

**Tk 38 cr EU
grant for BRAC**

Under the European Union's development assistance programme for Asia and Latin America, the European Commission (EC) has approved a grant of about 38 crore taka to Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) for its Rural Development Programme (RDP), reports AP.

A three-year programme to alleviate poverty and help the rural landless, RDP follows a multi-sectoral approach covering such components as: institution-building and human resource development, savings and credit, employment and income generation, primary health care and non-formal primary education.

RDP objectives and expected impact on poverty alleviation correspond to the development priorities of Bangladesh and coincide with the orientations of the EC-Bangladesh Cooperation Strategy.

**Bangladeshis
abroad urged
to invest more**

WARSAW, Aug 1: Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharruf Hossain has urged the Bangladesh citizens living abroad to invest in Bangladesh for help building a sound national economy, a message received here said, reports BSS.

The Energy Minister was addressing here a reception accorded to him by the Bangladeshi citizens on the concluding day of his week-long official tour to Poland Saturday morning.

The Energy Minister said "you are the major foreign exchange earners of our country and promotion of our national economy depends in a bigger way on yours."

He said, "we are proud of you all and the nation expects more from you."

Dr Mosharruf Hossain said, "you are the carrier of our national culture and heritage and you have to enhance our image abroad through constructive and creative activities."

**160000 people
jobless in
Jordan**

AMMAN, Aug 1: Almost one in five of Jordan's working population is jobless, amounting to 160,000 people, the Department of Statistics announced here yesterday, reports AP.

It said the unemployment figure had risen to 18.8 per cent from 14 per cent in 1992. Jordan, a country of four million people, has almost 53,000 foreigners with work permits, 38,000 of them from Egypt.

**Action to be taken against
corrupt jute mills officials**

By Staff Correspondent

Jute Minister A S M Hannan Shah Monday said stern action would be taken against the purchase officers of the public sector jute mills if any of them is found involved in irregularities while purchasing jute.

The minister said he was monitoring the performance and activities of all the staff and would terminate the services of corrupt officials.

He also said the jobs of the jute mills staff from now on would depend entirely on the profitability of the mills.

The government would no longer operate the non-profitable jute mills by giving huge subsidies, Hannan Shah

said. The Jute Minister was speaking at a policy formulation meeting for jute purchase organised by the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) in the city.

The minister said the purchase officers should be grateful to the jute growers and traders because they have been keeping the mills operative by providing jute on credit for a long time. But, the purchase officers are making money by exploiting the traders and growers as well as the government, he said.

"If you want to keep your jobs, you will have to keep the mills running and make the

mills profitable," the minister said, addressing about 170 jute purchase officers of various public sector jute mills.

Presided over by BJMC Chairman M Manir Uddin Ahmed, the meeting was also addressed by BJMC Directors Majlur Islam and Ashraf Ali and the General Managers of various jute mills.

The government, he said, has plans to purchase 16 lakh bales of jute for the public sector jute mills. For this, 128 purchase centres have been opened in various parts of the country.

The BJMC purchased 14.63 lakh bales of jute last year.

**Sonali Bank
branch managers'
confce held**

By Staff Correspondent

Shafiqur Rahman, General Manager of Sonali Bank's head office in Dhaka urged the bank's branch managers to take effective steps for improving the deposit quality and also to provide better services to the customers.

He was speaking at a conference of the branch managers of the bank's greater Ramna region at the Sonali Bank principal office, Ramna as the chief guest on Thursday.

He urged the managers to increase credits and realising classified loans.

He also called upon them to fulfil their targets for the new year adhering to the strict principles of sanctioning loans.



Sonali Bank greater Ramna region branch managers' conference was held in the city on Thursday.

US signs Law of The Sea amendment

UNITED NATIONS, August 1: The United States has signed the agreement revising the deep seabed mining provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, paving the way for the Clinton Administration to submit the convention for US Senate ratification, says USIS.

US Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright signed on behalf of the United States July 29. Senator Claiborne Pell, a long-time supporter of an international treaty to regulate the use of the seas, accompanied the ambassador. Pell introduced the original Senate resolutions in the 1960's calling for a Law of the Sea Convention and was an observer at a number of negotiating sessions over the years.

On July 28, the General Assembly adopted an amendment fundamentally changing the provisions of part XI of the convention on deep seabed mining. Strong objections to the original deep seabed mining provision prevented the United States from signing the convention when it opened for signature in 1982, although the United States supported and accepted the remainder of the treaty.

The Clinton Administration will prepare the necessary papers to submit the convention and the amendment to the Senate for advice and consent to ratification. US officials expect the paperwork will be submitted in October, enabling the Senate to hold ratification hearings in early 1995. Albright called the convention "a remarkable achievement in successfully balancing the maritime interests of all countries."

In a Senate speech, Pell said that the "agreement and

the underlying convention — both the culmination of efforts by Democratic and Republican Administrations — contains substantial benefits for our country. We stand on the threshold of a new era in oceans policy. In that era, US national interests in the world's oceans will be protected as a matter of law."

As the world's pre-eminent military and commercial power, the United States has important and diverse interests in the oceans and in having a "predictable set of rules" governing states' jurisdiction, rights and obligations regarding the world's seas and oceans in a widely accepted treaty, a senior US official said before the signing.

The end of the cold war has highlighted that need, the official said. Ensuring the US military's ability to freely navigate and overfly the oceans as well as the free flow of commercial navigation are more important to the US now than when the treaty was completed in 1982, he said. "Many people are looking at what has been negotiated on the deep seabed mining but the benefits of the entire convention) to the United States goes beyond deep seabed mining."

Secretary of Defense William Perry said in a statement that "We support the Convention because it confirms traditional high seas freedoms of navigation and overflight; it details passage rights through international straits; and it reduces prospects for disagreements with coastal nations during operations."

A Law of the Sea convention has been a consistent objective of successive US Administrations since negotiations began over 20 years ago, and the United States has al-

ways been a leader in the efforts to develop the convention.

The 320-article convention covers virtually all uses of the oceans and their resources, including boundaries, oceans transit, fishing, environmental safeguards and jurisdictional agencies. It establishes a 12-nautical mile territorial sea limit and a 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone as well as setting out responsibilities to protect everything from marine mammals to fiber optic cables.

The changes in the deep seabed mining section ensure that market-oriented approaches are taken to the management of the minerals of the deep seabed, replacing the original provision's centralized economic planning approach.

**Food month ends with
barbecue in Singapore**

SINGAPORE, Aug 1: Thousands of Singapore food lovers, who would rather die than diet, ended a month-long eating binge with a beachside barbecue Sunday, reports AP.

Food for "the great Singapore cookout" was prepared by 100 chefs and cost 15 Singapore dollars (10 US dollars) per serving. It was accompanied by tunes from the Heartbeat Percussion Band, which used chopsticks, teaspoons, woks, pots and pans and other kitchen utensils to pound out tunes.

Among other diversions on Sentosa island was a contest for high-speed noodle makers. Organisers said the record is 4.096 noodles in 41.34 seconds, or 99.8 noodles per second.

The barbecue was the final display in the first annual Singapore Food Festival, an event that appeared as unnecessary as carrying coals to Newcastle.

Holding a culinary carnival in a country that regards eating as a national pastime seemed superfluous for many of the 3 million people in this small city state.

People get into heated arguments about how to make the best chicken rice or which restaurant serves the tastiest chili crab.

Western fast food chains have become popular in recent years, especially those which offer a touch of local flavour. Sweet and sour pizza has been a hit for Pizza Hut.

Straits Times writer Irene Hoe says employees in local companies resist taking assignments in other countries because of the shortage of good restaurants.

**British Telecoms
may cut 50,000
more jobs**

LONDON, Aug 1: British Telecommunications is contemplating shedding 50,000 more jobs — one third of its current workforce — in coming years, the Financial Times newspaper reported Monday quoting BT Chairman Sir Ian Vallowance, reports AP.

The cuts will add to the almost 90,000 jobs lost over the past four years to reduce the group's operating costs, the report said.

