

Rehabilitating the Cyclone-affected

by Dr A F Rafiqul Islam

BAHANGADESH is a country located at the northern tip of Bay of Bengal. Any water body that is restricted on three sides by land is more prone to storms, cyclones, etc. Cyclones and similar storms originate between 5 degree and 10 degree north or south of equator. Cyclones originating in the northern hemisphere move in clockwise direction while cyclones originating in the southern hemisphere move in counter clockwise direction. Therefore, cyclones originating in the Bay of Bengal first move in the north-westerly direction, then gradually take turn in the north-easterly direction and while taking this turn, the rate of advance of the cyclone is very slow but after the storm has taken the turn its rate of advance gradually increases, the wind speed also gradually increases. The storm subsides after hitting land.

From these facts it becomes clear why our country is cyclone-prone. As we are not in a position to change our geographical location, we have to live with cyclones, particularly those of us living near the coast where situation is worsened by the addition of tidal bores during the cyclones. Only thing that we are able to do is to face the calamity boldly and intelligently to reduce the extent of damages and losses within tolerable limit.

Occasional Cyclones
Since the severe cyclone of 1960 which struck Chittagong with devastating effects, cyclones have struck Bangladesh coastal belt at regular intervals, each time causing severe damage and colossal loss of life and property. Bangladesh experienced one of the worst cyclones

in its history on the 12th November, 1970. That cyclone claimed about 3 million lives and properties worth billions of Taka. The devastating cyclone of the 29th April, 1991 was almost of same intensity of the severe cyclone of 1970. That cyclone also played havoc causing immense sufferings to people and colossal loss of properties.

Precautionary Measures
With improved satellite technology these cyclones can be tracked continuously from the time they originate. This allows early and accurate forecasting giving sufficient time to take precautionary measures. This year also a terrible cyclone hit Bangladesh on the 19th May, 1997, but fortunately appropriate precautionary measures could be taken in time which reduced the loss of life to a great extent. The loss of lives caused by this cyclone was very low compared to previous occasions largely because of timely evacuation to cyclone shelters and adequate precautionary measures.

Loss from This Year's Cyclone

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a public meeting on 30.5.97 at Manpura, Bhola stated that permanent houses would be built for the people living in the cyclone-prone coastal areas. This year about 4-5 lac of people have been affected by the cyclone and about 50,000 houses have been destroyed. So, even if 20,000 houses are built and the affected people are taken care of for about a month or so, the approximate cost is about US \$50m. Thus it is found how much loss is being inflicted by cyclones every year.

Suitable Houses in Cyclone-prone Areas

We find that after every cyclone, government, foreign donors, NGOs build cyclone shelters, tin-shed houses, tube-wells etc. spending huge sums of money. But due to unsuitable and inappropriate design many of these structures get washed away by subsequent severe cyclones. So, we suggest suitable structure that can withstand severe cyclones/storms for these cyclone prone areas.

We propose to the government the proven geodesic dome-shaped design for houses in these areas. The geodesic domes were first constructed by Buckminster Fuller of USA in 1927 and these were successfully tested and proven in different parts of USA, Canada and many other countries.

Merits of the Geodesic Domes

(1) **Strong Structure:** Due to its spherical shape the structure is very strong even when shell is thin compared to conventional structures (defined by 90 orientation between planes). Because of spherical shape no stress can develop and it can withstand severe blow of wind (say 200 km/hr) and tidal bore. The strength of the structure is increased in logarithmic ratio as the size becomes bigger. But the conventional structures cannot bear the pressure of high speed wind and tidal surge, as wind and tidal bore hit the flat surfaces of the rectangular structures causing immense damage to them.

(2) **Much Less Resistance:** Due to its spherical shape, geodesic dome has much less resistance to wind force and tidal bore compared to the conventional structure where resistance to external force is much higher. As a result, this geodesic dome structure can easily withstand severe blow of wind and tidal bore.

(3) **High Volume of Enclosed Air:** The conventional houses/buildings cannot be easily made water-tight and airtight due to their structural characteristics. But geodesic dome structures can be easily made airtight and water-tight.

Internal volume to floor area ratio of geodesic dome structures is 2.7 times more than that of conventional structures. So, whereas, in air-tight conventional structures people can live for only 13 hours without fresh supply of air without being suffocated, in geodesic dome structures, people easily can live for about 36 hours in

emergency situation during cyclones. Even if the structure is submerged under water for about 36 hours, there will be no problem of suffocation.

