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VOL. VII NO. 285 REGD. NO. DA 781

KARTIK 24 1404 BS.

DHAKA SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1997

RAJAB 7 1418 HIJRI

12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 6.00

20 including 9 BSF men killed in Tripura blast

AGARTALA, Nov 7: At least 20 people, nine BSF personnel and 11 civilians, all travelling in a BSF convoy, were killed in a powerful explosion by suspected militants of the banned National Liberation Front of Tripura near Raishyabari in Dhalai district, the Director General of Police, Tripura, B P Singh, said, reports PTI.

The massive explosion, believed to have been triggered by anti-tank mines, blew up the vehicle, which was the second from the front, into pieces. Seven of the nine BSF men were killed on the spot. Five people, including two civilians, were injured.

The BSF Inspector General, AK Sarbadhikari, said that the militants attacked the BSF convoy which was on its way to Dyke four around noon after conducting an anti-militant operation in the border areas. The militants looted a cache of arms including SLR rifles.

A general alert had been sounded all along the border and patrolling intensified in the area, the BSF IG said. The Tripura Chief Minister, Dasarath Deb, directed the army and para-military forces to launch massive combat operation in the area.

JSD leader shot dead in Kushtia

From Our Correspondent
KUSHTIA, November 7: A JSD leader and Freedom Fighter, Abdul Wahab, 45, was gunned down last night by five unidentified persons of a tea stall at Khoksa Bazar in the town.

Police later recovered the body and sent it to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy. A case has been registered with Khoksa police station in this connection.

After autopsy today, JSD leaders and workers brought out a big procession with the body of Wahab and paraded the main streets of the town.

They later held a meeting at Majumdar gate with Lokman Hossain in chair and called dawn-to-dusk hartal in the town protesting killing.

They also brought out a torch procession this evening in support of tomorrow's hartal.

56 killed as train hits bus in Cuba

HAVANA, Nov 7: A train hit a packed passenger bus that had failed to stop at an intersection in rural Cuba early Thursday, killing 56 people and injuring eight, according to a preliminary toll, radio Progreso reported, says AFP.

The crash occurred near the eastern Cuban town of San German.

Most of the people on the bus were adults travelling from the town of Urbano Noris to the provincial capital Holguin. The train was travelling from Santiago to Havana.

The Daily Star
on the Internet
<http://www.dailystarnews.com>

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Investors urged at concluding session of int'l confce

Exploit vast potential in Bangladesh

A two-day investors' conference concluded in the city yesterday with ministers, donors and foreign companies operating in the country urging the prospective investors to put their capital in Bangladesh to exploit its vast potential, reports UNP.

This is a country that has a bright future... you should take note that Bangladesh is a very good investment destination. Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria told the investors before winding up the meeting.

The Investors' Forum — Bangladesh: A New Era for Investment and Growth — attracted executives from some 50 international companies and investment firms, but political uncertainty overshadowed its main purpose.

Kibria tried to assure the prospective investors that despite some political differences, Bangladesh's major political parties are united on a point:

Large-scale foreign private investment. "There is a national consensus on economic issues and investors should take note of it... Yes, there are some occasional disturbances, but these are nothing but some ripples," he said in his summary speech to the conference.

The Bangladesh government in collaboration with the Financial Times Conference, a subsidiary of the London-based economic daily, organised the forum just after the Bangladesh Aid Group Meeting at a city hotel.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed, who spoke on the role of foreign investment in Bangladesh, also made a similar call to the investors to invest in a country that has many opportunities to offer.

"We are no more identified as a country of cyclone, tidal bore,

starvation and economic backwardness, rather a country of bright prospect for rapid economic development," he told the conference.

He again listed the incentives and opportunities now prevailing in Bangladesh and said many foreign investors have already shown tremendous interests to invest in the country's potential sectors.

"You please come to invest in the potential sectors for high returns by taking advantage of the preferential market access and investment incentives offered by the government," Tofael told the investors.

Representatives of the foreign companies already active in the country also expressed the same view that despite some problems, Bangladesh remains a good destination for foreign investors as it ensures profitable growth.