The paper said Sir Ian aimed to prune the workforce to about 100,000.

The paper said Sir Ian "declined to give a commitment not to resort to compulsory redundancies to secure the reductions 'over the next five years or whatever'.

**Russian shareholders start
to buy MMM again**

MOSCOW, Aug 1: Thousands of shareholders hurt by the collapse in the share price of investment group MMM began to buy its shares again yesterday in a bid to regain some of their losses, reports AP.

People crowded outside the company's main sales office in southern Moscow after its one-day closure on Saturday, attended by a vast army of vendors selling hats, papers and fruit to the crowd.

Nearly 3,000 signed up to buy new shares.

Sticking to the formula which brought its original success, MMM promised to buy back shares next Friday for 1,500 roubles which it was selling Sunday at 1,025 roubles.

The move was a bid to stop the selling panic sparked by its Friday announcement that it was slashing its share price from the unsustainable high of 125,000 roubles to 1,000 (60 dollars to 50 cents).

"I'm playing again and I hope all will go well if the government does not put a spoke in the wheel," explained trader Irina Alexandrovna, aged 43, who said she had lost three million roubles (1,500 dollars) to date.

She had come to MMM headquarters at the height of the crisis three days ago to sell off her shares, but had "changed her mind" since then, she added.

The government declared the company's activities illegal

on Thursday but failed to actually ban it and promised "special action" to cushion "the pain of the firm's collapse."

It also said it would tighten security laws and force MMM to register its activities, pay tax on earnings and obtain an official licence.

Dzorzsh Surtanovich, aged 24, and his companion said they would buy the maximum of shares possible — 100 per person — "to support MMM and prevent it from going bankrupt." Otherwise he could say goodbye forever to his money.

"People hope to get back some of the money they have lost," explained engineer Alexander Nikolayevich, aged 44.

**Kuwait to raise
oil refining
capacity**

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 1: Kuwait will increase its oil refining capacity from the current 800,000 barrels per day to 840,000, an oil official said yesterday, reports AP.

Abdel Aziz Bassiri, Deputy Managing Director of the Kuwait Petroleum National Company, told the daily al-Watan that increased production would be carried out at the Shuwaiba refinery. He did not say when.

The firm, the refining subsidiary of the state-owned Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, runs the emirate's three refineries — Shuwaiba, Al-Ahmedi, and Mina Abdallah.

**S Pacific countries losing
control over tuna fisheries**

BRISBANE, Australia, Aug 1: Leaders of South Pacific states are worried they are losing control over the world's biggest tuna fisheries, and one of them is demanding that the region create a cartel, reports AP.

The leaders, who were attending a retreat here today as part of the annual South Pacific forum, fear that a treaty under negotiation at the United Nations may wrest control of the country from them.

Marshall Islands President Amata Kabua said the time may have come for the region to negotiate as a fishing cartel with the rest of the world.

Australian Pacific Affairs Minister Gordon Binley said

that officially, about two billion Australian dollars (1.4 billion US dollars), worth of fish each is taken each year from the region, but that Pacific states get only 74 million dollars, or less than five per cent of it.

He said the South Pacific tuna fishery contained 50 per cent of the world's canning tuna and supplies 90 per cent of Japan's tuna needs.

The Pacific nations biggest worry however is that most of the valuable fish is migratory, and although the regional forum fisheries agency tackles its management and enforcement regionally, most of the big fishing nations are pushing for international control.



Left-wing political parties staged a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday to press for safeguarding interests of jute and sugarcane producers. — Star photo

**Dollar recovers
slightly against
yen in Tokyo**

TOKYO, Aug 1: The US dollar recovered slightly at midday Monday from a low open against the Japanese yen. Stock prices were mixed in thin trading, reports AP.

The dollar was trading at 98.90 yen at 11:30 am (0230 GMT), down 1.03 yen from Friday's close but above its Monday open at 98.45 yen. In New York, it finished at 99.95 yen on Friday.