(4) **More Airtight and Lighted Space:** Due to its spherical shape, the inhabitants in the structure can get plenty of air and light from all sides. In the conventional structure if wind blows from south, the inhabitants get air if they have south windows and cross ventilation. But in these proposed structures, they can get plenty of air and light from all sides irrespective of which side the wind is blowing from.

(5) **Less Corrosion Due to Water and Weather Salinity:** In the geodesic dome structures, corrosion-free materials can be used more successfully



due to the fact that the structures are much lighter compared to conventional ones. Effective bamboo polymer composite structures have been tested and found suitable and are proposed for the purpose.

(6) **Cheap:** As the structure is lighter compared to conventional one, it is cheaper to construct than the conventional structures.

(7) **Ideal Home Structure:** This geodesic dome structure will be the most ideal structure specially for rural houses of Bangladesh due to its economy and immense merits stated above. The most inconvenient and relatively costly conventional GI sheet structure may therefore be replaced with these very strong and functional dome shaped structures.

(8) **Security:** Many inhabitants do not want to leave their homestead till the last minute of cyclone striking, as vacant houses are subject to looting and arson by unscrupulous local miscreants. Household effects, grain and cattle will remain secured under these dome shaped structures.

Conclusion
In conclusion we would like to propose to the government that non-conventional geodesic dome structures be tried in the country so that each homestead can act as cyclone shelter for the entire family along with cattleheads.

Shaking Up the Ageing UN

by Ekram Kabir

It is imperative that the member-countries assess Kofi Annan's reform plan rationally in everybody's interest.

THERE is a weird notion among the Americans, says a Bangladeshi expatriate living in Texas, that the United Nations is going to invade the United States. "Possibly, the isolationism of the US is the cause behind this belief," he tries to reason.

But, paradoxically, it is the other way round.

It is the US which wants to take the lead in reforming the world body and make its presence strongly felt in every stratum of UN activities. It became clear when secretary-general Kofi Annan's reform-package delivered on July 16 failed to meet US demands. Annan, promising a "quiet revolution" at the United Nations, proposed the most sweeping reforms in UN's 52-year history, focusing chiefly on to streamline the bureaucracy, reduce staff and cut budgets.

But the plan outlined in a report titled *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*, according to the wire services, flunked to keep the critics content on Capitol Hill who had asked for steps that, UN officials say, go beyond Annan's authority. The UN top-man's propositions did not address some key Congressional demands, including a reduction in US dues and crediting America for some of the money spent in supporting the world body's peacekeeping operations.

Senator Rod Grams of US's Republican-led Congress was quoted to have said in the press that the plan "represents nothing more than the status quo". Hinting that Congress may continue to block funds, Grams said it is up to the Congress to prevent the UN from becoming "a country club for diplomats".

But some households of the global village may not like US camaraderie in every UN decision and its presence in all the places all the time, including its role in international affairs at large. And hostility to the US is likely to run strong where Kofi Annan's reform plan requires approval of the 185-member 52nd General Assembly in September next.

The world now needs "peace and security" more than when the UN was formed; and doubtless it is that the UN is a powerful platform for international politics and given the post-Cold War bipolar scenario (where the US is fighting to remain as the lone ranger), the UN has become the most important wagon to exercise power at the international level. Kofi Annan, however, knows the challenge, because it was the US opposition that forced the departure of his predecessor Boutros Boutros-Ghali and enabled him to step into the top job.

time to study the report, noting that "we are fully aware that the secretary-general cannot achieve all of the proposed reforms alone; cooperation will be crucial if efforts to strengthen the UN are to bear fruits".

Now, whose "cooperation" was he talking about? That of US, of course!

Meanwhile, representatives of European Union, Asia, Africa, Latin America, Russia and Japan have given esteem to Annan for his efforts — and they cautioned that reform is not all about cost-cutting, but about changes which will provide the changes to the United Nations to play an effective role in meeting its objectives and give the organisation more unity of purpose and flexibility to respond to 'humanitarian', 'development' and 'human rights' needs.

This is a welcome sign, because the linkage between domestic and international affairs has pointedly grown in, for now, two ways: one — rapidly growing domestic needs and demands have increasingly become dependent upon international politics; and two — international politics has become the playing field only for the richer nations after the demise of the Soviet Union.

