

Political instability, floods blamed for decline in export earning

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of the business community observed that the political instability and prolonged floods in the country are the main reasons for which the export target could not be achieved.

Rather export earning from major ten sectors has declined and the total earning fell short of target by 9.03 per cent during the first half of the current fiscal.

Exchanging views with high government officials at the 25th meeting of the task force on export business yesterday, the business leaders and the declining trend might continue if the political situation did not improve.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed chaired the meeting while FBCCI president Abdul Awal Mintoo, BKMEA, president Monjurul Huq, Bangladesh Frozen Foods Association vice-president Ferdous Alam, Bangladesh Textile Mills Association president Salman F Rahman spoke on the occasion. The meeting was held at the Commerce ministry's conference room.

Meeting sources said the BKMEA president Manjurul Huq demanded 25 per cent cash incentives against knitwear export as about 40 per cent

knitwear factories are facing closure — an effect of the prolonged flood.

The business community appraised the minister of the problems they are facing due to political instability and natural calamities. Tofail sought specific suggestions from the businessmen and exporters how the government could help them in overcoming the present situation.

Export earning comparison shows that ten major sectors earned less during the first half of the current fiscal year than that of the corresponding period of last fiscal.

Frozen foods export earning declined by 15.59 per cent, agri products by 40 per cent, raw jute by 52 per cent petroleum by-product by 58 per cent, chemical products by 6.52 per cent, leather by 15.23 per cent, jute goods by 4.14 per cent, handicrafts by 2.12 per cent, and engineering products export earning by 26.27 per cent.

The total export earning however, fell by 1.50 per cent compared to the earning of previous year's corresponding period. The earning during July to December '98 stood at 2560.71 million US dollar as against 2599 million dollar last year.

JS told

Govt earns Tk 637cr from shrimp export in July-Dec '98

The government earned Tk 637 crore from the export of 10,577 metric tons of frozen shrimps in six months from July-December, 1998, the Fisheries and Livestock Minister told parliament yesterday, reports UNB.

Replying to a question from Master Majibur Rahman (AL-Shariatpur), Abdur Rab said income from export of 11,132 metric tons of frozen shrimps was Tk 766 crore during the same period in the previous year.

Responding to a supplementary question, he said the European countries put restriction on the import of shrimps because of low quality, the reason behind less export last year.

But the volume of export has gone up after the EU gave the clearance to 21 firms for export, he added.

The Fisheries Minister also

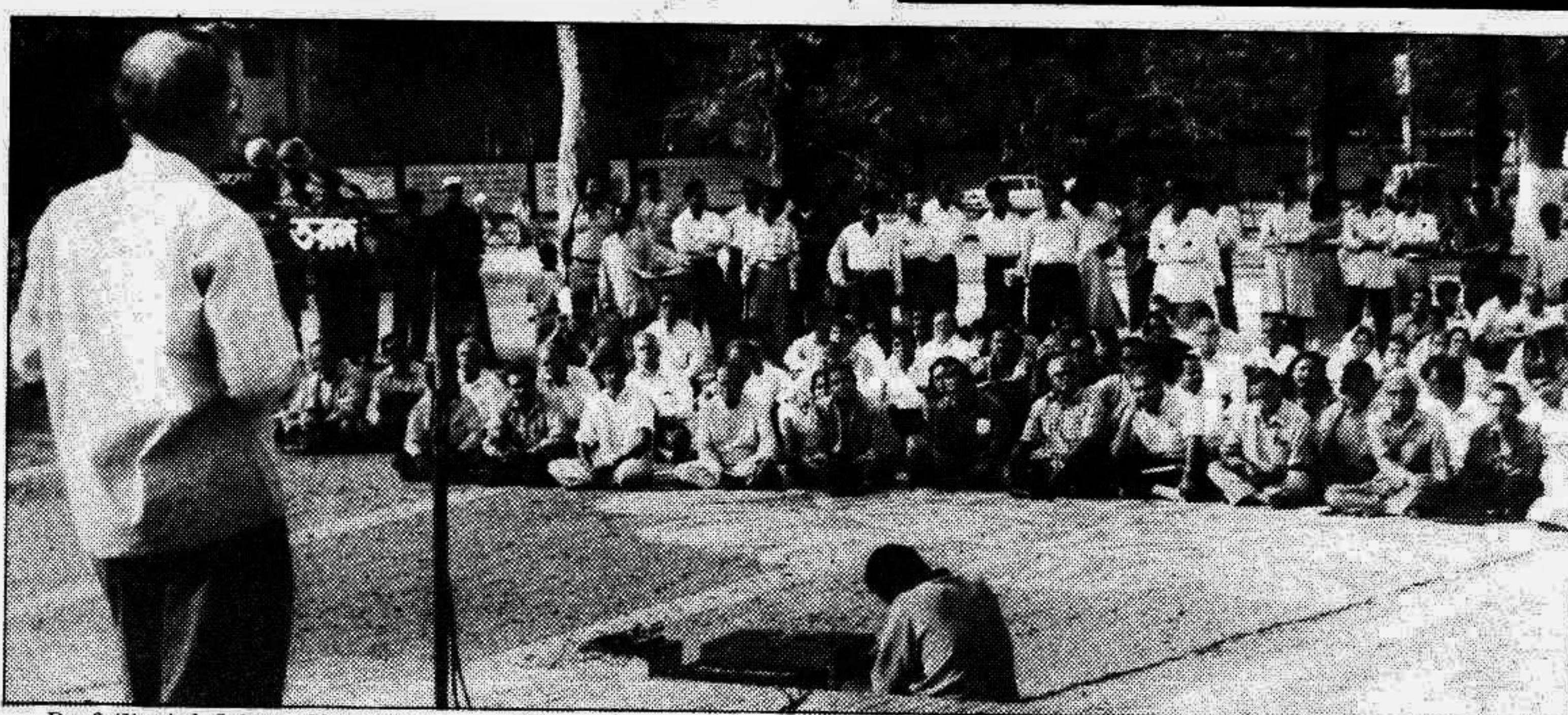
said the government has no plan at the moment to issue any licence for new trawler to catch fish in the deep sea.