The dollar's slight recovery came as Japan's central bank was reported to have intervened to help prop up the dollar after its sharp slide against the yen.

The Bank of Japan (BOJ) does not customarily comment on its intervention activities.

Osaka Bay's boggy area now most expensive airport

OSAKA, Aug 1: Crossing a four kilometer bridge from the mainland puts you on a giant man-made island the size of more than 700 soccer fields. Not too long ago, this place was just water in the Osaka Bay, says AP.

Today, it is the Kansai International Airport — at 15 billion dollars the most expensive airport ever built.

When it opens on September 4, Kansai airport is supposed to transform Osaka, Japan's second-largest city, into a hub for Asian transport and commerce. But that will happen only if the airport does enough business to keep from sinking under a mountain of debt — something that's still far from certain.

With its opening just weeks away, fewer than 50 interna-

tional flights are expected to take off each day from the airport, well below the original target of 90.

Japan's sluggish economy is partly to blame. But airlines point to huge fees the airport wants to charge for landing and facilities. Office space, for instance, is supposed to be rented monthly at about 15 dollars per square foot, more than a first-class office in downtown Tokyo.

"I'm astonished at the way we've been treated," says Warwick Blacker, chairman of the Board of Airline Representatives in Japan.

"Airlines are going down — airlines have to reduce costs. They have to price their airport accordingly."

But the airport expects carriers to chip in to cover huge

construction-cost overruns. Interest payments alone will total 580 million dollars a year.

The airport cost more than twice its original projection and was delayed a year and a half after engineers discovered the artificial island was sinking into the bay. The addition of more soil appears to have solved that problem.

Blacker, however, says several airlines have given up on Kansai airport rather than pay the fees, while others have scaled back expansion plans in Osaka.

Tsuneharu Hattori, President of the airport's operating company, counters that the airlines are crying wolf.

"The only thing they care about is whether there's passenger demand," he said recently to reporters visiting the airport. "If I could attract more

airlines by lowering the prices I'd do so in a second, but just lowering them won't get a single one to come."

And the wrangling is overshadowing what local officials hoped would be the main story of the airport: the revitalisation of the Kansai region, perennially No. 2 in Japan to Tokyo.

The region, with a total population of around 14 million people, includes Osaka, the port city of Kobe and Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital and a popular tourist destination.

Takeo Ohnishi, the General Manager of project planning at the Kansai Economic Federation, hopes the airport will help make Japan a "multi-centered country" in part by encouraging foreign investors to base their operations in

Kansai. The airport itself has several advantages over Tokyo's Narita airport, notorious as one of the world's most congested, least convenient airports.

It takes at least an hour to get to Narita from downtown Tokyo, compared with about 30 minutes from central Osaka to the Kansai airport.

Transferring to domestic flights is also easy at Kansai compared with Narita, where arriving passengers must take a 90-minute bus ride to Haneda airport on the other side of Tokyo.

Also, because Kansai airport is in the middle of the bay, disturbing local residents is not a problem.

But critics say passengers are going to end up footing the bill for those conveniences and

the airport's airy, state-of-the-art terminal designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano.

"They're going to have to pay outrageous prices" at restaurants and stores, warns Robert Lamansky, Director of government affairs at Northwest Airlines.

Analysts say the government, which spent so much to build the airport, should be subsidising it to ensure Osaka doesn't lose out to planned airports in Seoul and Hong Kong.

