



Travel & Tourism



Tourism Month Ends: Objectives Accomplished?

A review meeting on December 13, after the end of Tourism Month, the State Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism Mr. Abdul Mannan declared the month a success.

But there were no more foreign tourists in the country during the month than usual. Nor has Bangladesh suddenly become a hot international tourist spot. Why then does the Tourism Month committee claim that the month was a success? Because the Committee set very definite goals for the month: to increase prevalence and awareness of domestic tourism, and to make foreign tour operators aware of Bangladesh. It believes it has realized these goals.

The committee was formed by representatives from Bangladesh Parjatan, Biman, Civil Aviation, Bangladesh Tour Operators Association, Association of Travel Agents, the major hotels, Bangladesh Television, Radio Bangladesh, and most national newspapers. The committee collaborated to lay out the objectives of the month-long program and to plan the events. Draft programs were discussed with all members, and events were added or discarded as seen appropriate.

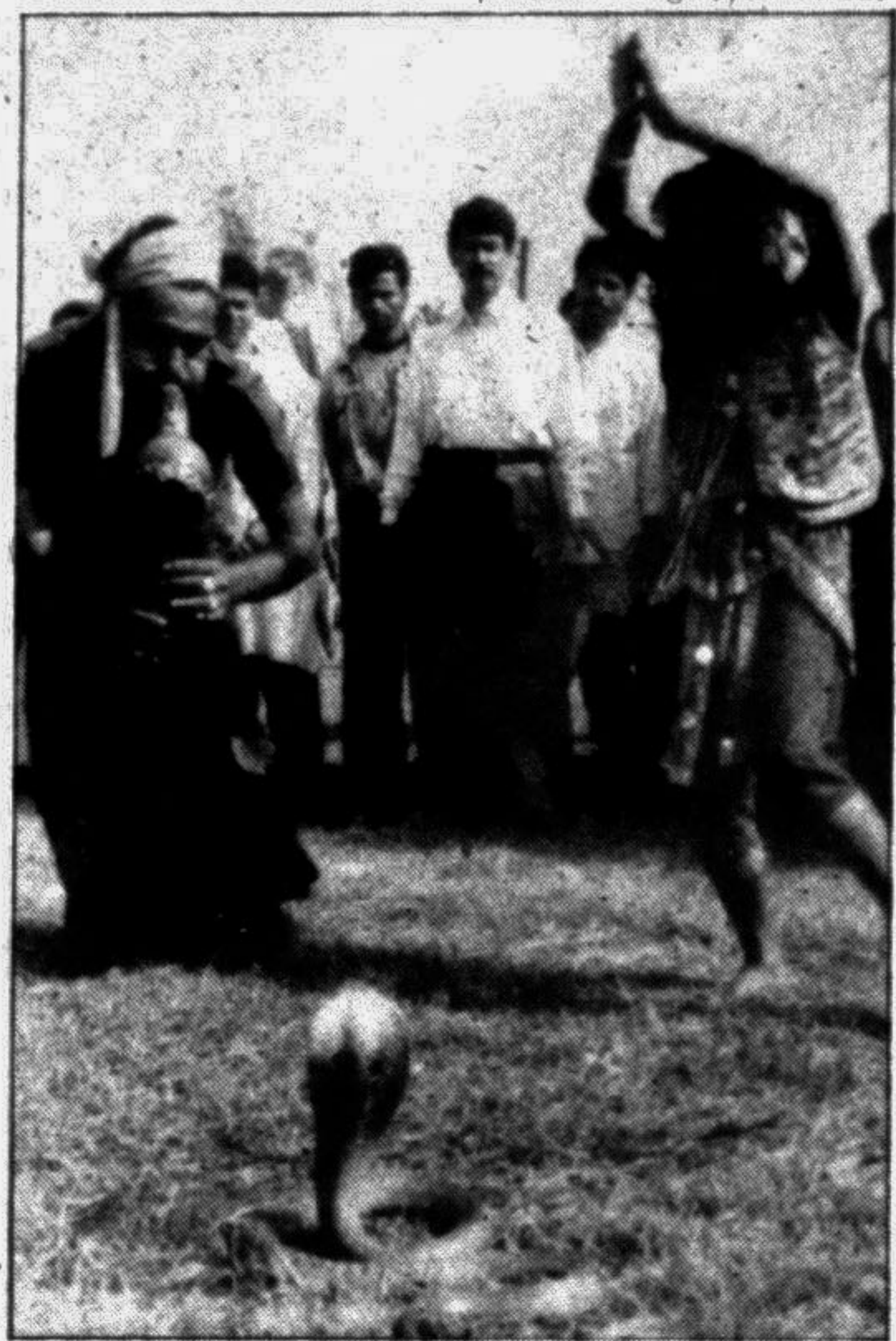
Although a good number of the events were held at the five star hotels and other wealthy institutions in Dhaka, many more events were staged nationwide in 1994 than in the previous year. Local people who attended cultural functions and general celebrations in places such as Chittagong, Mymensingh, and Rangpur, came away appreciating their own local attractions.

