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Inside today

International



My wife is helping me, but not as Sharmila Tagore, says Mansur Ali Khan, Nawab of Pataudi
Page 5

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day
Inspiration is important, says Santoor virtuous Omprakash Chourasiya
Page 3

Feature

Banking and Finance

Rural insurance scheme gets encouraging response
Page 6

Article



France's controversial former Pacific Affairs Secretary Gaston Flosse has regained power in French Polynesia. While cleared on some corruption charges, he still faces more, and the future looks uncertain for Tahitians generally.
Page 4

NEWS BRIEFS

Bush optimistic of ME peace

WASHINGTON, May 17: President George Bush said today he still sees "real cause for optimism" on prospects for a Middle East peace conference and the US effort to promote one will continue unabated despite apparent lack of progress, reports Reuter.

3 Rly employees taken into custody

From Our Correspondent KISHOREGANJ, May 16: Three railway employees including Station Master of Gachhata rail station were taken into custody for the death of two people and injury to 25 persons in a rail mishap on April 14.

5 killed in rocket attack

ISLAMABAD, May 17: Five people were killed and 18 injured today when Mujahideen guerrillas fired several rockets on Kabul, Radio Kabul reported, says AFP.

Rail link snapped

From Our Correspondent RANGPUR, May 17: Communication between Dhaka and northern districts has been snapped since Friday morning following collapse of rail bridge near Bharatkhal rail station at Teestamukh Ghat of Rangpur district.