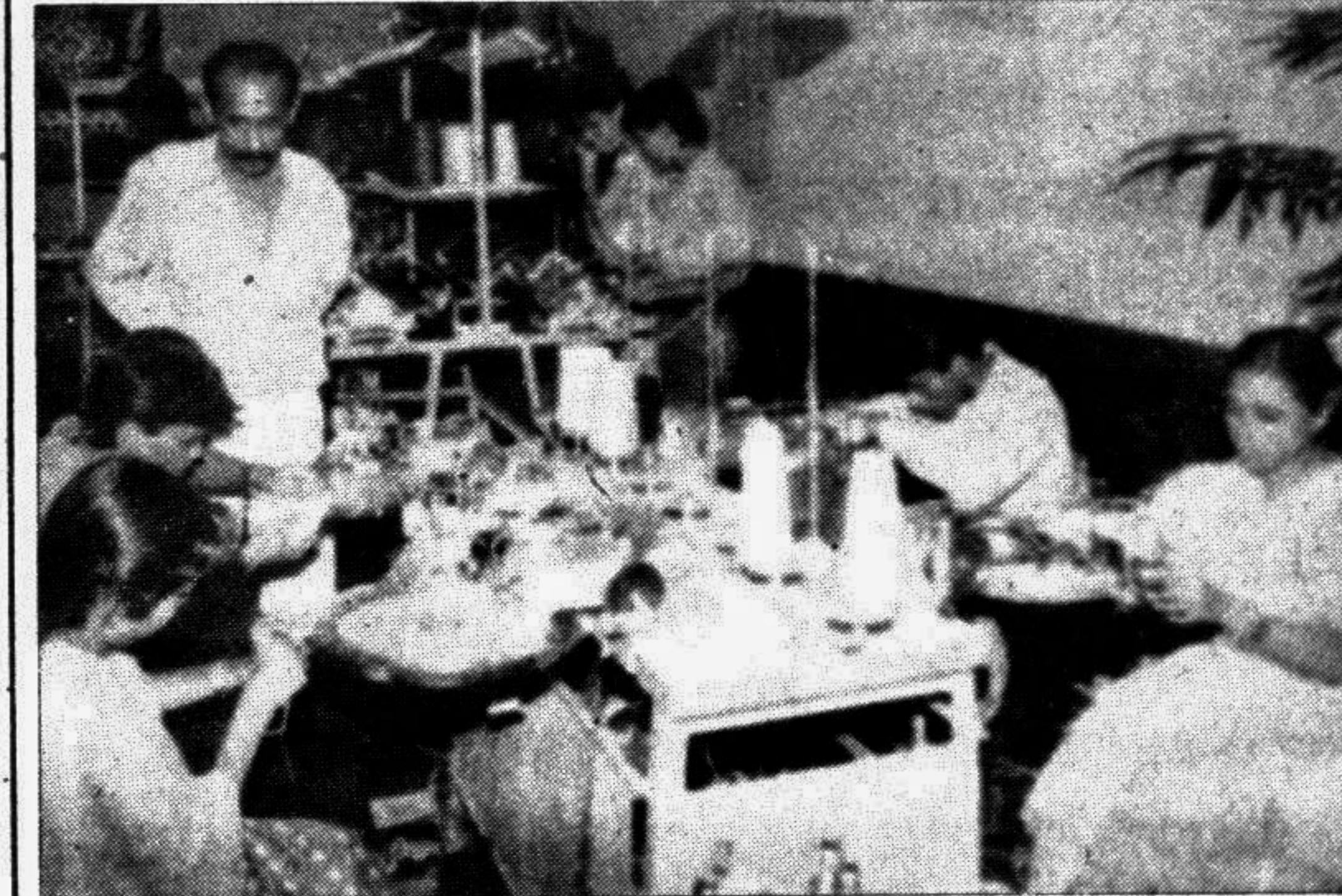
"If the Kansai airport can grab the leadership in Asia it will be a success, even if it's in the red a little," said Tomokazu Soejima of Yamaichi Securities' research institute. "If its function as an Asian hub is captured elsewhere, it will have been meaningless to build it."

**China's richest
state gold
mine closed**

BELJING, Aug 1: Thousands of illegal prospectors have forced the closure of one of China's richest state gold mines and caused serious damage to the surrounding environment, the financial newspaper reported today, says Reuters.

It said the state-run Bailong Jiang mine, on the border of Sichuan and Gansu provinces, is one of the finest in China, and one on which the state spent millions of dollars to import the country's largest mining machines.

The machines started operating in 1988. The newspaper called for stern action to restore order and normal production to the mine.



An exhibition of sweater knitting machines organised by Pacific Associates Ltd was held at Hotel Sonargaon in the city yesterday. — Star photo