Also, Bangladeshis are now more excited about traveling inside their country than before. "People are aware of tourism as a way of life, they know now what places to visit, and they are going there in flocks," the Public Relations Manager of Parjatan Mr. Ahsan Ullah said. How does Parjatan know people are travelling more? There are no rooms available in tourist hotels in Cox's Bazar, or Rangamati. Tourist agencies enjoy waiting lists of people eager to visit the popular tourist spots. The

Ittefaq, December 21, reported 500 to 700 people rushing daily to see the sunrise and sunset in Kuakata, risking their lives in the stormy waters on the way. All these people are local tourists.

Why excite Bangladeshis about tourism in their own country? The committee be-

lieves that an influx of local tourists will automatically force tourism spots to improve their facilities. The number of hotels will have to increase, more restaurants will open, and road services will improve.



Snake charming show during Tourism Month. Mohsin, Daily Star

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popular spots in the country, including Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, and Khulna. They were then asked to fill out questionnaires.

All the guests agreed that Bangladesh boasts rare scenic beauty and cultural attractions that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. They identified Sundarban as the number one tourism product of the country, followed by Chittagong Hill Tracts, specially Kaptai Lake and trekking, Sylhet tea gardens, and river tourism. The only problem: the facilities at each one of these wonderful tourist spots is sub-standard. No safe roads (or waterways) exist, there are very few standard hotels or restaurants, and the stay is just not comfortable in general. There is work to do before Bangladesh can sell itself abroad.

One tour operator from Calcutta sent a group of eleven visitors within two weeks of her leaving the country. Another representative from the US had come with a negative image of Bangladesh, but found it to be "a beautiful surprise." Discovery Expedition, a Belgian agency, published a tourist book about Bangladesh, using pictures of a quiet river ride, a young tribal girl, and an old smiling farmer.

Bangladesh Parjatan plans to establish tourist offices in Biman's major operating cities. At present Bangladesh is sold abroad through brochures, posters, and postcards sent to various local missions and embassies abroad, as well as Biman offices. These promotion items are also sent to foreign missions based in Bangladesh.

Who attended the events of Tourism Month? Some events were geared toward foreign nationals living in Bangladesh, and wealthy prospective investors. These were of course the events centered around the major hotels, Mary Andersen, and the river cruises in Dhaka. But many more events were arranged solely for the common Bangladeshi. For example, only 5000 tickets were sold for the open-air band show in Pabna. But over ten thousand excited local people watched the program hanging

from walls and roofs. But no special package tour offers were made abroad, and no free tickets were given away to foreign tourists. In fact, Biman did not even offer free vouchers or other incentives to visitors arriving in the country.

The government has formulated a National Tourism Policy with the goal to improve the socio-economic condition of the country through tourism. Some of the goals outlined in the policy are as follows: Develop physical infrastructures such as road and telephone communications (particularly with Paharpur, Sonar Masjid, the Kantaji temple in the north). Promote local tourism; attract foreign nationals to natural, historic and cultural attractions, but install modern recreational facilities also. Encourage investment of local and foreign capital in the industry by offering incentives such as loans, and tax holidays. Restore archaeological sites, conserve wildlife, the sea-beaches of Cox's Bazar and Kuakata, and develop river tourism.

