



Some ill-fated erosion victims of Sonatoli village, 45-km away from Sirajganj Sadar police station. They are living under the open sky. -Star photo



Jamuna erosion takes a serious turn at Shuvagachha village in Kazipur upazila of Sirajganj district. Only 20 houses are left which may go under the riverbed at any time. -Star photo

Erosion victims not properly rehabilitated

From Akhteruzzaman Babu

SIRAJGANJ, July 25: The number of homeless people is rising alarmingly due to continuous river erosion which is going on along the eastern part of the mighty Jamuna from time immemorial.

About five lakh people of 90 thousand families in six upazilas have already been rendered homeless during the last six years. When contacted with the district administration they disclosed they had already constructed a few cluster villages in some areas with the financial support of foreign agency to rehabilitate the victims. But those are too meagre in compari-

son with the demands. The administration sources think if the government takes up pilot programme to rehabilitate the erosion victims then they will be benefited in true sense.

According to a survey conducted by a non-governmental organisation (NGO), every year particularly from the month of July to November water coming from the upstreams affects the entire area and washes away hundreds of homesteads and crops of fields. There is no end to this erosion.

Sometimes vast tracts of lands are devoured in river bed within a moment. This way poor people

are getting poorer. Sometimes their new homesteads are devoured time and again in their life time.

The most affected upazilas are Sirajganj Sadar, Kazipur, Belkuchi, Chowhalli, and Shahjadpur. The mighty Jamuna flows close through these upazilas. Standing crops like paddy, jute, wheat and other cash crops on 21,747 hectares of land have already gone into the gorge of river during the last six years. Besides, 3,725 square kilometres area of land has already been devoured.

At least 20 per cent of those homeless people have migrated to

Dhaka and other unknown destinations. They are now living in distressed conditions as they have become poorest of the poor people. When contacted with the district administration and officials of Water Development Board (WDB) they said that to rehabilitate the affected people several programmes have been taken up. Embankment, cross dam are being constructed but the mighty Jamuna has been spoiling the endeavours. Under another project several spars are being constructed by WDB at three points in Kazipur-52, Sadar-2 at the cost of Taka 41 cores and Taka 67 lakh.

But no dam was constructed in Sadar thana and the municipali-

ties areas. As a result, river waters enter into the area during the rainy season.

Water Development Board submitted a proposal to the higher authorities in 1997 to control the flood.

The authorities, later, sent the project proposal to the ministry showing an estimated cost of Tk 17.27 crore for the project. But the works are yet to start.

An official told that Water Development Board (WDB) has approved the project on May this year but it is waiting for approval of the ministry concerned.

UNB from Patuakhali says:

Construction work on the Patuakhali town protection embankment is yet to start causing untold sufferings to the dwellers.

The town area is surrounded by a number of rivers and it goes under 3/4 feet water during the monsoon.

In a step to save the district from recurring floods, cross dams were constructed in Galachipa upazila in 60s while the dams were constructed in Kalapara, Dashmina, Bauli and Mirzaganj upazilas in 90s.

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