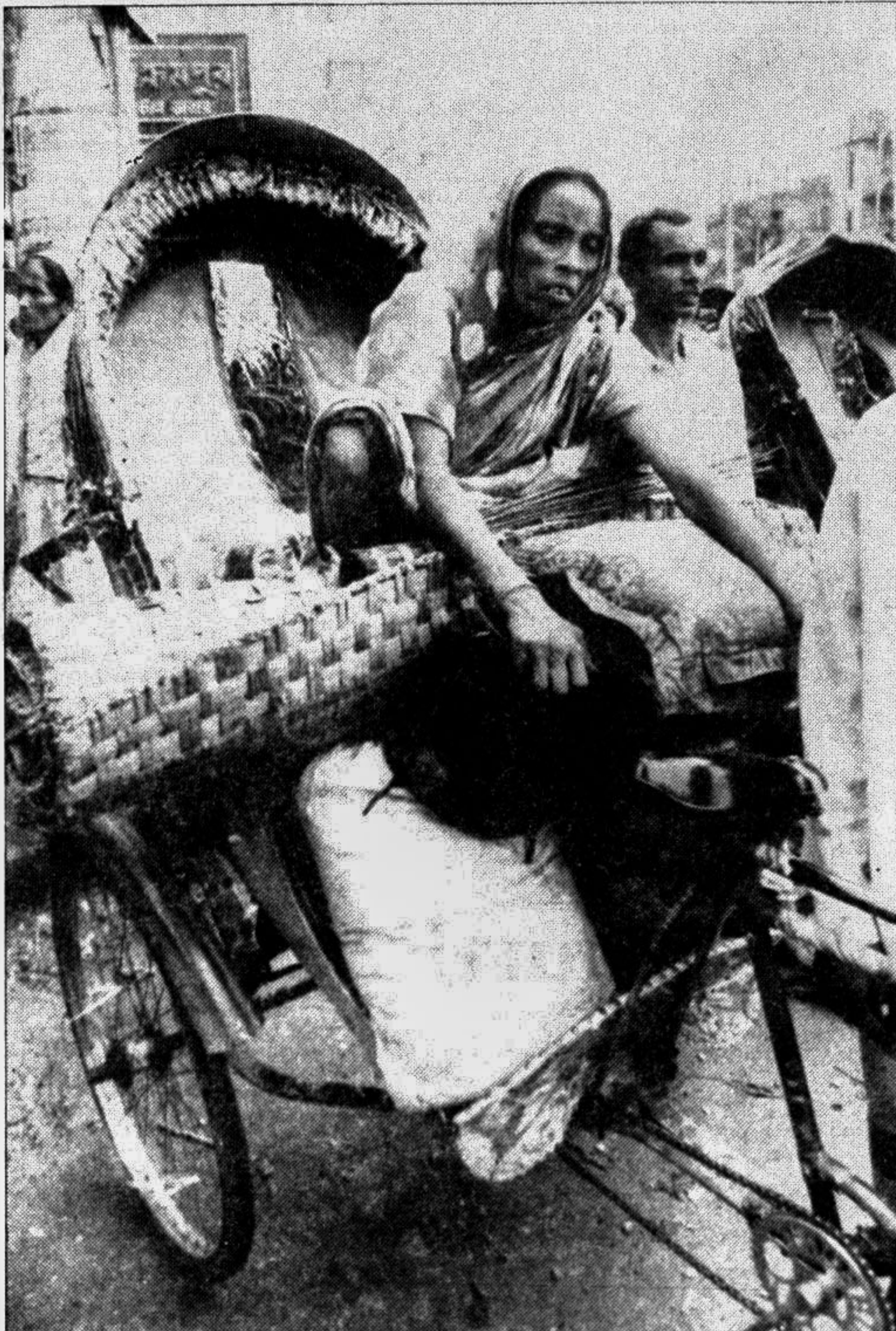


Destitute in Deluge

PHOTO FEATURE ON FLOOD



In search of shelter. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman



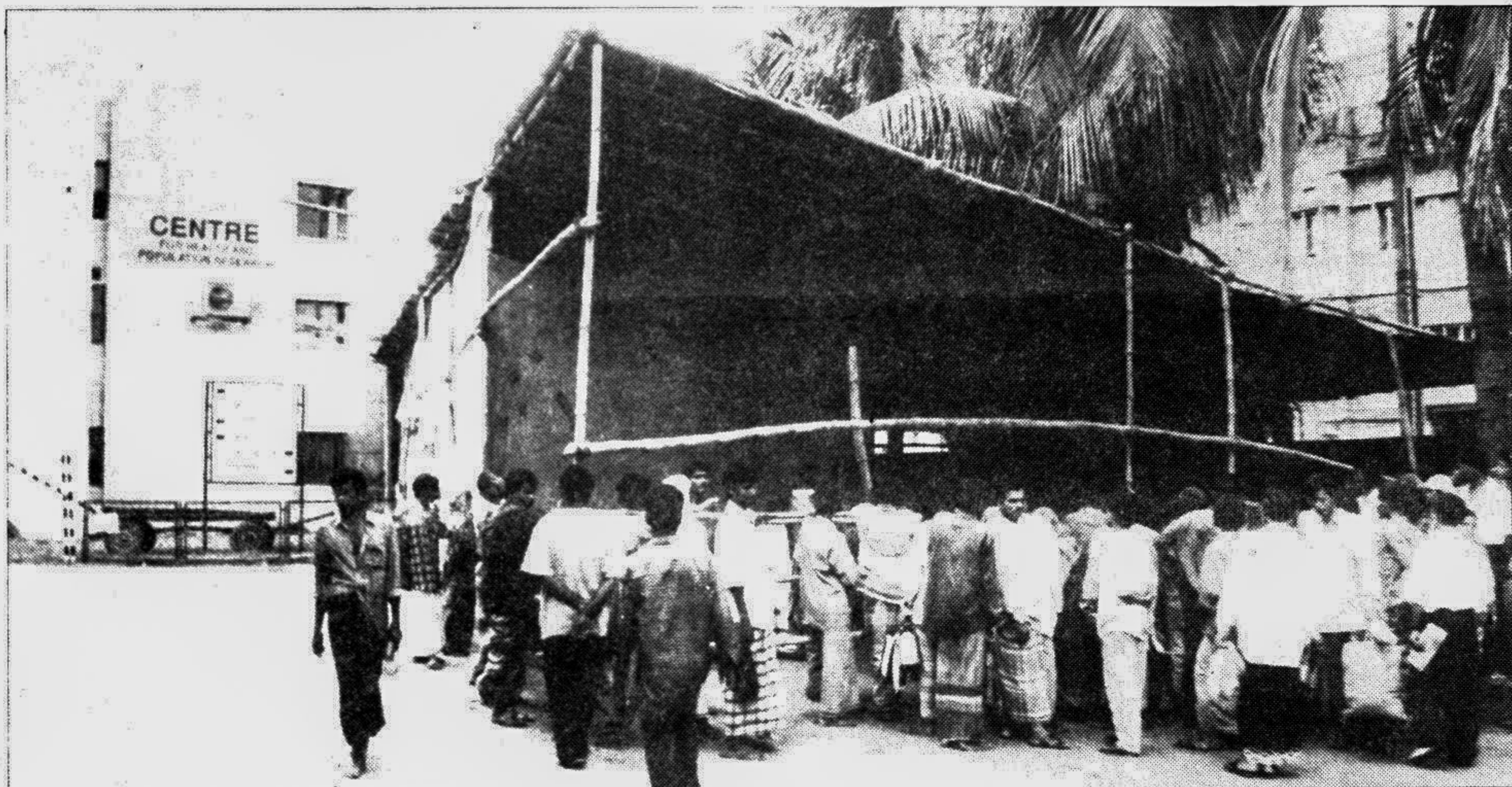
Going to an assured shelter. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman



Wherever there's a dry land, there's their shelter. — Star photo by A K M Mohsin



Waiting for someone to tell where to take shelter. — Star photo by Enamul Haq



Destitution is always accompanied by diseases: ICDDR,B has erected pandal to accommodate the patients. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Bangladesh Offers Attractive JV Prospects

BANGLADESH, of all South Asian countries, offers a low-cost alternative production base for India's firms, opening up promising prospects of joint ventures, according to a study.

The prospective areas for joint ventures suggested by the study, conducted by the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), are textiles and garments, petrochemicals and downstream units like fertiliser, polymers and plastics by using the vast natural gas reserves of Bangladesh, engineering industries (mainly machine parts), steel, cement, marine and food products and other export-based items like gems, jewellery and tea.

Such joint ventures can take advantage of the technological capability and expertise of Indian manufacturers to cater to the local market and also act as an import-substituting industry that would help Bangladesh reduce dependence on imports for various items, including intermediate inputs for export

T.V. Satyanarayanan writes from New Delhi

production, the study said.

The joint ventures could not only be local market-oriented and export-oriented but also take the form of regional projects, says the study by IIFT's Dean B. Bhattacharyya and Fellow Parthapratim Pal.