But, reportedly, a wise Annan while commenting on his 'simple aims' said: "I consider them bold; others may not... But when you take the package together, it is ambitious, far-reaching and the most extensive reform proposal." He, for example among others, is asking the UNGA to establish the post of a deputy secretary-general, streamline the agenda for the Commission on Human Rights, consolidate and reconfigure the ECOSOC's (Economic and Social Council's) subsidiary bodies, develop more reliable and predictable arrangements for the rapid deployment of UN peacekeeping troops, and review the roles of the UN regional commissions.

As far as the peacekeeping operations are concerned, he (the former head of UN peacekeeping) is right. Because on UN's part, Somalia was a bad precedent; the fallout from the earlier mismanaged peacekeeping operation in Somalia still continues to cause shock waves in countries which provided the personnel. Two Canadian and one Belgian soldiers have already been jailed for the death

of a young Somali in March 1993. The investigations in this regard have concluded in the first week of this month (July, '97). Reports suggest that what began as a peace mission turned into an army of occupation.

Moreover, the new Blue Berets chief, Bernard Miyet — a French diplomat who was appointed in March last — is faced with problems. He has more demands on his organisation and less money to do the job. Which makes his task all the more difficult is that member-states are being increasingly reluctant to support peacekeeping activities. This is partly because of the threat of failure — as in Bosnia, and partly because of the change in the nature of conflicts.