The committee is still analyzing the outcomes of Tourism Month. Each event will be studied for public response and effectiveness by various sub-committees, and a final report will be presented to the National Tourism Committee sometime in January. According to the results of the report, and the objectives outlined in the National Tourism Policy, specific programs will be undertaken.

Before any program can be finalized, however, the IMED (Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation Department) analyses it for cost effectiveness. Plans are further scrutinized before being sent to the Planning Commission. Only if the Planning Commission passes the program, work can begin.

It is not enough to identify tourism as an industry in Bangladesh, or to promote Bangladesh abroad. It is not enough that Bangladeshis are proud of their local attractions and eager to travel. Nor is it sufficient that Tourism Month was a success. But it is a start, in the right direction.

ing 400 steps. At a particular height, the statue of a four-faced Buddha can be seen from the steps. Inside the temple, over 13,000 images of the Buddha, each different from the rest, are stacked on the shelves. Eighteen live-size statues of the Buddha's followers adorn the entrance to the temple.

In Transit: Hong Kong

A transit passenger, waiting at Hong Kong airport for a connecting flight, may be reluctant to step out into the metropolis. After all, no one wants to venture into an unknown city and risk getting lost or missing the assigned flight.

made Hong Kong even has rickshaws - an ideal transport for sightseeing and fun rides. One of Hong Kong's main attractions is The Ten Thousand Buddhas Monastery. This temple is located at the top of a hill and has to be reached by climb-

all kinds of travellers. An art-lover can visit the Tsui Museum which holds over 2000 pieces of Chinese art, ceramic collections, and exhibits made of ivory, wood and bronze. For the tourist interested in architecture, there is the modern Hong Kong Bank Building, which was constructed using an ancient Chinese technique called Fung shui.

Hollywood Road, with its many antique and curio shops, is a browser's paradise. And finally, tourists who simply want to shop can take a trip to the Western Market. This modern shopping center sells everything from homemade dolls to teas.

Hong Kong is also a land of festivals. The most important one is the Lunar New Year. If a traveller is lucky enough to be in the city at this time of the year, he or she can witness a breathtaking fireworks display over the harbor. Another important festival in Hong Kong is the Dragon Boat Festival which commemorates the death of a national hero. On this day, narrow boats race each other with much symbolic drum beating. The Cheung Chau Festival, a week long ritual, is held to placate the spirits of people massacred a hundred years ago by pirates. It includes a grand procession by ornately costumed children and lion and dragon dances. There are other festivals too - some celebrate the lives of legendary figures such as Confucius and Lord Buddha while others mark historic events.

If not for any other reason, Hong Kong should be visited for its restaurants. Here, a traveller can have all kinds of food - Chinese, European, Indian and of course fast food. Prices are slightly higher than they are in other Far-Eastern countries. A lunch at a diner for an adult may cost up to US \$25.00. And dinner at a relatively expensive restaurant usually costs over US \$35.00. Hong Kong also celebrates a three-week-long Food Festival every spring. Over a hundred restaurants participate in this festival, featuring special dining programmes, theme parties and culinary excursions.



A dragon dance during Chinese festivals. — Dragonair

But Hong Kong should be an exception. No passenger should give up the opportunity to get a glimpse of this fantastic peninsula located at the southeastern tip of China. It is a rich mixture of the modern and the ancient, the oriental and the western, the exotic and the commonplace. Besides, Hong Kong is a city designed for the traveller. The transport facilities are highly developed, and English is widely spoken.

Kai Tak, Hong Kong's international airport, is located just twenty minutes from all major hotels in the city. Travellers may use airbuses, taxis and minibuses to reach their destinations. Usually, it is wise to have the name of a destination written in Chinese characters when using a public transport since many drivers do not speak English. In some cases, hotels may provide transport for the tourist if a reservation has been

ing 400 steps. At a particular height, the statue of a four-faced Buddha can be seen from the steps. Inside the temple, over 13,000 images of the Buddha, each different from the rest, are stacked on the shelves. Eighteen live-size statues of the Buddha's followers adorn the entrance to the temple.

Hong Kong is the home of Asia's largest entertainment center - The Ocean Park. Here, a wide variety of shows by dolphins, killer whales and high-divers can be seen. The establishment also has a shark aquarium and a glass-sided wave cove of seals and fairy penguins. Children can ride the Dragon Roller-Coaster or spend hours at an adventure playground. Recently, a spectacular 72-meter tower has been built in the park.