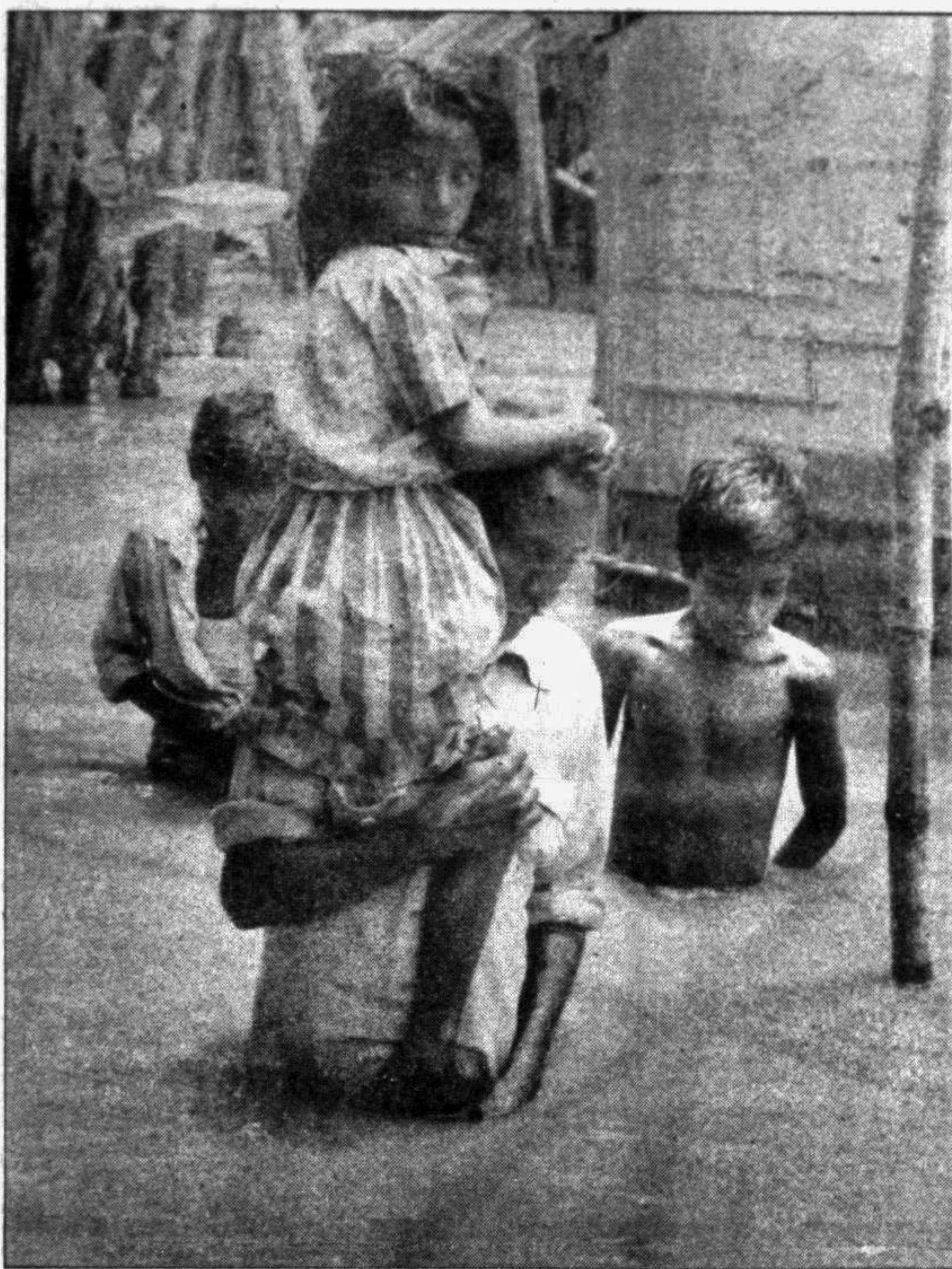
PDA to challenge Shariah Bill

ISLAMABAD, May 17: The Pakistan Democratic Alliance (PDA) today decided to challenge the constitutional validity of the controversial Shariah Bill in superior courts, reports PTI.

The bill, paving the way for making Pakistan an Islamic welfare state with "Quran" and "Sunnah" as the supreme law of the land, was approved by the National Assembly last night by a majority vote.

Death toll rises : Homeless people need shelters Flood situation unchanged

By Staff Correspondent



GOLAPGANJ (Sylhet): A flood-hit family leaving behind the submerged house in search of shelter. — Star photo

The overall flood situation in Sylhet and Sunamganj districts remained unchanged on Friday while it improved in Habiganj, according to district administration sources.

Thirtyfour persons were killed in sylhet district, six persons died in Sunamganj and four persons in Moulvibazar districts so far. In Sylhet district, total of 95 unions in 11 upazilas were affected. The area affected is 2175 square kilometres, a total of 12,30,210 persons were affected. One person was missing.

Crops of 1,83,811 acres were damaged, 7,038 houses were fully and 19,402 houses partially damaged. About 627 kilometres of embankment were washed away and 148 bridges, 2633 km of road were also damaged in the flood.

Meanwhile, 163 flood shelters have been opened and 75 medical teams are working in the affected areas of Sylhet district.

Balaganj upazila still remained cut off from Sylhet district headquarter.

In Sunamganj district 2,25,000 people were affected, crops in 88,625 acres of land were damaged. About 2,500 houses were fully damaged while 3,590 houses were partially damaged. Six haor embankments and 225 kilometres of kutch road were partially damaged.

In Moulvibazar district, crops of 40,830 acres were damaged. In Netrakona district, lowlying areas were submerged by flood water. Khaliyuri, Mohanganj, Durgapur and Madan upazilas were badly affected. IRRRI crops of 2,000 acres have been damaged. Cases of diarrhoea have been reported from some areas.

The flood situation in greater Sylhet district is likely to remain unchanged in the next 24 hours, a Water Development Board source said.

See Page 10 Col. 1

Task Force for sole purpose of providing disaster assistance : US British naval ship with helicopters arrives shortly

Star Report

A British naval ship is expected to arrive in Bangladesh on Monday carrying four helicopters with required manpower to carry out relief operations in the cyclone-hit coastal areas.

Our Chittagong Correspondent Nurul Alam quoting defence sources said, the British helicopters would conduct relief operations independent of the US Task Force.

Meanwhile, US State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher emphasized on Friday that the military forces had been sent to Bangladesh "solely for the purpose" of providing disaster assistance following the killer winds that hit the country's coastal areas, says a press release issued by USIS.

His comments came in response to a question about an Indian politician's assertion that US forces had been sent to Bangladesh for a longer period of time in order to establish a foreign military presence in the area.

"We are one of a number of countries that have responded to the Bangladesh Government's request for assistance," Boucher pointed out.

"India was also one of the first countries which sent aid to Bangladesh after the cyclone," he said adding "other donor countries are well aware of what the US government is doing in our common efforts to help Bangladesh."

The role of the Task Force in helping with this particular disaster, I think is very very clear," the deputy spokesman said. "I think we have made very very clear that we are there solely for the purpose of this disaster operation and not for any other purposes."

Our Chittagong Correspondent said, "the US Task Force continued their relief operations for the second consecutive day today ferrying over 200 metric tons of relief goods to the coastal areas affected by the cyclone."