India and Bangladesh together account for about 20 per cent of the total world population. The two countries form one of the very few unsaturated markets and, if tapped properly, the region could emerge as a new growth centre of the world, says the study.

The report has identified manufacturing and agro-based industries, the service industry, power, energy and other infrastructure as promising fields for investment.

The study has been submitted to the Commerce Ministry against the backdrop of an agreement by South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries to move towards the South Asian

Free Trade Area (SAFTA) by 2001, which would open up new trading frontiers in the region.

Joint ventures would help Bangladesh diversify its production base and also redress the trade imbalance. More foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows would be mutually beneficial to the two countries, the trade ties of which have increased substantially over the years, the study says.

Analysing the possibilities of joint venture investments in specific industries, the study points out that currently readymade garment units in Bangladesh spend approximately 65 per cent of the total export earnings on bringing in fabrics from abroad.

The projected demand gap in 1999-2000 for yarn is 468 million kg and for grey fabric 3.710 million metres. High quality raw materials for this industry are easily available in India and Indian firms possess sufficient technical expertise and

experience in this field, the study notes.

Similarly, Bangladesh is rapidly emerging as an important exporter of leather goods. The country has a big livestock base for this industry and its annual output of hides and skins is 150 million sq feet. Indian leather exporting units can use Bangladesh as a low-cost production base for exporting of value added items such as garments, gloves, shoes and wallets.

Endowed with a long coastline and a large number of water bodies, Bangladesh also has enormous potential for joint ventures in frozen foods and fisheries. Indian scientists have made substantial progress in aquaculture and can provide technical assistance to Bangladesh if joint ventures are established, the study says.

The potential in the fields of jute goods and other agro-based industries are equally impressive, according to the IIFT.

—India Abroad News Service

Germany Wants More Foreign Students

GERMANY is attempting to attract more foreign students and researchers to its universities and research establishments. Manfred Osten, General Secretary of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) in Bonn, notes that particular emphasis is placed on offering advanced training facilities to high-calibre research scientists. The foundation provides a variety of scholarships to support the most gifted young scientists in all fields around the world.

In all, more than 2,000 young academics are being sponsored — a two per cent increase on 1997 and most of them are natural scientists. Eighty per cent of the scholarship winners chose to undertake their research projects at German universities, the largest group being 145 researchers from China. Some 17,000 "Humboldtians" who spent part of their early careers in Germany are currently engaged in teaching and research throughout the world. New

scholarship applications from China led the field, followed by India.

A special "Roman Herzog Scholarship Programme" (named for the German Federal President) concentrates on sponsoring further education for law and economics specialists from eastern Europe, funded by German business and industry. By lending his name to the programme, President Herzog underlined the political dimension of sponsorship and its underlying aim to speed up the forging of links between the European Union (EU) and its neighbours. Many former "Humboldtians" already serve as constitutional court justices in Poland, the Czech Republic or Hungary.

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) also finances both long- and lesser-term periods of study by German and foreign lecturers and students in their respective counterpart countries. DAAD's president Theodor Berchem stresses the German business

world's high regard for young individuals who set out on their own initiative to gather personal experience both at home and abroad. "Our industry needs a high level of multicultural experience," notes the Federation of German Industries (BDI).

Jürgen Riitters, the federal minister responsible for education, cooperating with the DAAD, is actively promoting "externally oriented" courses of study at universities in the Federal Republic of Germany in an effort to enhance their attractiveness for students from abroad. The first 13 of these began in the winter semester of 1997. Lectures are bilingual and at least 50 per cent of the students must come from outside Germany. The DAAD also provides funding for "Courses of Study for Foreign Bachelors" at German higher learning institutions — that is, for academics who have already obtained initial qualifications in their home countries. Additionally, the intention is that foreign guest students sign on for 30-

month courses enabling them to gain either a German diploma or a Masters degree.

Experience has shown that, for many foreigners, the study of German as a foreign language is a major obstacle. DAAD is currently planning a new language test to enable candidates to be placed in language proficiency categories. Two thirds of the 20 million people learning German around the world live in central and eastern Europe. Germany has opened 13 new Goethe Institutes in these regions since this country was reunited.

In response to demand, special emphasis is currently placed on German external cultural policy. As regards Germany's ties with its West European neighbours, Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel says they have long enjoyed a "self-supporting network of cultural relations" requiring minimum government assistance.

—IN-Press

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by Jim Davis



JAN FLEMING'S James Bond DRAWING BY HORAK