A Trip to Dreamland-Cox's Bazar

by Anam Mahmud

WE could see the hills far away in the star-lit winter sky as we neared Cox's Bazar. The Attendant of Yama and the Great Bear were clearly visible in the sky. It was then just morning.

The city was named by Mr. Cox more than a hundred years ago. Piles of golden sands, towering cliffs, surfing waves, rare conch shells, colorful pagodas, Buddhist temples and tribes, delightful seafood - that is Cox's Bazar, the tourist capital of Bangladesh. The world's longest beach slopes gently down to the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal. Cox's Bazar lies 152 kilometers away from Chittagong, the trading sea port. It is connected by both air and rail with Dhaka and Chittagong.

The cold winter breeze, the palm trees on the beach, and the roar of the sea lent the atmosphere an incredible romance. We walked barefoot on the beach. The vast sea called to us. The morning rays of the sun had turned the beach red. It looked as if it were shy, having heard of the coming of its bride. The sea. We walked on, collecting conch shells. Then suddenly we found ourselves in the deep blue ocean, the blue sky above us. Birds flew above our heads.

One evening we watched the sunset on the sea. I felt as if the sun asked me, "who are you?" Not getting an answer, it went down in the sky, an explosion of red.

One night when there was a full moon in the sky, we were walking on the beach. There was an infinite number of stars twinkling in the clear sky. The waves lighted up because of the phosphorous substances in them. It was an outstanding sight.

The coastal area offers some delightful seafood such as Pankhash, Rupchanda, and Verki. The sea atmosphere made us hungrier than usual. The restaurants weren't very expensive either.

The Burmese Market sells conch shells at reasonable prices. You can get hundreds of varieties of conch shells

there. The shops are arranged systematically in a colorful orientation. The tourist can find Burmese shoes, decoration pieces, pearl necklaces, colorful shirts, and many other interesting objects.

The most extraordinary symbol of Cox's Bazar is perhaps its colorful pagodas, temples and monasteries. There are more than ten beautiful pagodas and temples.



Young girls selling garlands on Cox's Bazar Beach. — Star photo

Ven V Kassalia Temple, which stands on top of a hill, was made out of wood one hundred and fifty years ago. The stairs to this Buddhist temple have risen naturally out of the ground over time.

The temple is full of Gautam Buddha's statues, along with other beautiful statues. There are also many ancient books, written mainly in the Rakhain language. Most of the statues of Buddhist gods are made from bronze or whitenstone and were brought over from Nepal or Burma. The caretaker Brozen guided us through the interior.

He was concerned about the condition of the temple. We also met the supervisor of the temple, V. Nanawayesa, a

ninety-three year-old vegetarian. Another temple named Maha Thin Daw Grew stood just in front of Kasalia. It had been constructed on 24th September in 1956 by the Buddhists of Cox's Bazar. A Bedi tree stands just outside the temple. There is also a prayer place where young girls gather in the morning to make an offering of flowers. Visitors are requested not to behave in

wonderful view of the blue water. Himchari has a wonderful waterfall, which was discovered about seventy or eighty years ago. The water springs gently from the mountain, as if the mountain were shedding tears of love. We climbed to the top of a hill to watch the waterfall. The sun was setting just then, and its rays fell on the waterfall, creating wonderful combinations of colors.

In Cox's Bazar, we were removed from the mechanical life in the capital. Here we saw fishing, prawn and pearl cultivations, and many tourists.

The nitty-gritty details of Travel:

Biman operates three flights a week from Dhaka to Cox's Bazar. Tickets should be booked in advance because flights are crowded. Leave Dhaka by BG413 at 13:10 to arrive at Cox's Bazar at 14:50. Most popular hotels are a rickshaw ride away from the Cox's Bazar airport.

Local tourists usually take the train to Chittagong for about Taka 200 and then a bus to Cox's Bazar. There are sev-

eral trains from Dhaka to Chittagong, but one of the most popular ones is Mahanagar Probbati, which leaves Dhaka railway station at 8:20 am every day except Wednesday. The train ride takes between 5 and 6 hours.