The relief goods were dropped at Sandwip, Moheskhal, Matharbari, Azampur, Kutubdia and Cox's Bazar. All the relief materials were dropped by the American helicopters.

While urging all concerned to refrain from making public statement about the incident, the Commission reminded that it has the powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, and its proceedings are judicial.

See Page 10 Col. 1

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See Page 10 Col. 1

US aircraft crashes into sea

By Staff Correspondent

A US aircraft which arrived in Bangladesh for training purposes crashed on Friday off the Chittagong coast. The US Harrier aircraft AV-8B went down into the sea after taking off from the USS Vancouver.

US Defence Department spokesman Pete Williams said in Washington on Friday that the crash of the US aircraft was not related to the relief efforts. He said, "It was on a training mission". He said the pilot of the aircraft was rescued. The cause of the crash is being investigated, he added.

A USIS press release quoting the Defence Department spokesman added, the US amphibious Task Force, which is now in Bangladesh has been

See Page 10 Col. 8

Struggle for parliamentary democracy to continue: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina said, the struggle for establishing Parliamentary democracy on the basis of the commitment of the three alliances will continue. "Peace, stability and progress cannot be achieved unless democracy is institutionalised", she added.

Sheikh Hasina was addressing the leaders of Bangladesh Homeo Peshajibi Samity, who called on her Friday morning at the Bangabandhu Bhaban. The leaders of the samity apprised her of their professional

See Page 10 Col. 5

Uneasy calm on DU campus

By DU Correspondent

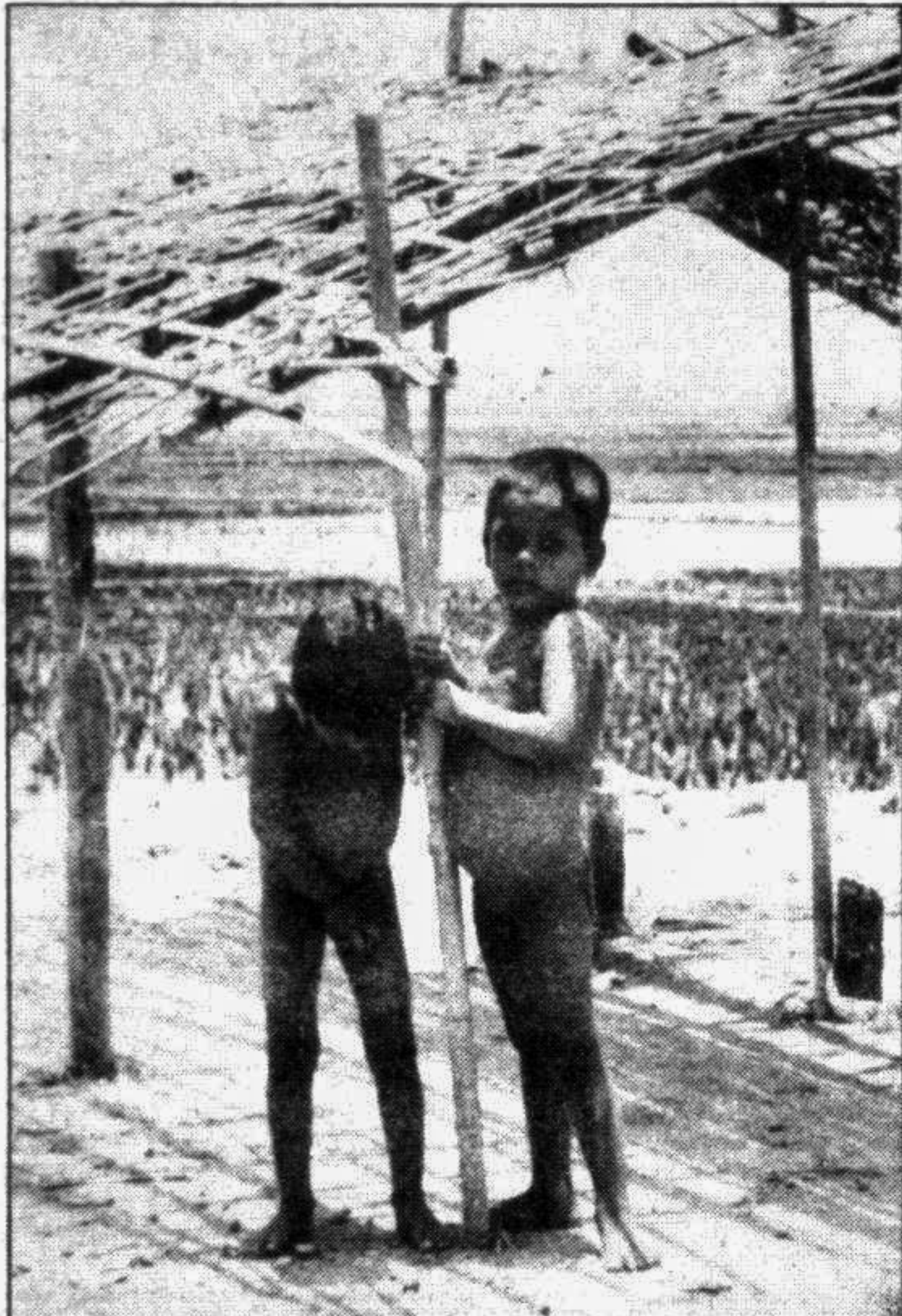
An uneasy calm was prevailing on the Dhaka University campus on Friday after a series of armed clashes between the supporters of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-A).