In reply to Alhaj Advocate Khairul Enam (BNP-Laxmipur), he said at present, annual procurement of fish from sea is about 270,000 metric tons. In 1997-98, 3.91 per cent of the total catch of fish was exported fetching Tk 352 crore.

The Minister told Mohammad Fazlul Azim (BNP-Noakhali) that the export of fish in 1997-98 was 30,158 metric tons.

The country earned Tk 986.09 crore from June to December 1998, which was 65 per cent of the target fixed for 1998-99 fiscal, he added.

Replying to Jafrul Islam Chowdhury (BNP-Chittagong), Rab said the country has an annual deficit of five lakh metric tons of fish.



Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury speaking at a condolence meeting in memory of Dr Ahmed Sharif at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday. — Star photo

2nd Nat'l Children Drama Festival begins today

The Second National Children and Juvenile Drama Festival begins in the city today, reports BSS.

A total of 46 drama groups from different parts of the country will present one drama each in the 16-day long festival. It is to be concluded on March 19.

Bangladesh Shikshak Academy is organising the festival in collaboration with People's Theatre Association, The First National Children and Juvenile Drama Festival was held in 1997.

Addressing a press conference at the conference room of the academy, Director General Azad Rahman said the objective of the festival is to encourage the children and the juveniles for their more participation in drama activities and improve the quality through fair competition.

State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader will inaugurate the festival at the Central Public Library auditorium at 5 pm. A children's rally will be held at 3 pm from Central Public Library to Dhaka University Teachers-Students Centre.

One drama will be staged on the first day while three dramas will be staged every other day at 4-30, 6-00 and 7-30 pm respectively. All the shows will remain open to all, the organisers said.

Director of Drama Department of the academy S M Mohsin said around 2000 children and juvenile artists will participate in the festival.

New lamp brings rays of hope for skin cancer sufferers

Skin cancer sufferers have been offered fresh hope, thanks to a revolutionary treatment lamp invented by a British scientist, reports UNB.

The photodynamic therapy lamp is said to be at least as effective as conventional treatments but is quicker, cheaper, less painful and easier to use, according to a new report.

The brainchild of Dr Colin Whitehurst from Manchester, north-west England, it can be used to treat non-life-threatening skin cancers that make up 95 per cent of the 50,000 new cases in the United Kingdom each year.

Skin cancer is the most widespread of all cancers and the number of sufferers is increasing at the fastest rate. Dr Whitehurst, 38, is based at one of Europe's leading cancer hospitals, the Christie, and took more than five years to develop the lamp, said the London Press Service report.

The report quoted Dr Whitehurst as saying that the lamp has been 'put through various tests at Christie's and the treatment has now been developed into quite a fine art.'

He said: 'We are one of the main treatment centres for

skin cancer patients in the country and where, traditionally, we would use radiotherapy or chemotherapy, we now use photodynamic therapy (PDT). It is a unique and remarkable step forward and has been extremely successful.'