See Page 12 Col 4

Task Force meets in Ctg today to review CHT situation

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 7: The Task Force on refugee repatriation will hold a meeting at Chittagong circuit house tomorrow to review the overall situation in CHT ahead of resumption of repatriation of tribal refugees from Tripura, India.

Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Md Shakawat Hossain who is the member secretary of Task Force told this correspondent that tomorrow's meeting was also aimed at taking preparation to start the next phase of repatriation, scheduled to begin from November 21.

Chief Whip of Jatiya Sangsad Abul Hasanat Abdullah who is heading the National Committee on CHT is expected to attend the meeting as chief guest while Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation Mohiuddin Chowdhury will remain present as special guest, sources in the Task Force said.

The meeting will be presided over by Kalparanjan Chakma, MP, Chairman of the Task Force.

Cyclonic storm in Bay intensifies

By Special Correspondent

The remains of Typhoon Linda that raked Vietnam, Cambodia and parts of Thailand gained strength rolling in the Central Bay yesterday, but its slurred northerly movement on the day kept meteorologists on their toes, watching its movement.

The cyclonic storm is likely to intensify further and move slowly in a northerly direction. If it does not change course, it may move towards Bangladesh, a meteorologist told The Daily Star last night.

If the storm moves in a north-easterly direction, it will crash on the mountains of Arakan in Western Myanmar and lash parts of Bangladesh's south-eastern tip, he said.

According to Reuters reports from Calcutta quoting Indian weathermen, the storm was moving "in the north direction, the typhoon may avert India and hit parts of Burma and Bangladesh".

The weird course of the storm has baffled its watchers.

When the tail spin moved from the remains of Linda on the Andaman Sea last week, it turned into a cyclonic storm on Wednesday and proceeded north-westward.

On Thursday evening, it changed course, veering right and threatened to hit the Myanmar coast by Friday morning.

It, however, remained virtually idle yesterday, moving slightly north-westward, and was centred at 9 pm last night about 720 kms south-southeast of Chittagong Port.

It is likely to intensify further and move slowly in a northerly direction, the M of office in its bulletin at 10-30 pm said.

The maximum sustained wind within 54 kms of the cyclone centre is about 70 kph, rising to 85 kph in gusts squalls. Sea will remain rough. Maritime ports of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar have been advised to lower distant warning signal number two but hoist no signal.

See Page 12 Col 8

Water transit Indo-Bangla talks on renewal of protocol begin

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: An official-level talks between Bangladesh and India on the renewal of the protocol on inland water transit and trade began here today, reports BSS.

The talks will continue till Monday when the renewal of the Indo-Bangladesh protocol on inland water transit and trade is expected to be approved by both the countries, official sources said.

At the talks, Shipping Secretary AH Mofazzal Karim is leading the Bangladesh side while Surface Transport Secretary Yogendra Narain is the head of Indian side.

The agreement was signed earlier in 1995 for a period of two years.

Albright to start S Asia tour Nov 16

WASHINGTON, Nov 7: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Defence Secretary William Cohen planned to travel to South Asia and Asia next week on separate trips, reports AP.

Albright will visit Pakistan, India and Bangladesh to help prepare for a presidential trip to those countries in early 1998. She will arrive in Pakistan on Nov. 16 after taking part in a Middle East economic conference in Qatar.

In Pakistan she will encourage the government's commitment to democratic development, human rights, and religious tolerance, and work with Pakistani officials to end the conflict in Afghanistan. State Department spokesman James P Rubin said.

He said the focus in India will be on strategic and environmental issues. The dispute between India and Pakistan will not be a central theme of the trip.

The agenda for Bangladesh includes democratic and economic development, women's empowerment and child labour issues, Rubin said.

Preparations for business summit almost complete

Preparations are almost complete to host a three-nation business summit in the city on November 23 that is poised to usher in a new horizon of mutual trust and climate of cooperation among the countries of the subcontinent, reports UNB.

Initiated by Dhaka, the summit conference will be attended by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Indian Prime Minister I K Gujral and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

The three leaders will strive to devise ways of maximising trade and economic cooperation to promote socio-economic condition of some 1.25 billion people.