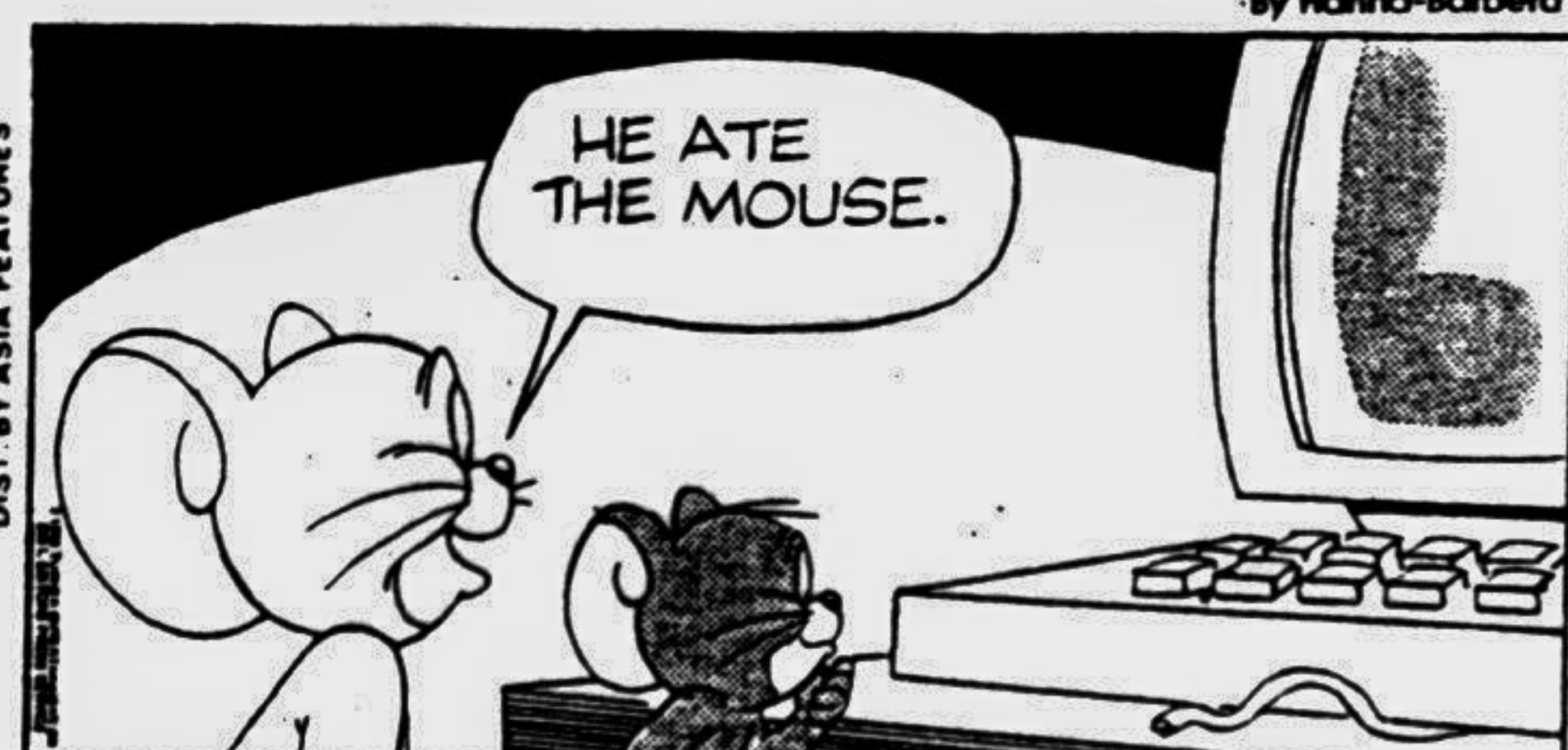
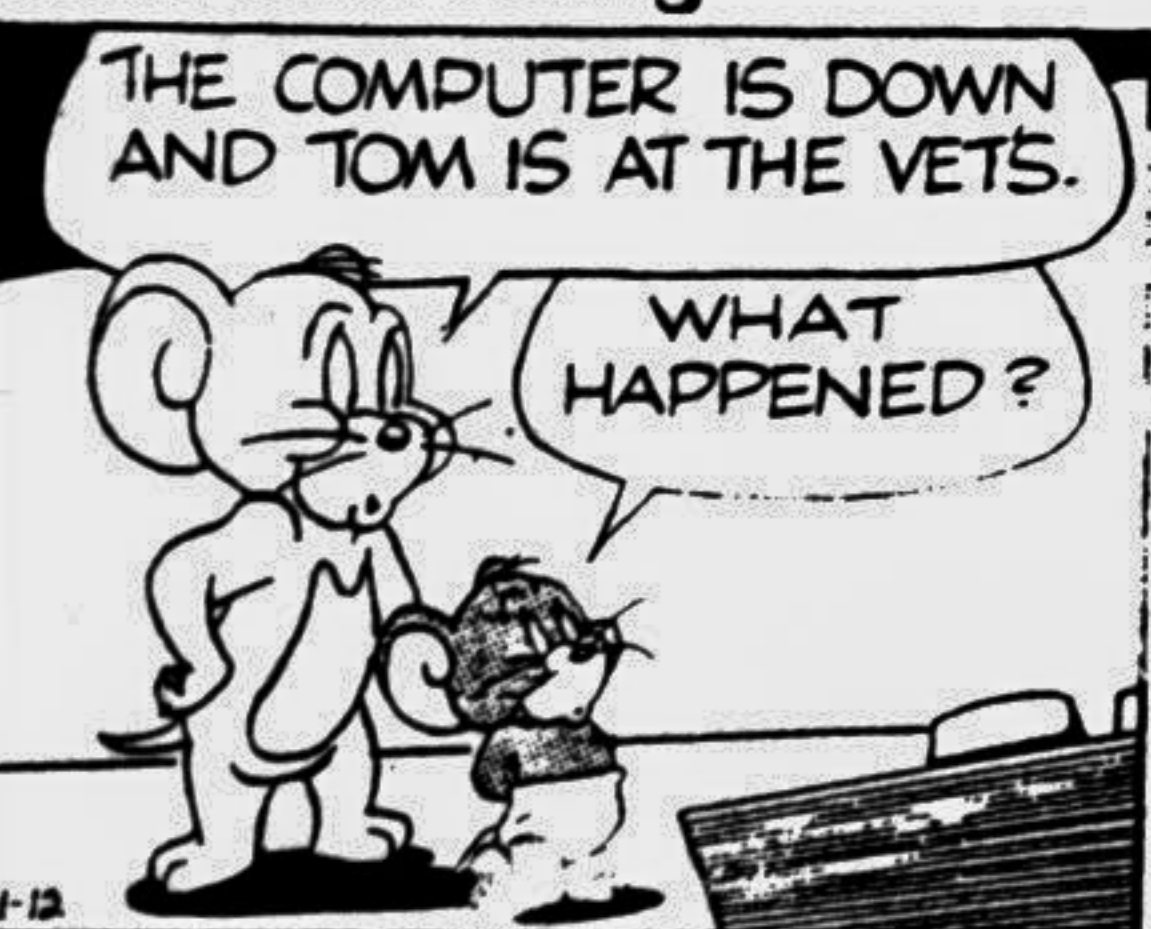
The participating countries reason that most wars are today internal — between factions rather than between two hostile nations, and such collisions are often politically confusing and even more bitter than traditional wars fought between countries where outsiders can be severely struck away.