The lamp is used in conjunction with a light-sensitive cream applied to cancerous areas of skin several hours before treatment. The cream contains a naturally occurring chemical called 5-ALA (or aminolevulinic) which the body is programmed to convert into protoporphyrin.

Normally it would be harmlessly filtered out of the body. But when light from the PDT lamp, similar to a laser beam, is shone on the treated area, the protoporphyrin kills cancerous cells. Healthy cells are killed as well but Dr Whitehurst's PDT treatment means they are quickly replaced.

Dr Whitehurst added: 'That's the amazing thing. With traditional treatments the skin tissue would scar over but this is a natural treatment. The body does not try to protect itself by scarring; it forms a crust and under that it goes to work rebuilding the skin until it's as good as new. With some patients

who have come back for check-ups we have had to refer to photos to check where the cancerous areas of skin were.'

Also unlike conventional treatments, Dr Whitehurst's device means skin cancer sufferers can attend hospital as day patients, require no injections or surgery and need far fewer sessions to achieve results. It is also possible to treat thicker lesions than before.

The cost per patient is far lower, with the cream costing around 10 pounds sterling and the lamps between eight and ten thousand pounds. Lasers used in conventional treatment cost up to 150,000 pounds each.

'In fact, cost was the main driving force,' Dr Whitehurst said. 'With the number of sufferers ever increasing the need for cheap, effective treatment is paramount. Eventually, with these lamps PDT therapy could be offered at family surgeries or nurses at special clinics.'

Experts hope that after further research, the lamp can even be used in areas including gynaecological and bowel cancers and on other skin problems such as eczema, warts and 'port-wine' stains, the LPS report added.

Thailand to issue multiple visas to Bangladeshis

Thai embassy in Dhaka will issue multiple visas to the Bangladeshi businessmen to promote bilateral trade among these two friendly countries, reports BSS.

Thai ambassador to Bangladesh, Pithaya Pookaman, said this at a meeting between the visiting Thai Trade Mission and the representatives of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI).

Earlier FBCCI requested the Thai government to relax the visa formalities for businessmen and introduce multiple visas with one or two years validity to facilitate regular and frequent business visits by Bangladeshi businessmen to Thailand.

The meeting also decided to organise a trade fair in Bangkok as soon as possible to ensure and facilitate expansion of trade and Thai investment in the country.

The FBCCI representatives and the country's leading businessmen in the meeting viewed that Thailand might hire po-

tential human resources from Bangladesh including engineers and science graduates.

Mentioning the huge trade imbalance between Thailand and Bangladesh, the FBCCI leaders said Thai investment could also help increase exports of Bangladesh to other countries.

Bangladesh in 1997-98 imported Thai goods worth US \$107.03 million against exports worth US\$16.51 million to that country. This has left a trade deficit of US\$90.52 million. M A Munim, Vice President of the FBCCI, pointed out.

In reply to a question on trade imbalance, the head of the 16-member Thai delegation Pisit Kijviriyia said that the Thai business community was showing increasing interest in enhancing trade and investment cooperation with Bangladesh.

The FBCCI Vice-President, M A Munim, led the Bangladeshi side along with Sharif M Alzal Hussain, Golam Dastagir Gazi and Abdul Haque.

Weather

Dry weather likely

Weather is likely to remain dry across the country in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports APB.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged during the period over the country. Met Office forecast said adding that there would be little change in the subsequent two days.

Country's highest temperature at 33.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and the lowest 10.8 degrees at Srimangal.

The sun sets today at 6:02 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:17 am. Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.7	15.8	59	33
Chittagong	31.4	17.0	59	53
Rajshahi	31.4	13.5	58	51
Khulna	31.7	14.6	62	45
Barisal	30.7	15.6	57	44
Sylhet	33.4	15.5	58	40
Cox's Bazar	32.5	19.0	48	59



Dhaka Sheraton Hotel extended a warm welcome to Turkish President Seyyid Demirel during the D-8 Summit. San Amal, General Manager of the hotel, is seen escorting President Demirel.

Now prescription software for physicians

Prodigy, a software developed by Newcastle University, north-east England, is the world's first national computerised prescribing system for family doctors (GPs), reports UNB.

During a consultation, the doctor types the patient's diagnosis on the computer and Prodigy will suggest an appropriate medicine and course of treatment.

According to a report received in the city, all recommended treatments have been validated by a national panel and chosen on the basis of clinical effectiveness and safety.

More than 900 GPs have taken part in the five-year evaluation trials. Prodigy is being provided free to GPs in the United Kingdom, said the London Press Service report.

The computerised system is not restricted to drug prescribing, but deals with a full range of management issues, including referral or investigation, doctor-patient shared advice screens and patient information leaflets.

