

Travel & Tourism



Boom Town, Dubai

by Shirley Kay

WHILE much of the world struggles with an intractable economic recession, Dubai moves in the opposite direction — business is booming. The city is expanding at a rate which defies belief. The end of the Gulf War early in 1991 relieved anxiety in the

oil had impoverished many of her customers. Shipping hesitated then to enter the Gulf, and Iran's markets, always the most vital ones for Dubai, were closed. But the end of that war brought a smile back to the faces of Dubai's traders, a smile which has broadened considerably

going vessels) in her creek increases annually too. Indeed, Dubai today has developed into an impressive modern metropolis, spread-

Perhaps even more spectacular in this arid desert setting, Dubai is becoming increasingly a green city. Brilliant pink, purple, and white bougainvillea spill over villa walls in the garden suburbs, roadways are lined with flowering shrubs and beds of annuals, and parks provide shady walks across extensive lawns, beneath spreading trees. The parks are perhaps the most popular of recent developments in the city; they are always packed with people on weekends and in the evenings.

Even more unexpected are the luxury lawns of Dubai's two grass golf courses. The first of these opened amid the desert dunes in 1987. It was the only grass golf course in Arabia and seemed like a miracle at the time, an oasis of green sward, lakes full of colorful fish, tall palm trees, and flowering shrubs. In summer it was kept green with three quarters of a million gallons of desalinated water a day.

Rapid Expansion

All this is a far cry from the small Arab town which lined the banks of a curving creek on the southern shores of the Gulf thirty years ago. In those days, the town extended but a kilometer or two away from the creek, which was the center of activity in the place. For the creek offered a safe mooring to the wooden trading dhows which made the journey across to Iran, north up the Gulf to Bahrain, or eastwards to Muscat, the Indian subcontinent, and even the east coast of Africa. The same dhows still through the creek today, and now there are many more of them.

An extensive labour force was brought in from abroad

to tackle a great diversity of projects. These followed rapidly on the heels of another throughout the 1970s, guided and personally supervised by Shaikh Rashid, Ruler of Dubai until his death in 1990. In quick succession a large dry docks was built, a second harbour — the largest

their families, as the large number of English, Indian and international schools in Dubai testifies, workers on a labourer's wage must come alone. As a result, most of the hundreds of thousands of immigrants in Dubai, and in the United Arab Emirates in general, are men.

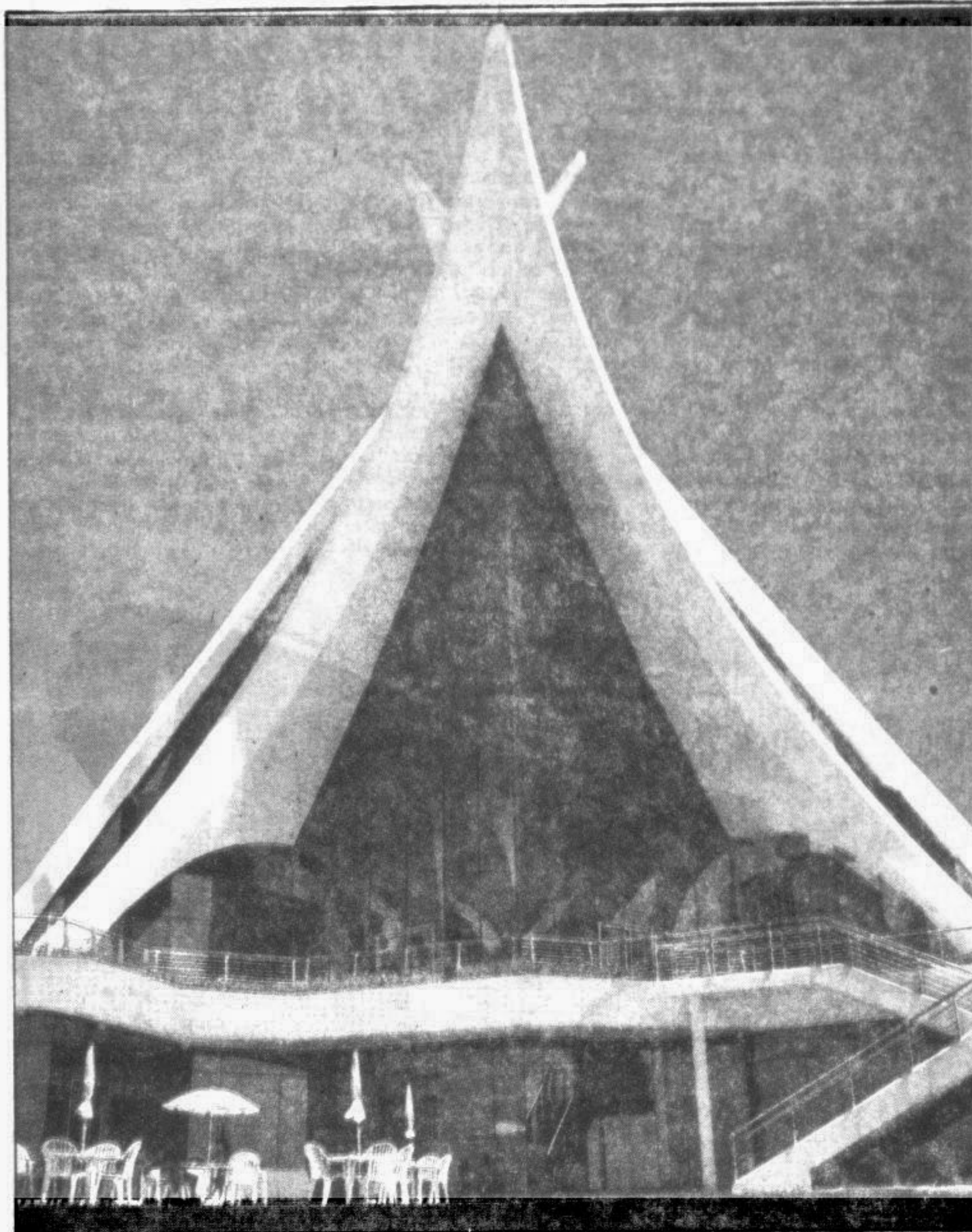
Those who has labouring jobs working for large enter-