If this is the backdrop, then Kofi Annan has a tremendous task ahead in convincing the member-states about UN peace missions.

However, the specialised agencies within the UN system like UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, World Food Programme and IFAD, for their successful track-records in the past, have escaped Annan's fund-trimming. But an integrated fund has been proposed in the plan. However, in this regard, since the first phase of UN reform programme was announced March last, as part of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), the chair of which the UNICEF assumed in April last, a common budget format has also been approved by the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF.

Without going into further details, it can be fathomed that the United Nations was hungry for good ideas for reforms for long, especially after the Soviet collapse. Now that some good ideas have set in — which began during Boutros-Ghali's time — it is imperative that the member-countries assess Kofi Annan's reform plan rationally in the light of everybody's interest. More so, when it comes to the question of increasing the number of permanent members in the Security Council.

Tom and Jerry



IAN FLEMING'S James Bond



Metropolitan

HERE and THERE

Bangabandhu Parishad SC Lawyers' unit

A meeting of Bangabandhu Parishad of Supreme Court Lawyers' Unit was held Sunday day, reports BSS.

President of the parishad unit Barrister Shaukat Ali was in the chair.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by advocate Subrata Chowdhury, Abdul Halim, Parimal Guha, Tamizuddin, Enayetur Rahim, Zahirul Islam and Subash Saha.

A seven-member sub-committee was formed at the meeting to observe the National Mourning Day on August 15.

The programmes of the parishad on August 15 will include placing wreaths on portrait of Bangabandhu at 7.30 am on the day.

The meeting condoled the death of Advocate Sirajul Islam and Principal Shah M Humayun Kabir and expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

It also condemned the July 18 incident that led to the postponement of the programmes of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

Ain O Salish Kendra

By Staff Correspondent

Ain O Salish Kendra has strongly condemned the public speech of Moulana Shaikhul Hadis Ajizul Haque, the Ameer of Khelafat Majlis, in which he accused Prof Ali Asgar of "blasphemy" and offered a reward of taka one lakh for killing him.

In a protest letter yesterday Dr Hameeda Hossain of the Kendra said the Ameer delivered his speech on July 15 at a meeting arranged by Islami Oikkyo Jote.

The letter said the speech was a clear incitement to violence and it urged the government to take immediate legal action against the perpetrator.

"We support Prof Ali Asgar's proposal for withdrawing religious instruction as a compulsory subject from our school curriculum, because personal

beliefs should not be made a matter of public debate," said Hossain in the letter.

Shakti Foundation

By Staff Correspondent

Maya Kasthagiri, a member of 'Shakti Foundation for Disadvantaged Women', a non-government organisation, left Dhaka for Thailand on Saturday to take part in a two-week training course on food processing at the Institute for Food Research and Product Development (IFRPPD), Kasetsart University, Bangkok.

A loanee of Shakti Foundation, Maya Kasthagiri is currently running a successful business of manufacturing and marketing 'papad', said a press release.

Shakti Foundation, in conjunction with United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (UN-APCTT), is promoting technology sharing among grass-roots women groups in the food processing sector, the release added.

Nalta High School Ex-students

Sangsad

The second death anniversary of eminent educationist Mohammad Darbesh Ali, former Headmaster of Nalta High School, Satkhira, was observed on Friday, says a press release.

In observance of the day, Nalta High School Ex-students Sangsad, Dhaka, arranged a discussion meeting on Darbesh Ali at the auditorium of the Faculty of Architecture and Planning, BUET.

Chaired by Prof Dr A F M Ruhul Huq, president of the Sangsad, the meeting was addressed among others, by Prof Dr Gulam Rahman, Dr Abu Tayeb Abu Ahmed, Principal Ashraf Ali, Dr Shahidul Alam, Badaruddin Ahmed, Dr Major Ruhul Amin, Khalilur Rahman, Prof Jahannara Begum, Moulana Sakawat Ullah, Dr M A Wahab, Enamul Huq, Shafiqur Rahman, Abdul Aziz, Anisur Rahman, Lopa and Jamayet Ali.

Hasina, Samad greet PM, FM of PNG

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday felicitated Bill Skate, MP for his election as the Prime Minister of the independent state of Papua New Guinea (PNG), reports BSS.