The planned summit, first of its kind, is seen as launching pad towards establishing a free trade zone in the South Asian region.

I K Gujral and Nawaz Sharif, who will arrive in the city on See Page 12 Col 2

Khaleda at discussion on 'Solidarity Day'

Foil conspiracy on CHT, Sylhet

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday cautioned against 'conspiracy' to compromise the country's sovereignty over Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Sylhet and some other areas and urged the people to get united in the 'spirit of November 7 revolution'.

"Conspiracy is on against the CHT, one tenth area of the country, if the country's sovereignty over CHT is compromised, we may lose Chittagong and the sea port as well and eventually Feni also," said the BNP chairperson while taking part in a discussion in the

city as chief guest. The discussion meeting marking the 'National Revolution and Solidarity Day' was held at Ramna Park, organised by the solidarity day observance committee, with its convener and BNP leader Mir Shawkat Ali in the chair.

Begum Zia also said that conspiracy was on with some other resourceful parts of the country including Sylhet. "If this subversive government tries to hand over to India various parts of the country including CHT, the people will unite in the spirit of March 26, 1971 and

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Fitness stickers, laminated driving licences soon Deaths from road accidents nearly double in 9 months

By Masud Arif

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) is going to introduce fitness sticker to be used on windshields of vehicles and laminated driving licence soon to check deaths from increasing road accidents which nearly doubled during January-September this year compared to last year's.

Sources in the BRTA said fully computerised vehicle inspection centres and overloading monitoring systems will also be set up in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi to check fitness of vehicles. The decisions, to be implemented within the next six months, are among some measures being studied by the National Road Safety Council to check road accidents, the sources said.

According to data available from police department, a total of 2,297 people were killed and 4,028 injured in road accidents across the country from January to September this year. The death toll was 1,328 during the corresponding period last year and 1,267 in the year before.

The BRTA sources said most of the accidents occurred due to drivers' faults, overloading and

plying of unfit vehicles. A large number of drivers and vehicle owners do not even bother to check fitness of their vehicles with the authorities concerned, they said.

Refuting a common allegation that the BRTA failed to stop plying of unfit vehicles on the roads, a BRTA official said, "The BRTA has no authority to look into it. It is the police who are legally obliged to check fitness certificates."

He, however, said the BRTA should be strengthened with more manpower and logistic support to make it more effective.

See Page 12 Col 8

BB Governor annoyed at delay in publication of bulletins

By Govinda Shil

Bangladesh Bank Governor Lutfar Rahman Sarkar has expressed his dissatisfaction over delay in publication of some journals and bulletins of the central bank.

Publication of at least 16 journals and bulletins have been due for long, official sources said.

The Governor, in two recent meetings, reminded the officials concerned to publish those soon.

"What shall I do with a two-year-old report?" he retorted when an official submitted to him a report on Commercial Bank Inspections, 1995, at a meeting, a source said.

The publications due include See Page 12 Col 3

No Damal Smriti final today

Sports Reporter

The final of the 18th Damal Smriti cricket tournament between defending champions Abahani Krira Chakra and Mohammedans Sporting Club will not be held today at the Dhaka Stadium following Mohammedans refusal to play in protest of the fines imposed on star players, skipper Aminul Islam Bulbul and all-rounder Minhajul Abedin Nannu.

Both Bulbul and Nannu were fined Tk 75,000 each for their un-sportsman like behaviour during the Abahani-Mohammedan group match on November 2.

See Page 12 Col 2

Bidding for exploration blocks No outcome in talks with Shell

Star Report

Negotiations with oil giant Shell, for hydrocarbon exploration in different blocks in the country ended last week without any positive outcome, sources said.

Meanwhile, the government, on Wednesday, invited South Asia Oil, USA, to discuss hydrocarbon exploration in blocks 4 and 5. The company told the Energy Ministry that it would send its representatives on November 16.

Another US company, Enron, has been invited to discuss about blocks 6 and 11 on November 11.