good deal when they see it. So the patterns of employment may change over the years, as they have in the dry docks for example. In the past, the labouring jobs in Bangladesh and the welding jobs to Portuguese and others; today Bangladeshis are winning the welding jobs because the graduates of one particular mission school in Bangladesh are recognized to have excellent skills.

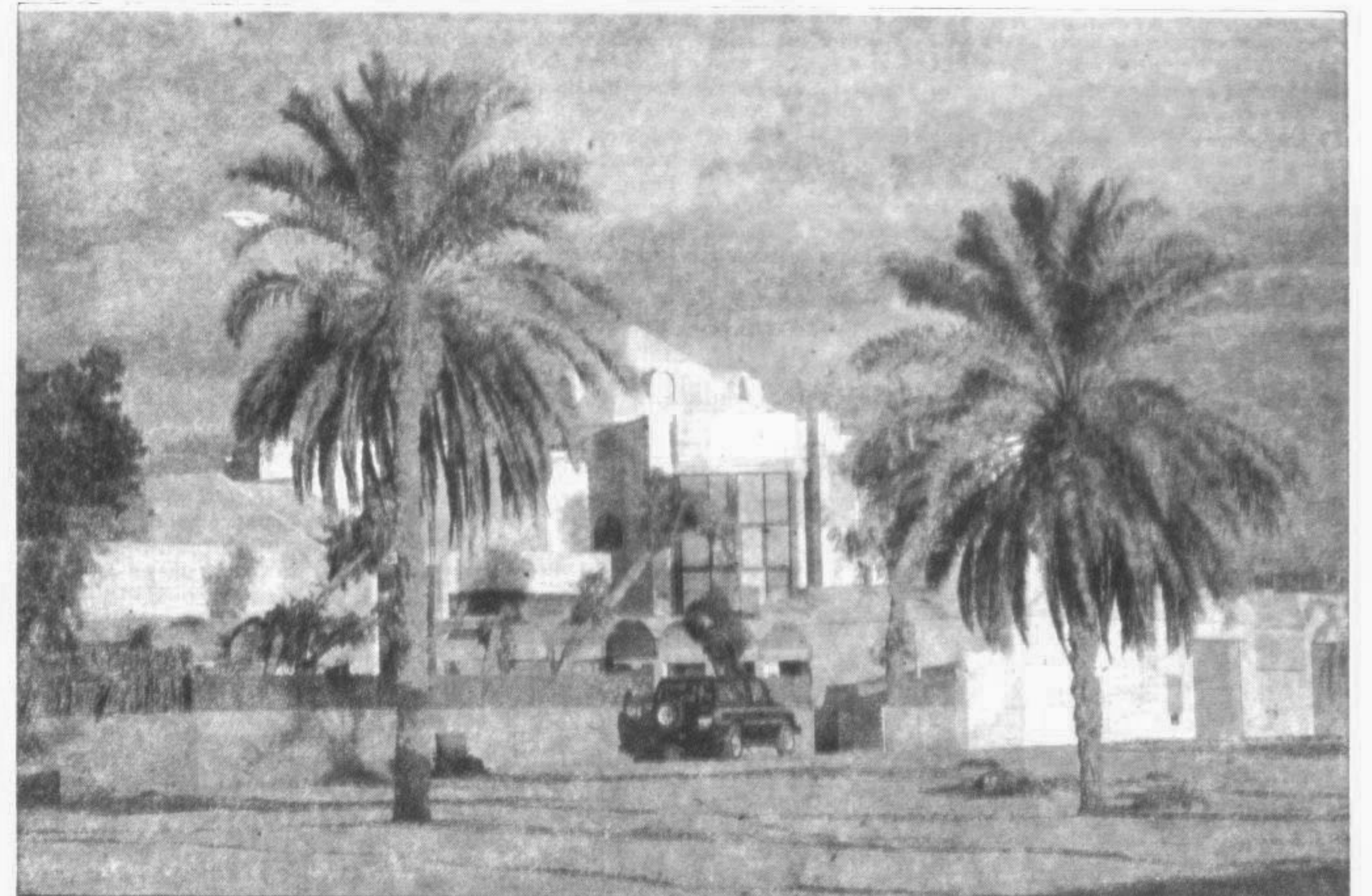
The scope for work in Dubai has increased dramati-