In a message Sheikh Hasina said the victory of Bill Skate clearly manifests the trust and confidence of the people of Papua New Guinea upon him.

In another message Foreign Minister Abus Samad Azad felicitated Chris Haiveta, MP for his appointment as the minister for commerce and industries, national planning, foreign affairs and trade and industrial relations of Papua New Guinea.

In the message Azad said that he was looking forward to work with Haiveta both bilaterally and internationally.

Nusrat stands 11th in Sc group

By Staff Correspondent

Elham Nusrat stood 11th in the combined science group merit list and fifth in the merit list for girls in the 1997 SSC examinations under Dhaka Board.

She appeared in the examinations from Yiqarunessa Noon High School. Daughter of Ziaun Nahar Begum, Director General, Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation, Nusrat wants to do MBA.

First class first

Muhammad Mahmudur Rahman stood first class first in the MSS (Final) examination in 1994 (held in 1996) of Political Science Department, university of Dhaka, says a press release.

He is the son of Muhammad Habibur Rahman and Mahfuza Begum of village Gaganatkatia under Swarupkati thana of Perujpur district.

Paternal homestead of Tagore's wife to be preserved

The government will preserve the paternal homestead of the wife of Rabindranath Tagore at Fultala in Khulna, reports UNB.

The Deputy Commissioner concerned has already been directed to take necessary step in this regard, an official announcement said here yesterday.

The decision was taken in a coordination meeting of Divisional Commissioners in the conference room of the Ministry of Land with its Secretary Syed Margub Murshed in the chair yesterday.

The meeting emphasised collection of outstanding land-development tax and decided that the officers and employees who will render better service in this drive would be rewarded.

Forty-five officers and employees of Chittagong Division, including Assistant Commissioner (Land), Tahshildars, Assistant Tahshildars and Kanungos were rewarded in recognition of their outstanding performance in collecting outstanding taxes.

Commissioners of Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet attended the meeting.

Directive to check women, child trafficking

A high-level meeting has directed the local administration, police and BDR to take combined measures to check women and child trafficking, reports UNB.

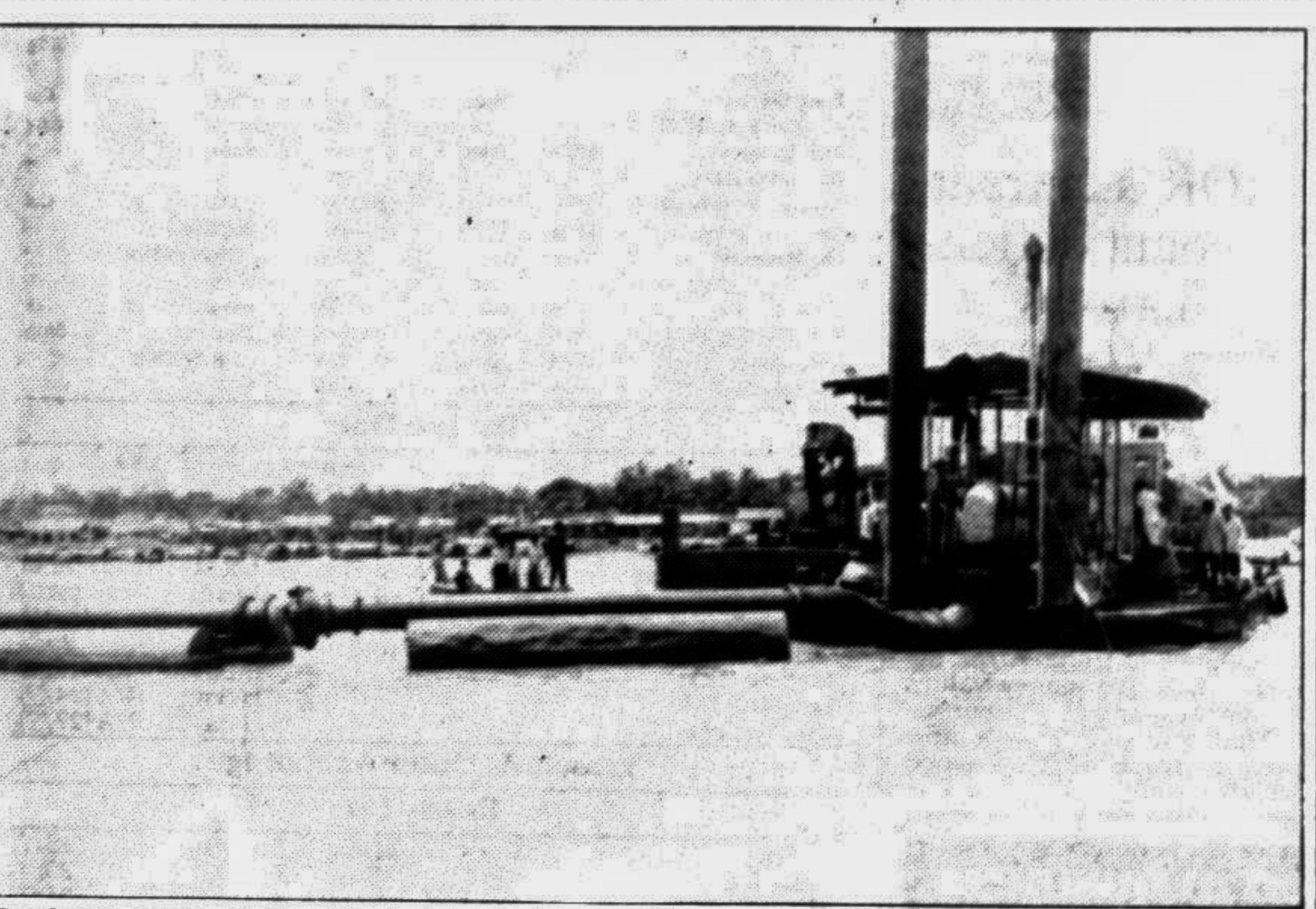
The National Anti-Smuggling Committee gave the directive at a meeting held Sunday with Home Minister Rafiqul Islam in the chair.

