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## Power supply RPC alleges dilly-dally by PDB

By Staff Correspondent  
Supply of electricity to the National Grid from the Rural Power Company (RPC) is being delayed due to dilly-dally by PDB in signing a power-purchase agreement (PPA).

"Two power units of RPC with 35mw capacity each are ready to supply electricity to the National Grid and the company will start commercial production on the basis of the PPA, which is yet to be signed," RPC Managing Director Md. Maqsoodul Karim said at a press conference at his office here yesterday.

PPC is a subsidiary of the Rural Electrification Board (REB).

Power Development Board (PDB) has been dilly-dallying in signing the PPA for last three months although the first unit of RPC started trial operation on November 20 and the second one on December 19, he alleged.

The donors as well as the Energy Ministry have asked the authorities concerned to take immediate measures for commercial operation of the power plant at Shambhugan in Mymensingh, Karim said. "We, through the State Minister for Power, have appealed to the Prime Minister to inaugurate the power plants in February next."

Karim said RPC suggested PPC to buy electricity at the rate of 4.19 cent (Tk 2.09) per unit, which is PDB's lowest purchase price from private companies.

RPC procured 35.5 million US dollars credit from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to complete the first phase of the project. Two more units under the second phase will add another 70 mw electricity to the National Grid, he said.

The second phase is likely to be completed by August 2000 by the contractor on turn-key basis, he said.

## JCD protests in front of VC's office

By DU Correspondent  
Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of main opposition BNP, yesterday staged demonstration in front of the office of the vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, protesting 'police harassment' on the JCD men.

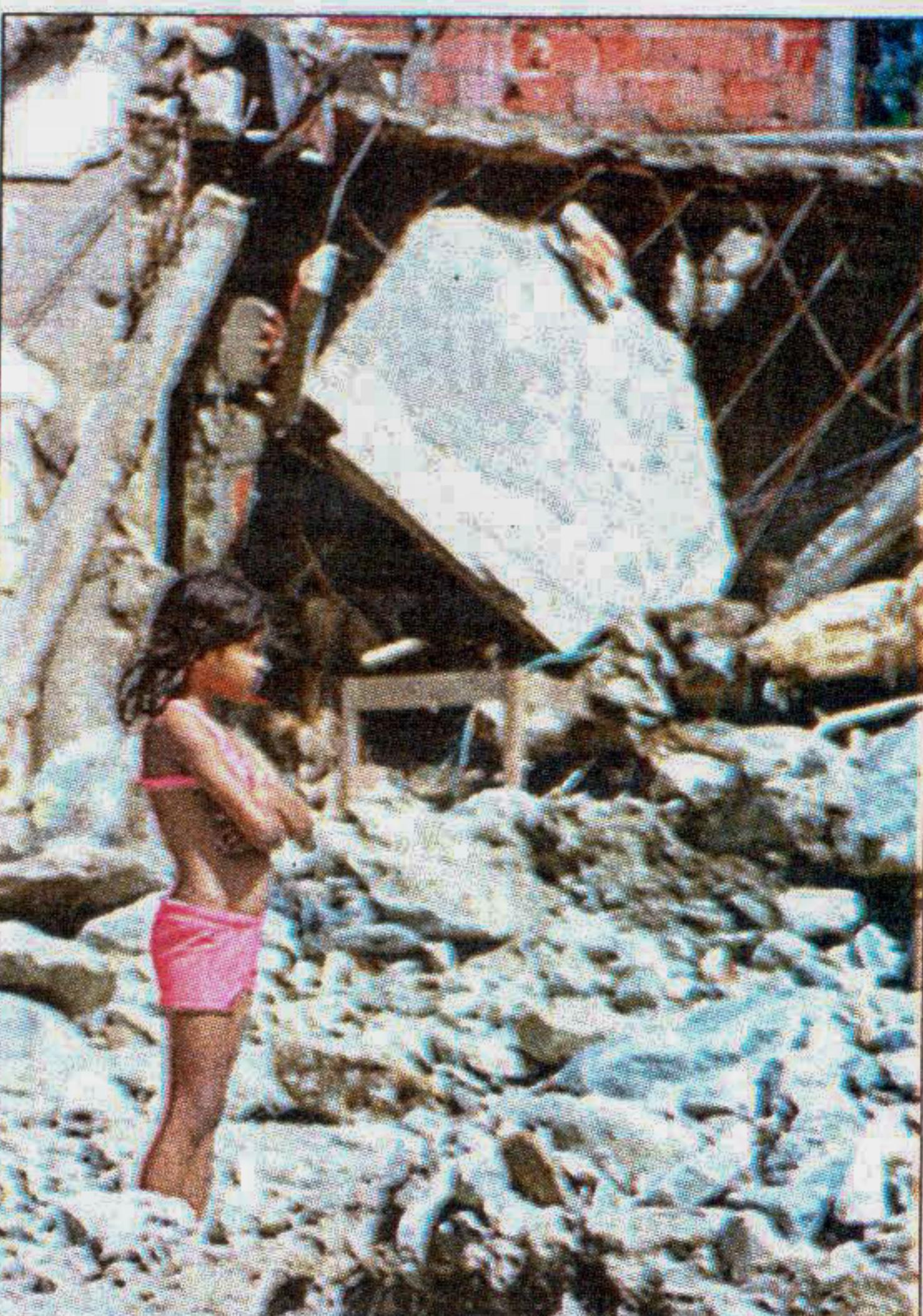
Following a procession on the campus, JCD leaders and activists gathered in front of the VC's office and held a rally there at noon.