crime rate. It offers welcoming areas of green in a desert environment, and has a splendid sea coast with some fine beaches. Its fresh food, especially fish, fruit, and vegetables, is second to none in the world.

Finally, for sports of all kinds, Dubai is a splendid center. Eater sports, of course, have pride of place: swimming, water-skiing, jet surfing, sailing, and diving are all available. Tennis, soccer, golf and rally driving are popular land sports. Even



The golfcourse clubhouse -Degonto



Modern villas built along palatial lines -Degonto

region and brought fresh business opportunities to ports in the southern part of the Gulf. It was a great boost for Dubai, far and away the leading port of the United Arab Emirates, and indeed of the area as a whole.

True, Dubai had suffered its own mini-recession in the mid-1980s, when the Iran-Iraq war was in full swing and the collapse of the price of

over the last couple of years.

For Dubai is a major center of entrepot trade. Her twin ports now rank among the top twenty in the world for container trade, and in 1991 she notched up her first one million containers handled in a year. At the hub of east-west trade, her ports and airport are kept continually busy, and the number of wooden trading dhows (sea-

ing out across some thirty kilometers of desert sand, along the shores of a shallow blue sea. Dual carriage highways are punctuated by numerous roundabouts, high rise buildings line the northern bank of Dubai's famous creek, glass-fronted bank buildings compete in the financial district, and tower blocks line the road towards Abu Dhabi.

in the world — at nearby Jebel Ali, a power station, aluminum smelter and gas plant, also at Jebel Ali, a thirty-nine-story trade center tower — the highest in the Middle East, and an ultra-modern Municipality building. Several of these outstanding buildings were officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1979.

Guest Workers

Foreign workers come to Dubai, however, on a temporary residence permit only. They are never given right of abode. While those with higher incomes may bring

prizes may live in workers' hostels provided by their employer. Others live in downtown lodgings and tenements or even, for those employed on the sea, in fishermen's shacks by the side of the water.

Labouring jobs are often accorded by nationality. Road workers may be Pakistanis, fisherman and boat builders Indians, musicians often from Poland, managers from England, and pop groups from the Philippines.

But nothing is hard and fast, for the entrepreneurial people of Dubai are quick to recognize good work and a

cally with the expansion in the late 1980s of the Jebel Ali Free Trade Zone. This industrial area, grouped around the huge Jebel Ali port, some twenty-five kilometers south of Dubai, has attracted a considerable number of light manufacturing industries which employ large teams of foreign workers. Employment in this area can be arranged directly through the Jebel Ali Free Zone Authority.

It is not only the money, however, that keeps Dubai's foreign workers happy. The quality of life is an attraction on its own. Dubai is a clean and safe city with a very low

cricket, though played on sand in Dubai, can be watched at the highest level in nearby Sharjah where a grass pitch attracts tournaments in which the national teams of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, England, Australia, the West Indies, and South Africa all compete.