The Home Minister instructed the authorities to make the people of bordering areas aware through media for checking cross-border crimes.

Home Secretary Safiur Rahman, Additional Secretary of the Cabinet Division, DG of BDR, Divisional Commissioners and senior officials of different Ministries and Departments were present.

The meeting also directed the authorities to gear up patrol of BDR and law-enforcing agencies in the frontier areas.

It reviewed the progress of implementation of the decisions which were taken in last one year. The Home Minister asked all concerned to identify the problems in implementing the decisions and find out solutions.



Dredging work at the Dhaleshwari river confluence near Mirkadim port in Munshiganj started yesterday.

'Final solution' to CHT problem likely by Sep

RANGAMATI, July 28 : Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Suranjit Sengupta, MP today underscored the need for restoration of peace and solution of the Chittagong Hill Tracts problems for utilisation of the vast resources of the hill districts for the welfare of the people, reports BSS.

Addressing a high-level meeting on law and order situation of the district at the Zilla Parishad auditorium here, Sengupta expressed the hope that a "final solution" to the problem of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is likely to take shape by September next.

In this context, he pointed out that the present government was trying sincerely for a negotiated settlement of the hill tracts problem so that peace is restored in the area and its resources are tapped for the welfare of the people.

He also said that it was the political commitment of the

Awami League before the last election that it would bring a political solution to the problem of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, not a solution by arms. "We are proceeding towards that direction, and we are hopeful that things will take shape shortly," he added.

Sengupta said the issue of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is not and should not be a political issue for any political party. Therefore, all political parties should extend their wholehearted cooperation to bring about a permanent solution to the problem.

He said a section of political parties are trying to linger the problem for their vested interests and to "fish in the troubled water," which is undesirable.

Dwelling on problem, Sengupta said the hill tracts problem is a problem for the nation and it should be resolved at the earliest. He urged all shades of opinion — both tribal and non-tribal — to forget their differ-

ences in the interest of a permanent peace in the hill districts.

Addressing the meeting, Dipankar Talukder MP, who is also a member of the national committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts, said the process of negotiation towards achieving a political solution of the CHT problem is "satisfactory". But he said details of the negotiation should not be made public at this stage for the greater interest of the continuation of the talks.

Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser, a member of the national committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts and Rangamati Municipal chairman Monishapan Dewan, among others, attended the meeting which was presided over by additional district magistrate Abdur Razaque.

Senior district officials also spoke in the meeting which reviewed the overall law and order situation of the district.



Chairman of Bangladesh Institute of Peace (BIP) Abul Kasem Chowdhury (R) presenting a rare set of 25 volumes of Encyclopedia Britannica to Director General of National Museum A Z M Rafique Bhuiyan in the city yesterday.