The JCD leaders at the rally threatened the government with launching a 'greater movement' across the country if the 'repression' on the opposition activists were not stopped immediately.

They also demanded immediate release of arrested JCD leaders and workers including its president and general secretary.

Police arrested about 51 JCD leaders and activists on Friday prior to the 40th convocation ceremony of the university.

## Venezuelan floods: Death toll may reach 50,000



A young girl stands amid destruction by torrential rains in El Teleferico, 28 kilometers north of Caracas, Venezuela yesterday.

— AFP photo

CARACAS, Dec 21: Between 30,000 and 50,000 may have died in Venezuela's torrential rains, though the exact toll "never will be known" Civil Defence agency chief Angel Rangel told AFP today.

AP adds: Foreign Minister Jose Vicente Rangel said the death toll could be anywhere between 5,000 and 20,000, but said the true magnitude of the catastrophe may never be fully known.

"There are many people covered by mud and rocks. There are cadavers in the sea," Rangel told reporters.

The National Guard fired shots, mostly into the air, and

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struck people with swords to quell looting today in La Guaira. Thousands of hungry residents raided containers left on the port, some stealing fish and fruit and others making off with goods including toys to cellular phones.

Helicopters swirled overhead, and one looter was shot in the foot.

Military helicopters filled the skies at La Guaira airport Monday, dropping off refugees from the disasters and quickly taking off in search of more.

Forty thousand people have been evacuated from areas hit by torrential rains last week, national civil defence chief Angel Vargas told The Associated Press. He predicted 15,000 more would be transported to safety in the next 48 hours.

Troops continued to search "meter by meter, house by house" for survivors who might still be trapped by mud and rubble.

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By Staff Correspondent

Dr Iftekhar Chowdhury, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh in Geneva, affirmed that despite failure of the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Seattle, the least developed countries would continue to press their demands in all international fora.

Dr Iftekhar chaired a meeting of the LDC delegations in Geneva on Monday, according to a message received here yesterday.

Chowdhury briefed the LDC delegations on the events in Seattle, especially those at the "Green Room", where a limited number of delegates met on the final day of the Meeting.

According to sources, the second floor of the building was almost empty when the students and teachers heard the news of the bomb.

Shahidul Alam, Agriculture officer, came up with the idea for the unique clinic, which opened at the thana's headquarters on Oct. 22. It charges Tk 60 for tests, which includes a Tk 20 consultation fee.

Shahidul Alam, a farmer from Sailkupa village, said the agricultural clinic will be very helpful to the community.

Rashidul Hasan, a local seed, fertiliser and pesticide dealer, said the clinic will change the socio-economic status of the farmers.

Abdur Razzaque, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension, applauded the initiative. He said he hoped similar clinics would open in other thanas across the country.