The sources said no substantial progress has been made so

far in the negotiations on signing Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) for exploration of hydrocarbon in 12 blocks in the country. The government had said earlier that negotiations would be completed and PSCs signed with "competent" companies by December 15.

The Energy Secretary, who plays a vital role in the negotiation process, is scheduled to go on a two-week official visit to the US while a member of the negotiation committee is leaving for a week-long visit to India. Observers said that their absence would slow down the on-going negotiations.

See Page 12 Col 8

3 more EPZs to be set up in 2 yrs

Bangladesh will have three more export processing zones within next two years providing additional facilities for investors from both home and abroad, reports BSS.

Disclosing this in the last session of the investors' forum in the city yesterday, Moazzem Hossain Khan, executive chairman of BEPZA said the existing two export processing zones (EPZ) are unable to cope with increasing demand from investors.

Peter Montagnon, Asia editor, Financial Times, was in the chair. The session was titled "Investing for export: export processing zone." Kihak Sung, chairman, Youngone Corporation, one of the largest foreign companies in EPZ also spoke in the session.

Khan said despite expansion, CEPZ and EPZ are not in a position to make room for any more investor.

The homogeneous nature of the land and its people, large number of potential human re-

sources said. Khan said despite expansion, CEPZ and EPZ are not in a position to make room for any more investor.

The homogeneous nature of the land and its people, large number of potential human re-

See Page 12 Col 4

4-nation confce on eradication of Malaria, Kala Azar in city Nov 18-20

By Staff Correspondent

A four-nation conference on control and eradication of two deadly diseases — malaria and kala-azar — will be held in Bangladesh from November 18 to 20.

Official sources said, the three-day conference, to be participated by about 35 experts from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan is being organised by the South East Asia Region Office (SEARO). The conference to be held at the BRAC's Centre for Development Management, at Rajendrapur, would focus on strategies to control the diseases in the common border regions.

The sources said, the principal target of the conference would be to find ways for a synchronised effort to contain the diseases. They would also pre-

See Page 12 Col 6

Gold ornaments worth Tk 7.5 lakh seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

A customs surveillance team recovered gold ornaments worth about Tk 7.5 lakh from two female passengers at the domestic terminal of Zia International Airport yesterday, official sources said.

The team, out of suspicion, searched the bodies of the two passengers coming by a Biman flight from Chittagong and recovered 1587 grams of gold ornaments.

A departmental case was lodged with customs in this regard.

Water, power lines of 16 shops at ZIA cut

By Staff Correspondent

The Zia International Airport (ZIA) authorities has disconnected the power and water supply lines of most of the shops inside the airport following a four-year dispute over rent.

The action was taken on Wednesday in a bid to recover about Tk two crore in unpaid rent and other charges from the shops, airport sources said.

It concerned 16 shops including those of stationary and snacks. Shop owners claimed that the ZIA authorities did not have the right to disconnect the utility supply lines as there was a court order to maintain status quo. They also said the action seriously hampered their business and tarnished the image of the international airport.

A top ZIA official, however,

said they did not shut down the shops but snapped the supply lines as shop owners had failed to pay about Tk 30 lakh in arrears bills for power and water.

The dispute between shop owners and the ZIA authorities began when the rent of shops was increased by 15 per cent in 1993, airport sources said.

Rent was increased after expiry of the contract with the shop owners.

At that time, ZIA authority offered the shop owners to renew the contract accepting the 15 per cent rent increase per year or leave the shops.

But the shop owners refused to accept the 15 per cent increase and later went to the court.