Most important of all, perhaps, the worries of developed countries in recession, and of developing countries struggling to feed growing populations, all vanish in Dubai. There, life is secure, the future seems assured. Source — Degonto.

The New Bangkok Airport

THE complete redevelopment of all elements of Bangkok's Don Muang Airport has been one of the most complex and substantial civil aviation projects ever undertaken in Asia.

The overall time scale, from concept to realisation, has taken almost a decade, with detail planning and construction being scheduled over eight years, from 1980 to 1988.

Direct costs involved total over five billion Baht, or US \$200 million, with associated costs, expenditure by airlines and provision of ancillary service elements having added many millions more.

The whole massive project was undertaken and co-ordinated by the Airports Authority of Thailand, in close co-operation with the national carrier, Thai International and the many other airlines and interests involved.

Completion of the various key elements was staggered over several years, to allow the minimum disruption and in convenience to airlines, cargo shippers and passengers using the airport. The success of this aspect of the redevelopment is among its greatest achievements.

First phase of the redevelopment was the construction of a second main runway, 3.7 km. long, with associated taxiways and other facilities. This runway allows for a fully loaded 747 to take off for the non-stop flight to Europe.

Associated with this building are an aircraft parking area of 540,000 sq. m., sufficient for 52 aircraft and 1,400 car parking spaces. Motorway and rail links operate from directly outside the Airport into the city centre and an overhead walkway has been built to connect the Arrival Hall directly to the adjacent 300 room Airport Hotel.

Passenger Handling

The improvements in service for passengers made possible by the development of completely new international and domestic termi-

nals at Bangkok Airport have been spectacular.

The new International Terminal, a joint Thai-Japanese project implemented and coordinated through the Airports Authority of Thailand, has an area of 172,000 sq. m., over four times the area of the previous international terminal.

The Terminal is designed to handle a peak hourly traffic volume of 12,000 arriving, departing and transit passengers, almost double the present levels of traffic.

Arriving and departing passengers flow efficiently through different levels of the five-storey building. In-bound travellers pass through 66 immigration counters, collect their baggage from up to eight carousels and leave through 40 customs counters, with red and green channels, to the bus, limousine and public taxi services outside taking them into the city. They are also served by duty free shops, money changing, left luggage, hotel and tour booking facilities on the same level and can connect by a covered bridge directly to the adjacent Airport Hotel.

Departing passengers are handled by 76 check-in counters, most equipped with computerised reservations, seat allocation and boarding pass print-out machines. There are special counters for groups, First and Executive class and VIP passengers. They can then pass through up to 40 immigration channels into the main departure and transit lounge, equipped with extensive duty free, shopping, money changing, postal and refreshment facilities. In order to reduce the walking distance to their flights, passengers have the use of 12 moving sidewalks.

Security is strict, with checked baggage being X-rayed on required flights and all passengers and flight crews passing through personal and hand baggage

surveillance equipment before reaching the plane-side departure lounges.

Transit passengers proceed directly to the main waiting area, with every type of service and facility available to cater for their needs.

There is also closed-circuit TV camera surveillance throughout the building.

The new Bangkok International Airport is particularly well designed to cater for the needs of 'commercially important' travellers, First and Executive class passengers and VIPs. The process of check-in is speeded for them by the provision of special express counters, where they and their baggage are given priority handling.

Thai International's premium class passengers are provided with exclusive lounges attached to the main departure and transit area, adjacent to the duty-free stores, after departure immigration and customs check points. In these lounges, First and Executive class travellers may enjoy free bar and refreshment facilities, hold a business meeting in private.

A similar luxurious facility is also operated by THAI for the First Class passengers of other airlines handled by their service. This superb lounge, located on the top floor of the Terminal, is equipped with every comfort and amenity to make their waiting time as pleasant and relaxing as possible.

Arrangements can also be made for the reservation of separate, private VIP lounges, for individuals or groups requiring priority treatment or special security.

Speed, efficiency, courtesy — these are the essential elements of passenger service at Bangkok's superb new Airport. All staff concerned are carefully trained and encouraged in a true understanding of the consideration and care due to every passenger.

Source: Thai

How Can We Improve Domestic Travelling?

by Saifa Rashid

AS a general rule, travelling from one district to another by road is not an enjoyable experience. Of course, if the district is near like Comilla or Mymensingh the journey is short and, therefore, sweet due to elimination of ferries on the Dhaka-Chittagong route. But travelling to other districts particularly in the north is quite horrendous and one needs a day to recuperate after the journey.

