

National

Coir industry on verge of extinction

From Abu Ahmed

SATKHIRA, Oct 6: Coir industry, one of the most important cottage industries of the country, is on the verge of extinction.

Lack of capital and government patronisation hampered the progress of this industry.

The southwestern parts of the country produce huge quantity of fibres from the coconuts, which form the raw material of the coir industries. A large number of coir industries had been set up by private entrepreneurs along the coastal belts during the last century. Coir ropes also found ready markets in foreign countries, it is learnt.

Many farmers took part time job in the coir industries. At home coir ropes have been used for making katcha houses by the rural people from a long past. Moreover, coir rope is one of the strongest ropes used for many purposes in the world. It is not easily rotten away.

Despite so many good qualities and abundance of raw materials the most important coir industries are now neglected. As such many of them have been closed down. Many artisans considered these industries as alternative avenues of employment.

This correspondent recently visited Bardal and

Budhata Bazaars in Assassuni upazila and found about 45 farmers of different villages were selling coir ropes in one corner of these two small markets. Each of them had about two to six kilograms of coir rope. When asked Samsur Rahman of village Bardal told that his forefathers also used to make coir rope. But now many people of the area deserted their occupation. Like many others he had no capital to buy coconut fibre. Other members of his family can efficiently produce coir rope. But they were without any work. Had he enough money, he could have managed work for all the able-bodied members of his family. Others also agreed with him in this regard. They told that lack of marketing facilities was another reason that led to closure of many coir industries.

With a view to saving the coir industries of the country, the government should make capital easily available to these industries through banks and other money lending organisations. The artisans should be trained in the use of improved modern machinery and improved quality of products. Solution to all these problems will prevent extinction of coir industries from the country.

News snaps

Re-election demanded

GAZIPUR, Oct 6: A protest meeting was held at College Gate here Saturday demanding re-election to Tongi Municipality, reports UNB.

Supporters of Independent candidate Hafiz Uddin Sarker organised the meeting where the speakers accused the ruling party of massive rigging. Chairman candidate Hafiz Uddin Sarker, among others, addressed the meeting with Samiruddin Pathan in the chair. Pro-Awami League candidate, Azmatullah Khan was declared winner in the recently held Tongi Pourashava election.

Two with fake notes held

COMILLA, Oct 6: Two people were caught red handed with forged notes of Tk 100 denomination from Burchang upazila recently, reports UNB.

Police said Awlad Hossain and Mijanur Rahman of Ramchandarpur village gave a fake 100 taka note to shopkeeper Shamsu Mia of nearby Jagatpur village after buying cigarettes from him. He with the help of local people later searched their bodies and recovered six such fake notes. Local people handed them over to police. A case was filed.

Man gets life term

HABIGANJ, Oct 6: A court here convicted a man and sentenced him to life term imprisonment recently in a murder case, reports UNB.

The District and Sessions Judge also fined convict Jamal Mia of Garhigaon village in Chunaroghat upazila Tk 10,000, with a provision to suffer one year more rigorous imprisonment in default. According to prosecution, the accused called his fellow-villager Dulu out of his house on the plea of going to a local market and hanged him with a tree after killing him on June 20, 1992 following a dispute over an affair with a girl of the village. After examining the records and 11 witnesses, the judge pronounced the verdict.

200 bridges to be built

JHALAKATHI, Oct 6: As part of developing rural communications the government will construct 200 bridges in 20 of Nalchiti and Sadar upazilas of the district during the current fiscal year, reports UNB.

Local Government Engineering Department will supervise the implementation work at a cost of Tk 6 crore. Official sources said each of the bridge would cost Tk 3 lakh only. The bridges will be constructed with pucca slab on iron frame to facilitate movement of people and small vehicles.

Smuggled timber seized

COX'S BAZAR, Oct 6: An anti-smuggling taskforce seized smuggled timber worth over Tk 50 lakh from a timber depot on the bank of river Bakkhali recently, reports UNB.

The taskforce, comprising police, BDR, forest officials and local administration, raided the depot in Kosturaghat area at about 9 am seized the timber. They had also arrested owner of the timber depot Abu Sultan alias Nagu Company. But Nagu reportedly disappeared from local police station moments after he was brought there.

1,034 schemes implemented

RANGPUR, Oct 6: Some 1,034 special test relief projects spending about 1,282 mts of wheat were completed in eight upazilas here during the last fiscal year, reports UNB.