The armed activists were learnt to be still staying in some of the residential halls of the university and supporters of both the feuding groups, who left their halls due to lack of security didn't return.

See Page 10 Col. 5

Cyclone survivors need jobs

From Safiuddin



Orphaned by the killer winds, the two children, not even in their teens, of Matarbari village in Maheshkhali upazila. They are the only survivors of a 12-member family.

— Photo : Shafiuddin

COX'S BAZAR, May 17: The brother and the sister orphaned by the April, 29 killer winds, came to their devastated homestead, perhaps to recollect the memory of their parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters.

Children of one Saber, they are the only survivors of a 12-member family, some people of Madarbari village in Maheshkhali upazila told The Daily Star. Hardly in their teens, the two orphans spend their night in the nearby Madarbari school relief centre.

The cyclone and its accompanying tidal surge destroyed everything of the newly built homestead and killed ten members of the family. The two children were rescued from a highland area several miles away.

Some neighbours have built a makeshift house, made of bamboo, for them.

The fields around the homestead are filled with saline water. IRRRI paddy in most of the fields have been damaged completely or washed away.

Few farmers who had harvested paddy could not protect the grains from the onslaught of the cyclone, local people said.

Some inhabitants of Madarbari said people living in the area are mostly day labourers working in salt beds, paddy fields, shrimp farms and fishing trawlers. All of them are now jobless.

See Page 10 Col. 6

Mirza Abbas sworn in as Dhaka Mayor

Mirza Abbas, MP, was sworn in as the Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation on Friday, reports BSS.

Acting President Mr. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, administered oath to the newly-appointed Mayor of Dhaka city at his official residence.

Sheikh Tayebur Rahman and Mr. Mizanur Rahman Minu took oath as Mayors of Khulna City Corporation and Rajshahi City Corporation respectively. The Acting President administered oath to the two newly appointed Mayors of Khulna and Dhaka at the same function.

Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali and LGRD Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder were present on the occasion. Earlier, Mirza Abbas tendered his resignation as minister of state for youth and sports.

Sadeque made State Minister

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on Friday appointed Sadeque Hossain, MP, a Minister of State and gave him the charge of the Youth and Sports Ministry, reports BSS.

The Acting President administered the oath to the newly-appointed State Minister at a simple ceremony at his official residence.

India to have 'hung' Parliament again

NEW DELHI, May 17: India will have a 'hung' Parliament again with no major parties appear to have chances for absolute majority in the three-day general elections beginning on May 20, reports BSS.

Electioneering ends tomorrow night in 205 Lok Sabha constituencies spread over six states completely and five other states partially where first phase of polling will be held on Monday. The elections will be held fully in West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi and Sikkim and partially in the UP, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh.

Five hundred and fourteen million voters will decide the fate of 8,952 candidates for 537 Lok Sabha seats in three

West Bengal, Haryana and other states and union territories will decide the fate of 3,911 candidates on the first day.

Elaborate security measures were taken to ensure a free and peaceful poll. The Bihar border has been sealed to prevent infiltration of anti-social elements.

Simultaneously with the Lok Sabha (Lower House) poll, elections will be held on May 20 for state assembly seats in West Bengal, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Over 197 million voters in

phases. The mid-term elections had been necessitated following resignation of the minority Chandra Shekhar government in March in the wake of the Congress(I) boycott of Parliament over the surveillance issue.

There is no election wave in favour of any of the major parties in the coming elections.