## Ctg city corpn polls Mobile security units to protect voters, army to be kept standby

By Staff Correspondent

Acting Chief Election Commissioner Mushtaq Ahmad Choudhury has asked the administration to ensure "visible" improvement of law and order ahead of the Chittagong City Corporation elections scheduled for January 3, 2000.

He said all concerned have to be convinced that there is "proper" improvement of law and order in the port city.

The administration will have to inspire the people so that they vote (in the polls) in a large number," he told a meeting of the heads of different government agencies responsible for law and order in the country at the EC Secretariat in the capital yesterday.

Choudhury also told the meeting that the EC had taken appropriate steps to help the people to elect their representatives in a free, fair and peaceful voting.

Mobile security units will work for protection of the voters and army units will be kept

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## Bomb scare at DU

By DU Correspondent

Panic gripped students and teachers at the Arts building of Dhaka University yesterday after a 'fake' bomb was found at the examination hall on the third floor of the building.

According to sources, the bomb was wrapped with red tape and placed in a container of condensed milk. It had four alkaline batteries and a digital watch and looked like a time bomb.

An official of the examination controller's office called the Proctor's office and the senior assistant proctor sealed all the gates of the examination hall.

Being informed, Vice-chancellor AK Azad Chowdhury asked the police to look into the matter.

Later, the army bomb squad and police officials reached the spot and found the container filled with earth.

Fire fighting units rushed to the scene and extinguished the blaze at around 3 pm.

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## Sherpur jailbreak

### 3 wardens suspended, 2 probe bodies formed

SHERPUR, Dec 21: Three jail wardens of Sherpur District Jail have been suspended, two of them transferred to Mymensingh, for negligence of their duties, reports UNB.

Nine prisoners escaped Sherpur district jail with 3 rifles, 100 bullets and a sword Monday morning. In a chase, one of them was killed, 7 were captured while the rest remained at large.

Two inquiry committees were formed today.

Meanwhile, 17 prisoners, including 7 escapees, 4 condemned prisoners and 6 convicts were today transferred to Mymensingh district jail.

The body of Mujibur Rahman, a jail escapee killed in exchange of fire with police Monday, was handed over to his wife Jelekha Begum at 3-30 pm today.

Hailing from Kakilakura village in Sreerampur, Mujibur had barely 8 months to be released from seven years conviction for committing dacoity.

One member committee with DIG (Prison) Abdul Zahid was formed today to investigate the jail escape incident. The second committee comprising three officials will be headed by ADM Mujibur Rahman. CID of police was inquiring into the incident separately.

Jail wardens suspended are Mir Shahjahan, Mofazzal and Abdul Halim. Mofazzal and Halim were given stand release

to join the Mymensingh District Jail.

The main person responsible for the incident, jailer Mohammad Amanullah, remained untouched, sources said.

An accused recently came out of Sherpur Jail on bail said that Amanullah and his associates used to supply drugs in the jail. He has also hand in supplying explosives to the escapees, he alleged.