Under Rural Infrastructure Maintenance programme, 76 schemes were implemented in Sadar, 181 in Mithapukur, 198 in Pirganj, 92 in Pirgacha, 37 in Kaunia, 272 in Gangachara, 132 in Badarganj and 51 in Taraganj upazilas, said official sources. The works on the projects included earth filling, construction and reconstruction of roads, culverts, bridges and excavation and re-excavation of ponds.

Man slaughtered

BAGERHAT, Oct 6: Unidentified assailants slaughtered a man at Kulia village in Mollahat upazila Sunday night, reports UNB.

The deceased was identified as Tuku Fakir, 55. Police said a gang of hoodlums stormed into the house of Tuku at dead of night and killed him. They said the killing might be linked with filing of a case against them. Tuku lodged a case with local police after some women traffickers abducted her 16-year-old daughter Reena but failed to send her in neighbouring India. The wife of the victim filed a case with the police in this regard.

Three killed in road mishap

NAOGAON, Oct 6: Three people were killed and 30 others injured when a bus turned turtle at Mirpur on Naogaon-Atrai road Sunday afternoon, reports UNB.

Police said the Atrai-bound bus from Naogaon overturned while giving side to another bus at about 5 pm. One of the victims was identified as bus helper Belal Hossain, 22. Of the injured, nine were admitted to Naogaon Sadar Hospital and Atrai health complex. Others were released after first aid.

Schoolgirl raped

PATUAKHALI, Oct 6: A schoolgirl was violated and a woman sexually abused allegedly by a cop and his associates at College Road in Kalapara upazila on Sept 26, reports UNB.

According to a delayed report, policeman Shimul Gazi and his associates took a schoolgirl and an insurance worker to a house in the area on the plea of opening an insurance policy while they were returning home in Amtali upazila at noon. Gazi then violated the schoolgirl while the others sexually abused the insurance worker. The criminals then boarded them into an Amtali-bound bus. The rape victim filed a case on Sept 30, four days after the incident. According to local police, Shimul Gazi works in Dhaka and came to his village home on leave.

Woman robbed of ornaments

PATUAKHALI, Oct 6: Pirates snatched gold ornaments from a launch passenger on river Buriganga Saturday night, reports UNB.

Police said Purnima Shah, wife of Sawpan Shah of Natun Bazar of Patuakhali, fell prey to the pirates while going to toilet of the Patuakhali-bound launch. The muggers then jumped into the river and disappeared.

Case against 11 under PSA

PATUAKHALI, Oct 6: A case was filed against 11 youths under the Public Security Act for demanding toll from a local family on Sunday, reports UNB.

According to the case filed on Thursday, the accused broke into the house of Sohrab Hossain at Subedkhali in Mirzaganj upazila and demand Tk 25,000 from his wife Shahnaz Pervin. Hossain was not present during the incident. They also snatched gold ornaments from her as she refused to give the money.