It is now certain that the Congress (I) which was ousted in the 1989 November elections from power due to the anti-Congress(I) wave created by the opposition will do better this time. All the opponents of Congress are now divided resulting in the multi-

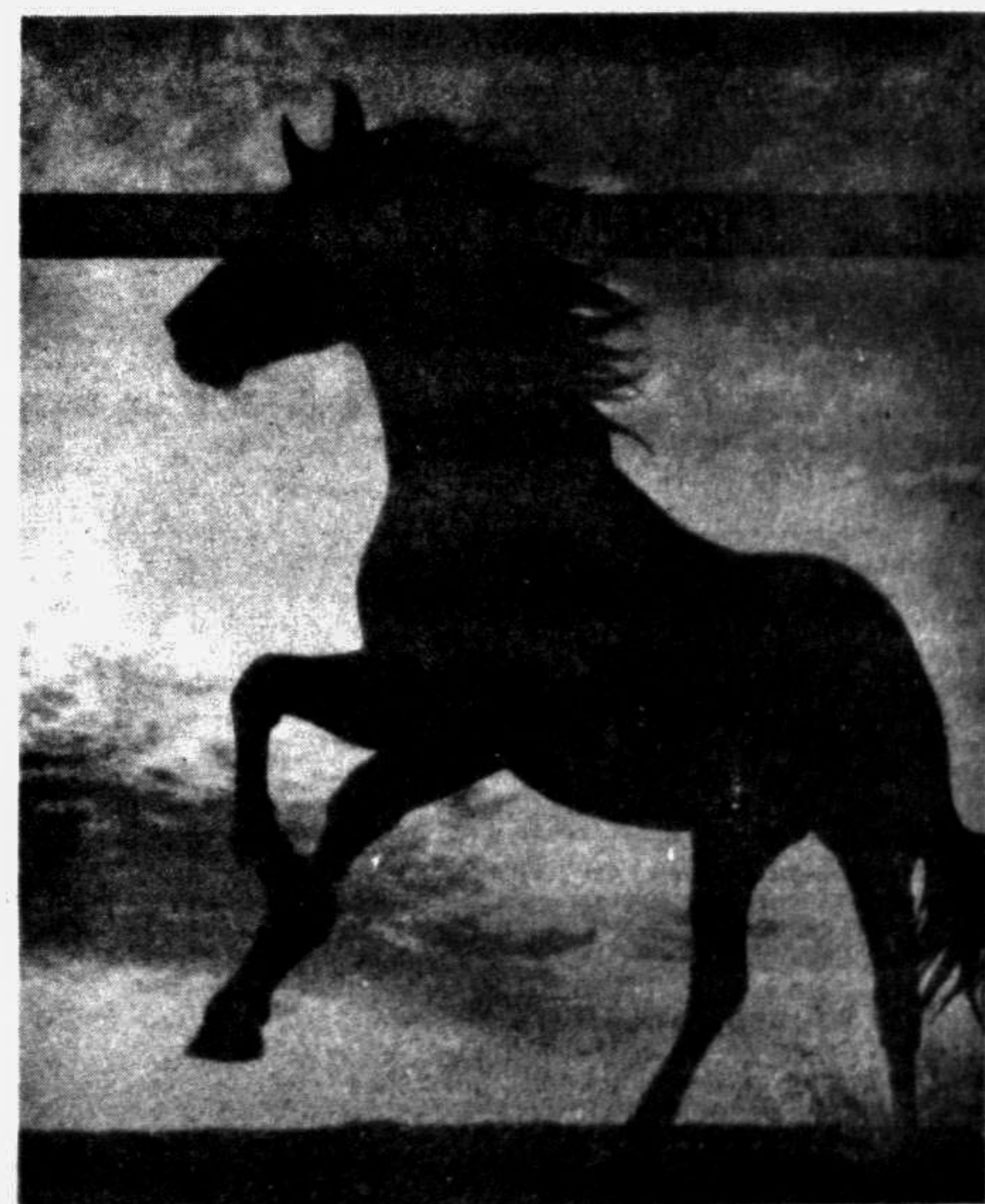
cornered contests unlike last time when straight contests were witnessed in most of constituencies between Congress(I) and opposition parties through seat adjustments, said analyst.

'Hindutva'

The Congress(I)'s strategy for a stable government is yet to generate a wave for the party with the elections only two days away, but "Hindutva" of the communal BJP party led by L.K. Advani seems to be up-beat in the Hindi belt in the northern India. Most calculations place the BJP as a runner up after Congress(I) with the

See Page 10 Col. 3

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