Recently, two luxury coaches have opened services between Dhaka and Cox's Bazar. Green Line Coach, which is air-conditioned, costs Taka 350 one way. The bus leaves Dhaka at 7 am and 11:30 pm everyday. Saudia operates non-airconditioned coaches for Taka 195 one way. Buses depart at 7 am, 9 am, and 10 pm everyday.

Hotel Accomodations: Hotel Shaibal offers air-conditioned rooms only. Both Single and Double rooms cost \$48 per room. Hotel Upol costs \$15 for Single rooms and \$20 for Doubles. These rooms may not be air-conditioned.

Sayemen Hotel is another popular hotel, rated at \$22 for Singles and \$27 for Doubles. Other private hotels, like Panoa and Niribilli, also offer decent accomodations.

What to Eat? Bangladesh Parjatan offers a restaurant near Hotel Shaibal. There is also a seafood restaurant near the beach. For Bangladeshi food, go into the city to the restaurants inside the hotels, such as Sayemen, Panoa, and Niribilli.

To Get Away: Guide Tours recommends visiting the fish market near the airport to see all the boats coming back with the day's catch. 4-wheel jeeps can be hired at any hotel to drive on the beach. Himchari is about 20 km to the South of Cox's Bazar and only a beach drive away. A drive to Teknaf, also south of Cox's Bazar, by the Naf river separating Bangladesh and Myanmar, is also a memorable thing to do. Other interesting day trips are the deltaic islands of Moheshkhali and Sonadia in the Bay of Bengal.

Where to Start: Several tour operators as well as Bangladesh Parjatan offer trips to Cox's Bazar as part of a tour package. Contact Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (325155-9) for a list of tour operators. We obtained all our information from The Guide Tours Ltd. (836338)

Travel Briefs

Death of an airline

Last decade of the present century has not been kind to the airlines all over the world. Although new airlines are mushrooming around the globe, many established ones have been forced to cease operation. Declining revenue, increasing cost and mismanagement at top are the chief reasons for all these closures.

Zambia Airways, the state owned airline of Zambia in Africa is the last one to close down. On 6th December the Govt has announced liquidation of the airline.

The airline started its operation soon after independence of the country with two aircraft to serve the local and regional routes.

Zambia has rich deposit of copper. Steep rise of copper price in international market in the mid 70s boosted up the national economy. The airline also started to expand. It first acquired a DC-8 and then a DC-10 to serve its prestigious Lusaka-London route. When Air-India pulled out of Lusaka, Zambia Airways started a weekly service to Bombay under a code-sharing agreement with Air-India.

Like many other African nations, Zambia also had fixed the exchange rate of its currency kwacha to US dollar at a very high rate. This artificial exchange rate served the national ego, but not the economy. The country felt the adverse effects once the demand

for copper started plummeting down. The airline realised that real income was much low. The currency also started its downward journey.

In an attempt to save the airline from declining cash inflow the Govt announced in mid-93 plans to restructure the airline. Privatisation was aimed at. The airline disposed of its aging DC-8 aircraft which was a source of continuous operational problem.

Number of employees was reduced from 2130 to 1930 (10.8%). But nothing could save the airline from liquidation.

At the time of closure, Zambia Airways had a fleet of six aircraft: *Airupam Basu*

Northwest and KLM partnership makes new strides

The five year relationship between KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and Northwest Airlines has produced the largest and most integrated worldwide system in civil aviation history.

A combined fleet of 454 aircraft flies to 350 cities, in more than 80 countries, across six continents. Timetables are carefully synchronized. Moreover, passengers can travel around the vast network on a single ticket with luggage checked in just once - tremendous advantages for globetrotting business trips.