A shop owner, talking to The Daily Star, claimed they paid See Page 12 Col 1

Potato farmers stuck with huge stock

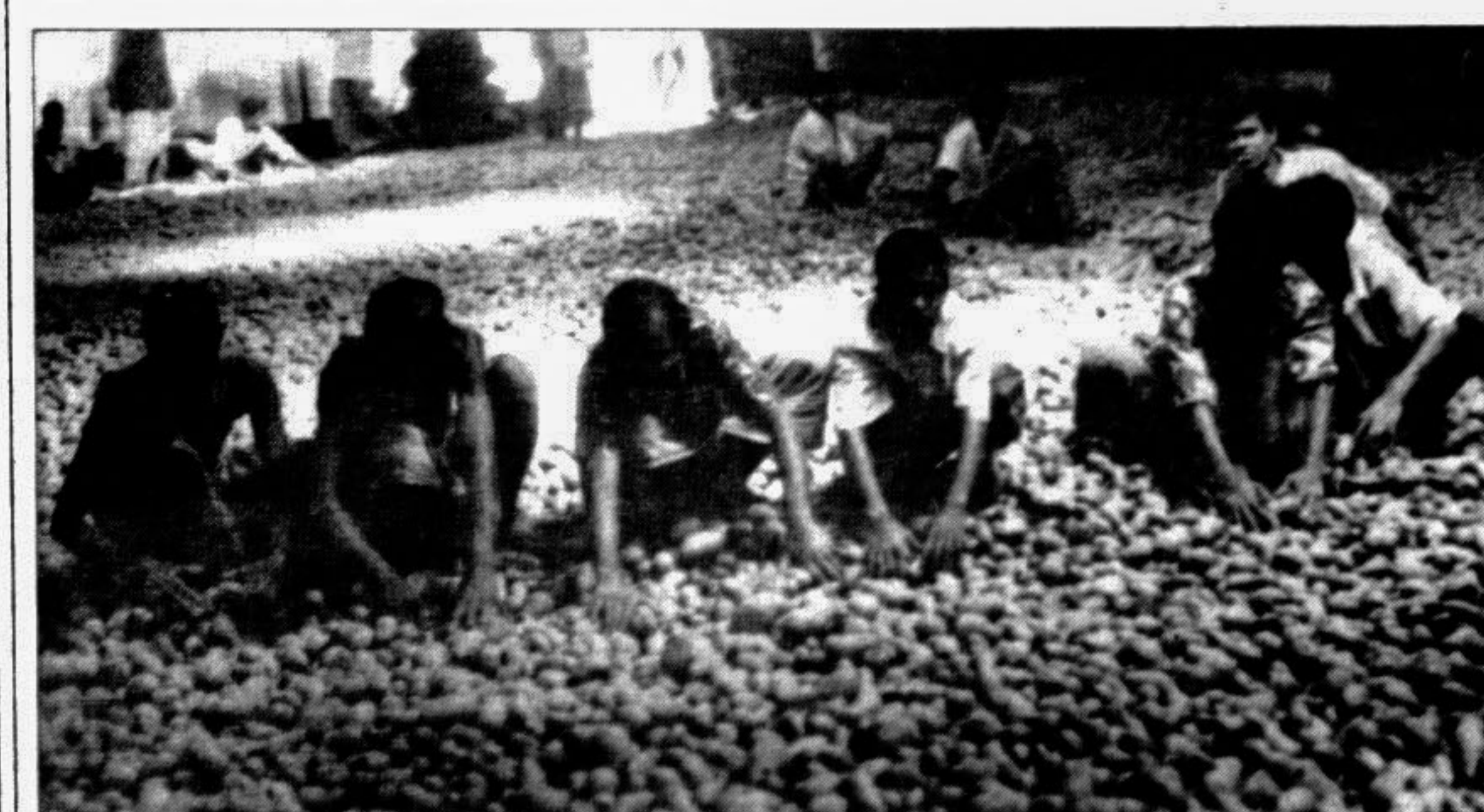
By Shehab Ahmed

Thousands of potato farmers and cold storage owners are in a fix with about 11 lakh tonnes of potato lying in cold chambers in the country before the new harvest starts arriving in the market early next month.

Disposing the huge stock has become a headache for the cold storage owners. They simply cannot throw it out of the cold storages. It costs them to properly dispose of the discarded potato, instead of throwing those into rivers or in the fields that poses health and environmental hazards.

As cold storage owners ponder over disposal of the old stock before time runs out, in the next three weeks, their creditors too are getting worried. A huge amount of bank loans would likely remain unpaid.

General secretary of the See Page 12 Col 7



Workers sifting through potatoes at a cold storage in Munshiganj to sort out bad ones — Star photo by AKM Mohsin