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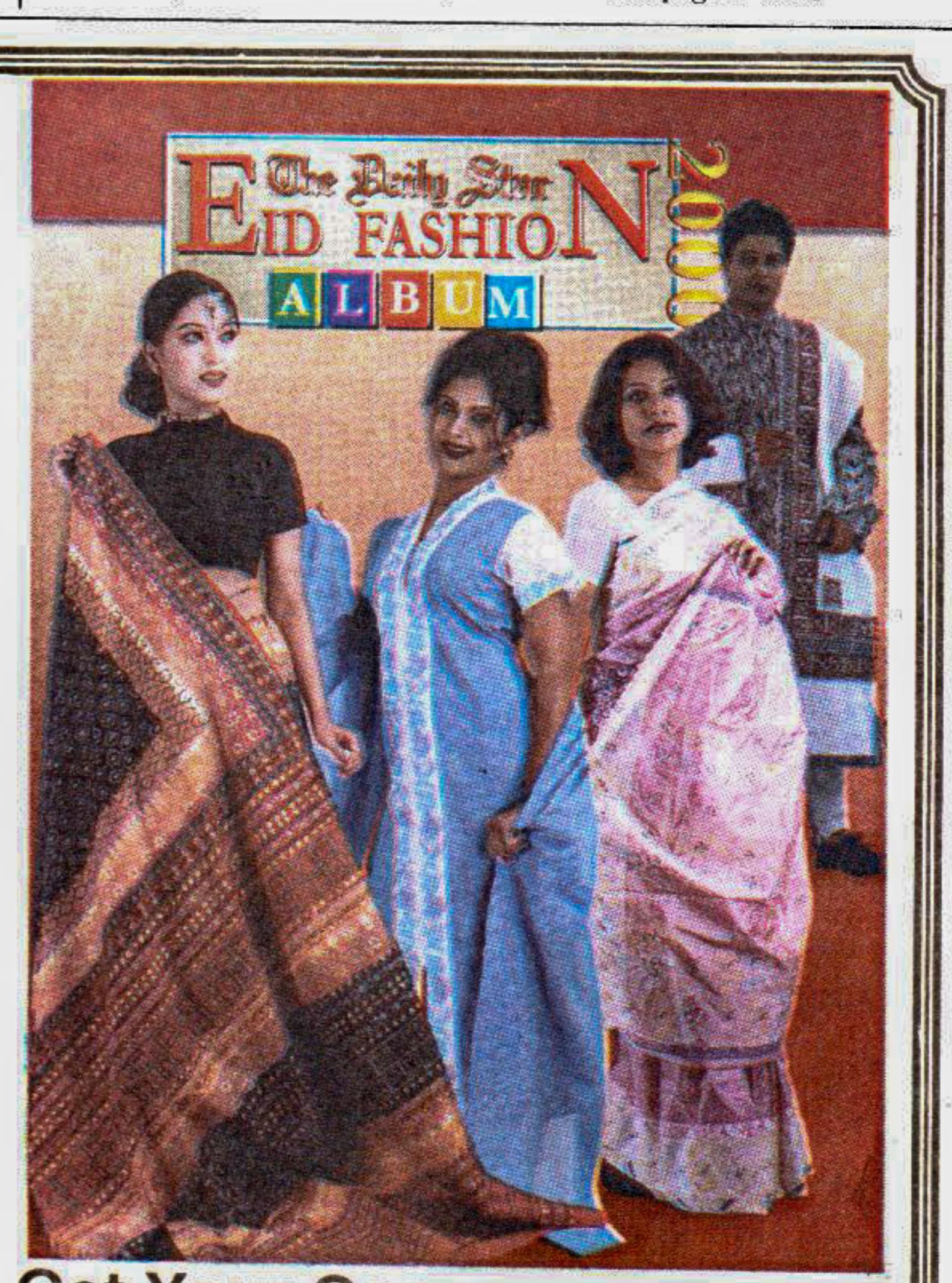
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Friends, not foes!

Amami League Presidium member Amir Hossain Amu and Jamaat-e-Islami Publicity Secretary Abdul Kader Molla are all smiles at the iftar party yesterday hosted by the French ambassador in Bangladesh. BNP leader Anwar Zahid is also seen (extreme left).

— Star photo

## The unique 'Krishi Clinic' in Sailkupa

By Reaz Ahmad with Delwar Kabir

Farmers in Sailkupa thana in Jhenaidh district can get their soil and seeds tested for nutrients, diseases and other pests at the neighbourhood 'Krishi Clinic'.

Shahidul Alam, Sailkupa's agriculture officer, came up with the idea for the unique clinic, which opened at the thana's headquarters on Oct. 22. It charges Tk 60 for tests, which includes a Tk 20 consultation fee.

"Let the days of the next millennium shine like the brightest ever moon-lit night and wash away the pain, sorrows and sufferings of the commoners," said Afzal Hosain, Jote leader and organiser of the Purnima Utsab '99.

In addition, Sammilito Sangskritik Jote have organised a moon-lit cruise on the Meghna tonight.