This partnership was achieved through the US Department of Transport's un-

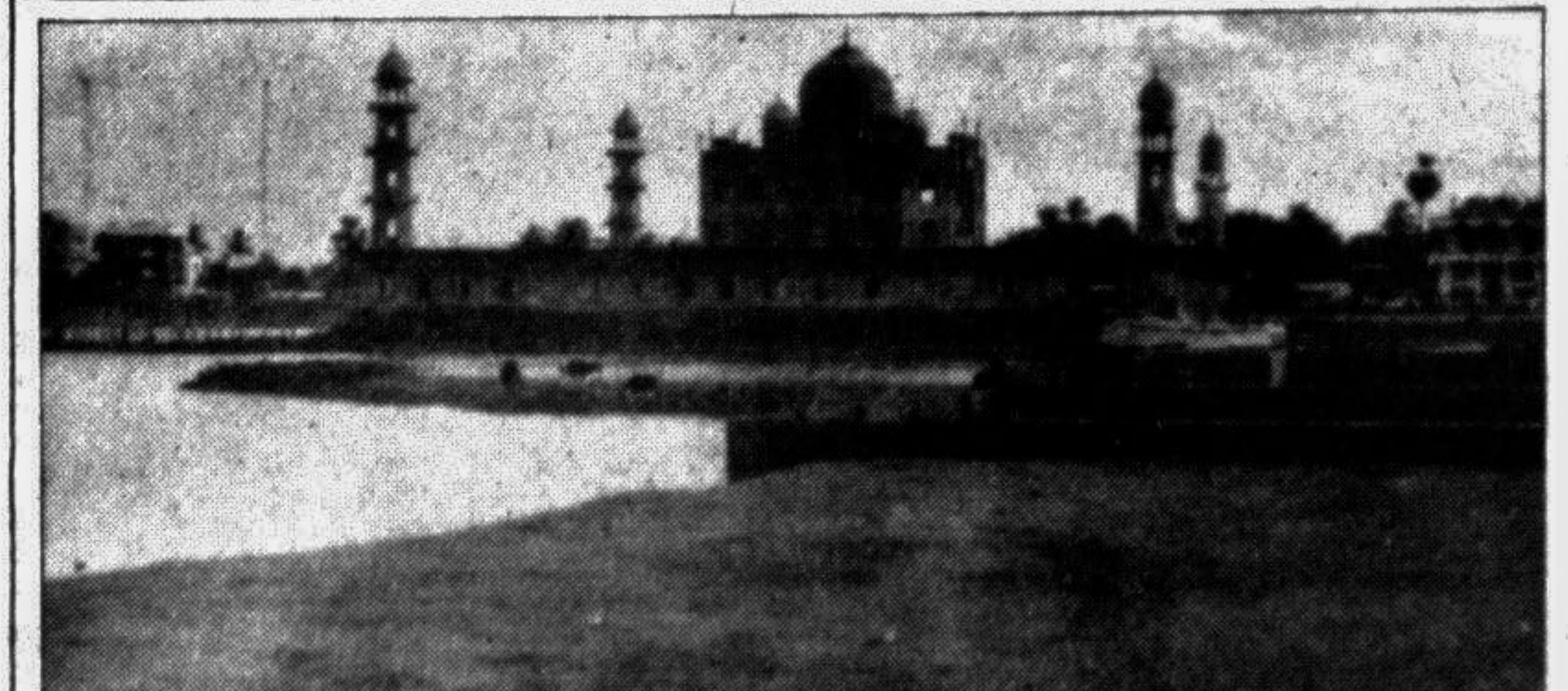
precedented decision to grant Northwest and KLM anti-trust immunity. As a result, they enjoy a unique right to price, market and sell as one airline.

The organization also plans to expand the number of code-sharing flights in order to streamline the connection process on more routes worldwide. So far Northwest in cooperation with KLM has increased its number of European and Middle East gateways from five to 33 as a result of the introduction of code-share services. The latest additions to the service are Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai.

More than 40 additional cities in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia are also due for inclusion in the code-share network. — *Courtesy, Northwest.*

KLM holds Photo exhibition in Dhaka

KLM will hold its first annual photo exhibition in Dhaka from 18th December to 5th January from 3 pm to 8 pm daily. This exhibition is held annually in 40 countries at 70 venues. The exhibition is opening in Dhaka this year because this is the first year KLM will operate in Dhaka. The exhibition will be held at House no. 58, Road 15A (New) in Dhanmondi. Sponsored by Beximco, USIS, and Alliance Francais, it is open to the public. — *WorldLink Travels.*



Dar es-Salam mosque in Shamoli, popularly known as the Taj Mahal of Dhaka. Photo was taken from the Adabar side. — *Morshed, Daily Star*