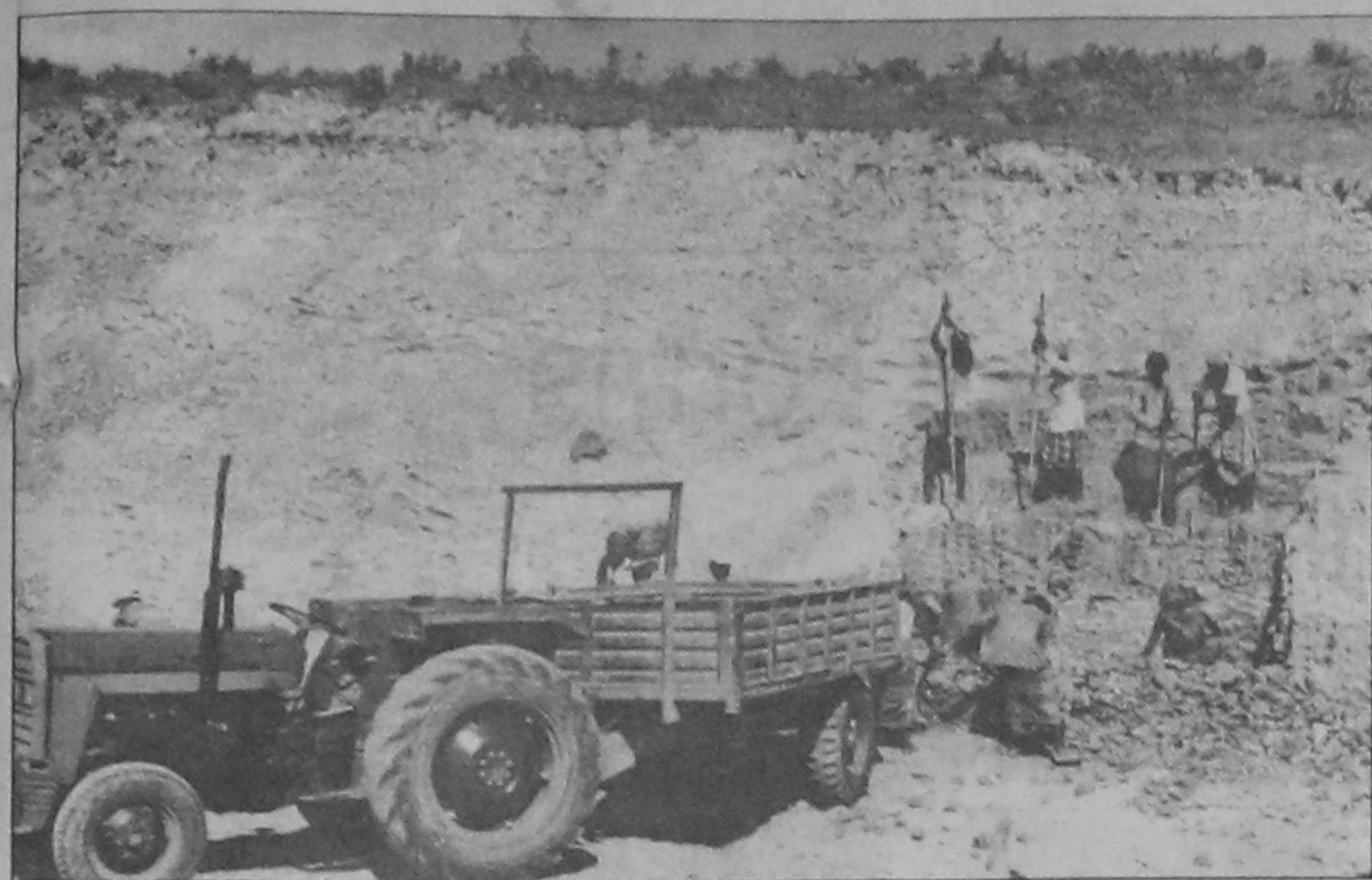
Fisherman drowns

LUXMIPUR, Oct 6: A young fisherman drowned in river Meghna when a fishing trawler caught in the whirlpool sank early hours Tuesday, reports UNB.

Shahidul Haq, 35, drowned while 12 other fishermen managed to swim ashore. The trawler sank south of Bayarchar at 1 am. They were going to fish in the Bay.



Bangladesh Navy relief team distributing cooked food at a flood relief centre in Jessore.



Hill cutting is going on unabated in many areas of Sylhet for a long time. As a result the environment has been threatened. Photo shows a hillock type location is being levelled near Sylhet-Tamabil Road.

—Star photo by Iqbal Siddiquee

Bad days for fishermen

From Abdul Monayem Khan

COX'S BAZAR, Oct 6: Thousands of fishermen have been facing manifold problems in carrying on their ancestral profession due to shortage of funds and scarcity of fishing materials.

According to a statistics, about 46,000 fishermen of Moheshkhali, Kutubdia, Teknaf, Chakoria, Ukhiya and Cox's Bazar sadar upazilas are engaged in the age-old profession.

Some of them said sudden price hike of nets, boats and other necessary equipment and exploitation by non-professional fishermen have thrown them in a crisis.

Pisciculture in the six upazilas has been largely affected due to drying up of water bodies. Siltation of the rivers and ponds are worsening the condition of fish cultivation and production in Cox's Bazar. Siltation of the Bakkhali river and Matamuhuri river have largely affected pisciculture.

Disposal of wastes of mills and factories in the rivers is the main reason of water pollution and situation of the rivers.

Local fishermen said they are passing their days in extreme hardship due to shortage of capital. In absence of adequate loan facilities from the commercial banks, they are forced to borrow money from the money lenders with a high rate of interest.