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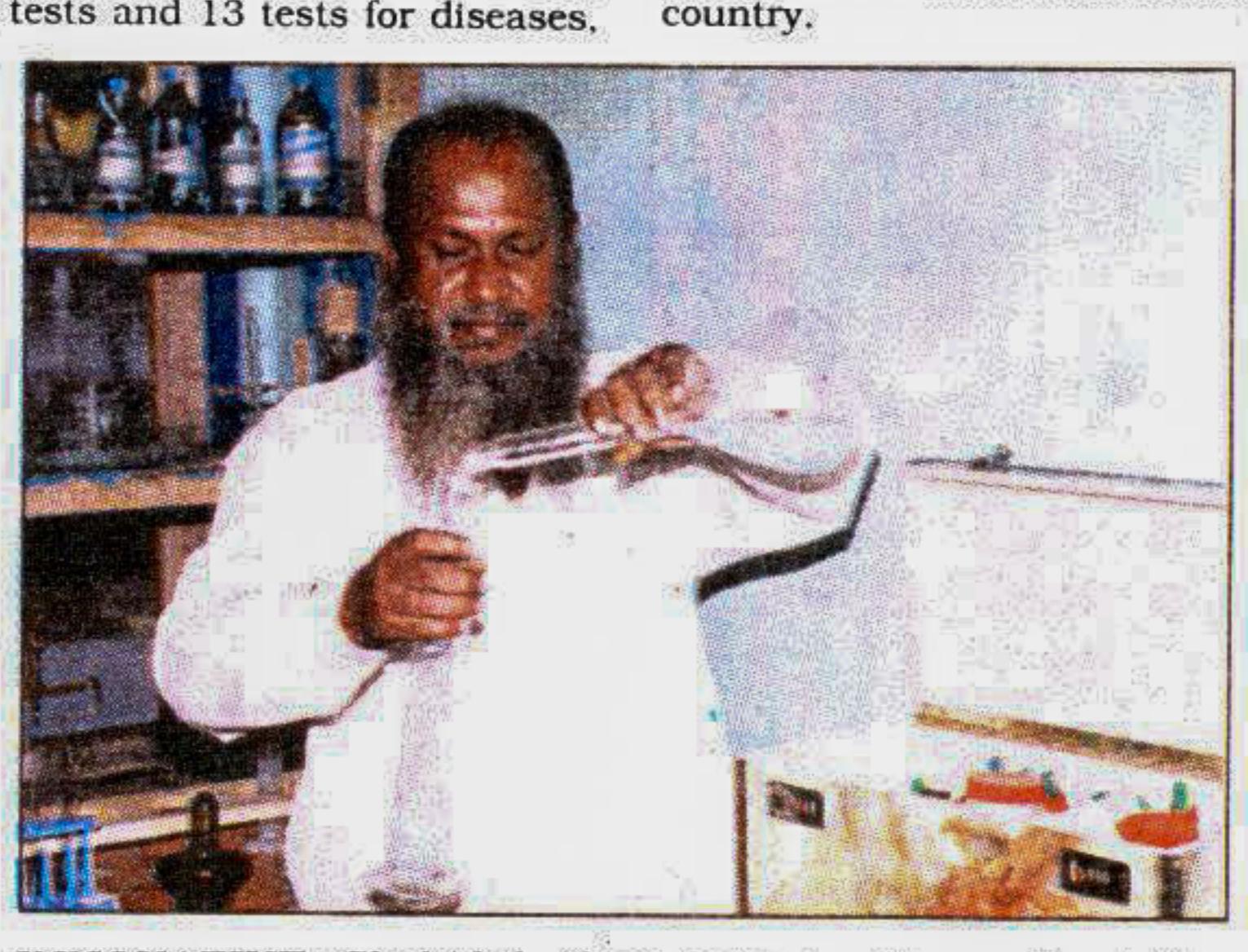
Shahidul Alam, Sailkupa's agriculture officer, came up with the idea for the unique clinic, which opened at the thana's headquarters on Oct. 22. It charges Tk 60 for tests, which includes a Tk 20 consultation fee.

"If there can be clinics for human beings and livestock, why shouldn't there be one for seeds, plants and crops," said Alam.

Alam said he opened the clinic to help poor peasants who pay a high price when their crops fail. Early detection of disease and nutritional deficiencies in the soil can save crops from unexpected damage, he said.

Poor farmers can't always follow the field inspectors' advice, but if we can give them specific solutions to specific problems, farmers can take sufficient precautions in advance," said Alam.

Since opening its doors, the clinic has conducted 51 soil tests and 13 tests for diseases.



INNOVATIVE: Shahidul Alam tests a soil sample at the 'Krishi Clinic' in Sailkupa. — Star photo by Delwar Kabir

## Youth Dev Deptt JS body to probe 'irregularities' in recruitment