I have travelled to Bogura several times on various coach companies and I can honestly say the best way to go to Bogura is by car. One can fly to Rajshahi and then travel the remaining 80-90 hrs by car but the road is bumpy and the 2-3 hr. journey is tedious.

To travel to Bogura by road one must first travel to Aricha Ghat, then board the ferry to Nagarbari. This ferry journey can last from 2-4 hrs. Then after reaching Nagarbari a further 2-3 hrs. journey brings one to Bogura. The coach journeys consist of indescribable tortures during a

8-10 hr. journey which seems like eternity. However, the journeys need not be so wearisome. The roads have improved greatly; especially the Nagarbari-Bogura road has been widened and is almost smooth as glass. The main problems are the inadequate coaches and the long, tiresome launch journey.

Each time I have travelled to Bogura or back by a different coach company to see if any of them suit me. None of them did! The chairs are uncomfortably cramped close together with hardly any leg room. There is inadequate luggage holding space so that luggage is piled up in the corridor between the seats. Fans are present but they are more of a decoration than anything else. They certainly revolve but produce a faint air current at the most.

Apart from that in many coaches extra people are given little wooden stools to sit on in the space between the seats, others travel standing up. One can easily imagine the over crowded and

chaotic atmosphere in such a coach. And if that was not enough the coach owners leader the coach roofs with various merchandise such as bananas, chickens etc. Bananas create no problems but chickens are unwelcome fellow travellers mainly due to the unsavoury smell they produce. So when the travellers are hopeful that they have almost reached Gatabdi and their troubles are at an end the coach stops at Savar and unloads. The merchandise which takes at least 1/2 an hour. Having an unendurable journey lengthened by another 1/2 hr causes as amount of vituperation which can easily be imagined.

If a few luxury coaches like the ones plying the Dhaka-Chittagong route were introduced on to that routes of the country then travelling would not be such a tedious experience. It might even increase the number of tourists or who want to tour the northern districts. I am sure there are many people who would be glad to pay a little more to travel in greater comfort.



The busy terminal of Gatabdi

Star photo

Travel Briefs

Southeast Asia to spend on aircraft: Governments and airlines in Southeast Asia will spend upwards of \$40 billion on airports and new aircraft over the next decade. A study compiled by the US-ASEAN council, says that about \$20 billion is expected to be spent on the complete overhaul of ground facilities, including major outlays on international airports in Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

Over the same period another \$20 billion will be spent on new jet airlines and spares. Fuelling this investment will be passenger traffic growth averaging 10.7 per cent a year through 1998, well above the world average. — Asian Aviation

US offering F-16s to Philippines: The US government is reportedly offering to sell the Philippines 11 F-16 fighters at a 'concessional' price.

This was disclosed by Philippines the Senate speaker during his visit in Washington. He said that he had received assurances from congressmen that they would support such a sale with extended payment period.

The Philippines has also been offered the Israeli Kfir 2000, Dassault Mirage F-1, Denel Cheetah and Mig-29 fighters. — Asian Aviation

Airline News: All Nippon Airways received Japanese CAB approval to operate scheduled services from Osaka-Kansai International Airport to Shanghai and Kuala Lumpur.

United Airlines has applied to the Indian authorities for approval to start scheduled service from the US to New Delhi with 14 flights a week.

Jordan signed a bilateral with South Africa allowing Royal Jordanian to operate two flights a week to Johannesburg. — Asian Aviation

UPS early service from Asia: United Parcel Service has opened an overnight service called UPS Express Plus from Asia to over 4000 cities in the USA. Consignments from Hongkong, Sydney and Taipei and the Korean cities of Incheon, Busan and Seoul are carried overnight and distributed early in the morning. — BD Shipping Times

Gulf Air retires fleet: After almost 20 years of service, Gulf Air's fleet of Tristar aircraft has been retired from scheduled operations. The Middle East airline's longhaul routes are now being operated by 18 Boeing 767-300 aircraft as well as four A340 Airbus. — BD Shipping Times

Jakarta to host '96 air show: Approximating 800 aircraft related companies and 120 aircraft are expected to participate in the International Air Show 1996. The air show will be held at the Soekarno-Hatta airport, Jakarta, from June 26 to July 1 next year. The 1996 show will also feature aircraft acrobat. — BD Shipping Times

SIA starts cargo flights: Singapore Airline Ltd. (SIA) started its first Boeing 747-400 air freight service to Chicago on November 2.

The weekly service will operate from Singapore to Chicago via Taipei and Anchorage. With the additional new service, SIA now serves 25 freighter destinations. — Monitor