They told this correspondent that the bank loans sanctioned for the fishermen are quite inadequate and most of the genuine fishermen cannot get the loan. Local fisheries department has failed to take proper measures for solving the problems of the fishermen, it is alleged.

They alleged that some lease holders in collusion with the local vested groups are giving sublease to the fake fishermen. Moreover, genuine fishermen cannot catch fish normally even after getting leases in most cases.

Fish cultivation in the district has been facing setback due to lack of proper maintenance of rivers, canals and ponds. Hundreds of ponds have turned derelict due to lack of care for the last 15 to 20 years. Many others are

full of water hyacinths.

Local leaders urged the authorities to take a comprehensive scheme for cooperative fish farming using the sweet water bodies.

On the other hand, fish supply has drastically fallen in Cox's Bazar, a wholesale fish market, for a considerable period.

Sea fish and various other local varieties of fish are generally brought and sold in the bazar, an important centre of the southern region. Traders from various parts of the country have their local agents here to purchase and supply fish to their desired locations.

But according to local traders, due to increased activities of the pirates in the Bay of Bengal and its adjoining areas, fishing in the Bay has been facing a serious setback, resulting in huge shortage of fish in the markets.

Traders urged the authorities concerned to ensure security of fishermen in the Bay and spray lime water in the fallow water bodies immediately.

Erosion takes alarming turn

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Oct 6: Erosion by the River Teesta has taken an alarming turn at Gangachhara upazila in the district, devouring vast areas in Kolkond, Mohipur and Nohali unions.

The erosion also rendered a large number of people homeless in the affected area. Meanwhile, the erosion is also threatening parts of Teesta Embankment at Singimari under Kolkond union.

Local Water Development Board (WDB) sources said many breaches, which developed along 600-metre long areas of the embankment in June, were repaired with the help of Army personnel.

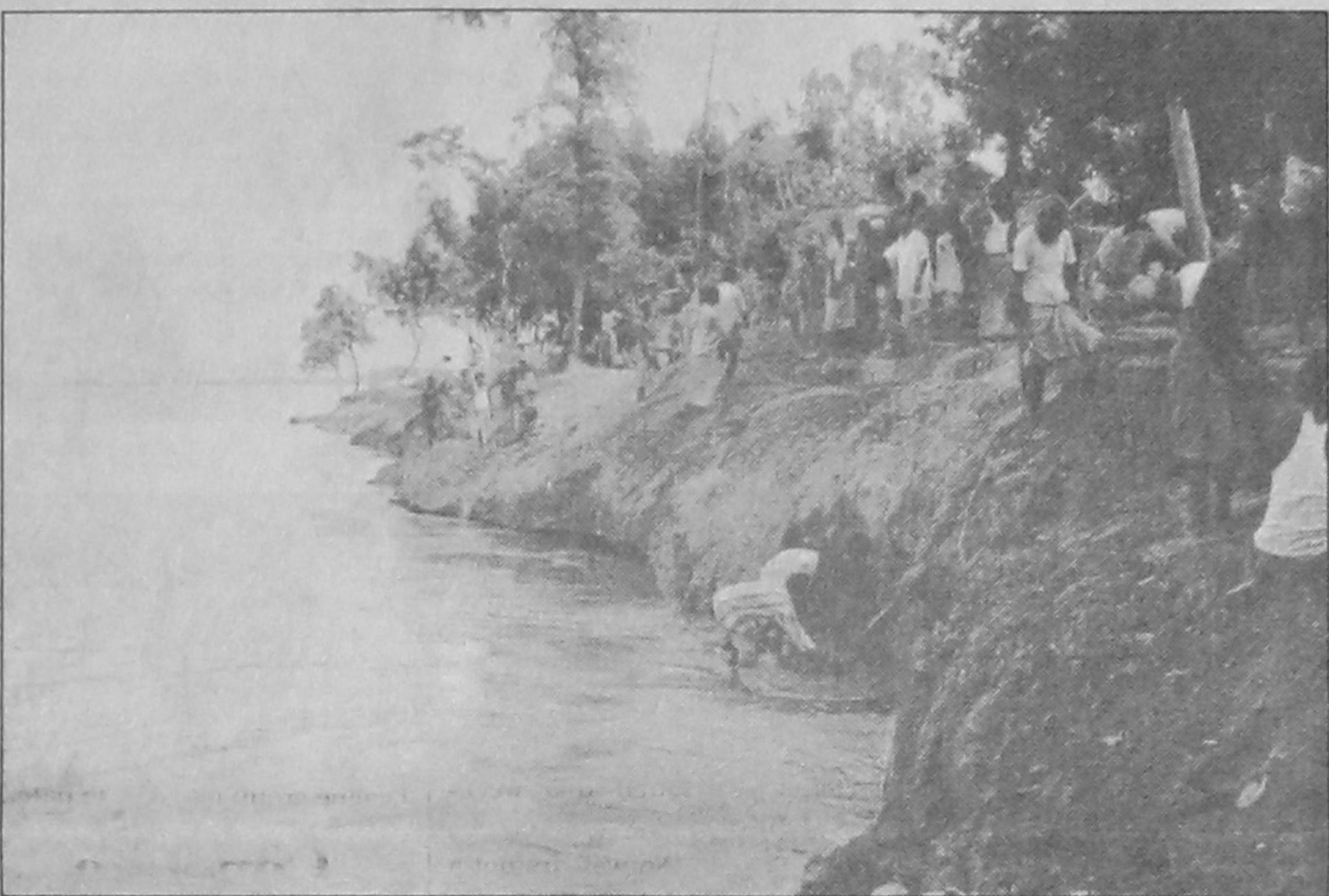
The Army personnel were withdrawn on September

5. Shortly after they withdrew the embankment is again facing threat.

Local people alleged that WDB officials failed to look after the embankment. Officials concerned could not be contacted for comments.

However, local people also said crores of taka are spent every year to protect the dam, but efforts go in vain. The WDB remains silent during dry season and undertakes no measure, for reasons best known to the officials concerned, they added.

If embankment at Singimari collapses, the existence of Rangpur town will surely be jeopardised.



Repair work of Singimari Teesta river protection embankment is going on at Gangachhara upazila in Rangpur district.

—Star photo

Agro-based activities: Women's greater role suggested

From Delwar Kabir

JHENIDAH, Oct 6: Women should have easy access to agro-based activities for better production of crops, besides proper use of modern cultivation method, speakers said at a training workshop for females held here recently.

Women should be provided with training facilities, the speakers observed at the daylong workshop where 500 participants were present.

A number of researchers of

Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI), including its Director General, were present in the training course on plant production.

Omar Ali, a renowned farmer of village Moheswar Chanda in Kaliganj upazila under the district, said farmers of Moheswar Chanda village produced only eight thousand maunds of paddy a year by cultivating 382 acres of lands a few years ago. But now about

forty-two thousand maunds of paddy are being produced in the village, he added.

The villagers are better off now, Abdul Jalil, another farmer of the village, told the workshop.

According to villagers, both males and females have been provided with training on agro-based activities from various government and non-government organisations.

Omar Ali while talking to this correspondent said villagers were provided with training on use of pesticides, fertilisers and soil nutrition, pisciculture, repair of shallow and deep tubewells, nursery and poultry and dairy.

Local people also said Unnayan Dhara, a local NGO, has been working in the locality to motivate farmers to use organic fertiliser instead of chemical fertiliser on cropland. The NGO is also imparting knowledge regarding integrated pest management to farmers, they added.

Obituary

Nasima Begum, mother of the District Correspondent of Mymensingh of The Bangladesh Observer, Nurul Islam and wife of Dr Abdul Gafur died of brain stroke at her house at village Dhipur under Bhaluka upazila on September 21.

She was 67, says a press release.

She had been suffering from Rheumatoid Arthritis and high blood pressure for a long time.

She was survived by husband, five sons, a daughter and scores of well-wishers to mourn her death.



Abdur Razzaque, director general of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute, distributing a sapling of coconut to a participant recently after completion of a day long training course on production and usefulness of coconut plants at village Moheswar Chanda in Jhenidah district.

—Star photo

Births not registered in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ Oct 6: The registration of birth and death is not being maintained properly by the municipality and union parishads here.

There are nine upazilas, 81 unions parishads and four municipalities here. Because of non-registration of birth and death complications arise during admission in the educational institutions or in getting passport and visas. Authorities of hospitals, clinics, maternity centres, mother and child care centres do not report the birth of a baby to the authorities concerned. The local bodies find it difficult to chalk out programmes to meet the needs.

Source in Sirajganj Municipality says the number of birth or death registration is very poor. Town dwellers have no idea on the registration matter. But it is very important to register about the registration of births or deaths.

Under the provision of the existing law parents are to register the name and particulars of a new born baby with the local bodies like municipalities and union parishads within 90 days of birth. Besides, health workers like health assistants and sanitary inspectors under health department and family welfare assistants and family planning inspectors under Family Planning Department also collect information of newborn baby and register the name with local bodies. The parents of a newborn baby have to pay a fine of Taka five if they fail to report to the local body within the stipulated time. If needed, the rate of death can easily be obtained from the places where they are buried or put into flames. At present, authorities ask for birth certificate from those who seek admission in institutions and seek jobs, passports and migration or immigration.

USA immigration visa lottery owners collected these certificates from union parishads during the last five years. Sirajganj Municipality source says, birth certificates were issued by the municipality to persons who were born 20 to 45 years back. Sanitary inspectors working under upazila health complexes are also issuing birth certificate to foreign immigrants. There is no system to charge money for birth certificate from municipalities or union parishads. Some birth certificate seekers, however, complained that a section of staffers of the Health Department or municipality or union parishad claim Taka 1,000 to 1,500 or more for a birth certificate.

However, an employee of Sirajganj Municipality said in case of persons of 20 to 45 years old they send the applications to the district administration to issue birth certificates.

Ashrayan infuses new blood in veins of landless

ULLAPARA (Sirajganj), Oct 6: Forty-five year old landless freedom fighter Yar Ali, who ended his battle after the achievement of independence in 1971 and continued his struggle for existence for long 27 years, is waiting for golden days in his tiny house at Enayetpur Ashrayan project.

"A house in the Ashrayan has infused new blood in my veins to live. I have driven out my painful days through establishing a nursery in 10 decimal of land allocated here for me," a beaming Yar Ali said.

Yar Ali, who fought against the Pakistani occupation forces during the War of Liberation in Pakshi of Pabna, Meherpur of Kushtia and Bagha of Rajshahi areas, said the allocation of a tiny house and 10 decimal of land in the Ashrayan project by the government of Sheikh Hasina is the greatest thing he has ever received after the independence.

"In the past it was a dream, but today it is a reality," he said. As a freedom fighter, Yar Ali, father of four sons and two daughters, got the house at the Ashrayan project in August 1998 on priority basis. He also received a loan of Taka 8000 from the Enayetpur Ashrayan Bahumukhi Samobay Samity and Department of Forestry to establish

a nursery one year ago.

The department of forestry and Samobay Samity gave him loan against the condition of repayment in 48 installments with 8 per cent service charge.

"I had made bed of 16 varieties of plants in my nursery and have already sold plants worth Taka 20,000," Yar Ali said and expressed his hope that he will earn at least Taka one lakh by selling all these plants after seven months.

Yar Ali said he has already paid 38 installments against the credit and he is hopeful to pay the remaining 10 installments within the next three months.

Not only Yar Ali, but all the members including Tara Miah, Khatun, Gazi Zillur Rahman, Abdur Razzak and Mozammel Huq of this Ashrayan are now self-sufficient as an excellent micro credit programme has been launched through the Samobay Samity in August 1998.

Ullapara Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Azhar Ali said so far Taka 7,60,000 was disbursed as credit to the members of this

Ashrayan after imparting them training on different trades including poultry, sewing, nursery and small business.

The rate of recovery is 88.89 per cent, he said.

Azhar termed the rate of recovery as satisfactory and said the amount of credit will be increased after assessing the repayment of credit of the borrowers.

According to official sources, Ashrayan Bastobayan Sangstha (ABAS) of Prime Minister Office (PMO), the implementing agency of Ashrayan projects across the country, is offering credits to the people of the project area for making them self-reliant.

They said 1,794 tin-shed barrack houses have been constructed so far across the country and about 90,000 people of 18,000 families have been rehabilitated under the Ashrayan projects.

Enayetpur Ashrayan, one of the projects of Ashrayan Bastobayan Sangstha (ABAS), was built on 15.12 acres of land on the bank of the River Korotoa in 1998. Fourteen barrack houses 10 houses in each were built in the Ashrayan. A total of 140 landless families were rehabilitated in this Ashrayan.

—BSS Feature