Launching the software, UK's Health Minister Lady Hayman said: 'It brings together two of the government's aims for developing the National Health Service.'

'It is at the cutting edge of modern technology offering a world-first computerised, GP-prescribing support system to GPs across the country. It also delivers, at the touch of a button, the latest practical clinical guidance.'

GPs still have total choice in what to prescribe their patients.

but Prodigy will help to ensure consistent, high-quality standards in prescribing.

'Not only do GPs get the most up-to-date advice but they can discuss it with their patients while it is on the screen. The information leaflets can be printed on the spot for the patient to take home,' said Lady Hayman.

She added: 'In time it will provide swift means of getting across emergency medical messages to GPs plus information about new drugs, contra-indications and safety alerts.'

Art exhibition of Rashid Chy concludes

By Staff Correspondent

An art exhibition of tapestry, drawings, and paintings of Rashid Chowdhury held at the Nandan Gallery, Visva Bharati recently, says a press release.

The three-day exhibition held from February 21 to 23 was inaugurated by Prof Riten Mazumder. Eminent art personalities including K R Subramaniam, Shuvan Shom, Jogen Chowdhury, art historian Kala Pranab Ranjan Roy, and Principal Kala Bhavan artist Jhanak Jhanakar Narzary were present.

The art exhibition was jointly sponsored by Kala Bhavan and Zulfikar Chowdhury, youngest brother of Rashid Chowdhury.

Int'l Women's Day March 8

The International Women's Day will be observed in the country as elsewhere in the world on March 8, reports APB.

The theme of the day this year is 'National Commitment to Eradicate Violence against Women'.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs will organise a discussion on the occasion at Bangladesh Shiksha Academy auditorium on the day.

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury will attend the function as chief guest while State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Prof Zinatunnesa Talukder will chair the discussion meeting.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Children and Women Affairs Dr MS Akbar, the Canadian High Commissioner in Bangladesh, and resident representative of UNDP and country representative of UNICEF will also attend the function as special guests.

Attack on car of Ershad condemned

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has condemned the attack on the car and house of JP chairman H M Ershad in Rangpur on Tuesday and demanded immediate arrest of those responsible for it, reports UNB.

In a statement yesterday, he blamed 'Awami goons' for the attack and said the ruling party men are making attacks on their opponents in the name of occupying streets.

Describing Awami League as an intolerant and anti-democratic party, he said the government has indulged in conspiracy to establish Bakshal rule destroying the country's democratic institutions, including the Election Commission.

Obituary

CHITTAGONG, Mar 3: Renowned educationist Principal Rashid Ahmad died of a massive heart attack at a city clinic here last night, family sources said. He was 82, reports BSS.

Rashid Ahmad left his wife, four daughters, four sons and a large number of relatives behind to mourn his death.

His *naim-e-janaza* will be held after Asr prayers today and he will be buried at Bakolia Rahattarpol graveyard in the city.

Moitree Sangha committee formed

An executive committee of the Moitree Sangha, Kalyan Sangha, a voluntary socio-cultural youth organisation, was formed recently, says a press release.

Naimul Haq, Lion Sheikh Fazlur Rahman Bakul and Lion Dilip Kumar Das are the new president, secretary general and finance secretary respectively of the organisation for the period 1998-2001. Besides, a new advisory committee was also formed. A reception was also accorded to the new office bearers of the Sangha. Besides, a 25-member committee was also formed.

He said he had lodged several complaints about the violence, cancellation of a polling centre at M C Jubilee School the night before the election, forcing of his polling agents out from 12 centres, and assaults on a commissioner candidate.

All these were not only ignored but my agents and workers and supporters are being harassed even after the election, they have been implicated in different cases and given with death threats', Biswas said in a statement.

Cultural show at Oxford Int'l School

The students of Oxford Int'l School performed Sonnets and Cantatas on the third day of their annual Cultural Week, says a press release.

Further certificates of merit were distributed among them. National Professor Kabir Chowdhury who was the chief guest at the programme, said in his speech that students should know more about their own culture and heritage, specially about the spirit of the Language Movement of '52 and the Liberation War.

Zikr mahfil

The monthly *zikr mahfil* will be held today after Magrib prayers at Khanakaya Toazia, 27 Siddheshwar Road in the city, says a press release.

Peer of Dariapur Sharif, Hazrat Moulana Shah Sufi Ahaj Abul Hasan Muhammad Abdul Quaiyum, will conduct the *zikr mahfil*.

20,000 low-cost houses to be built in '99

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria yesterday said the government has taken a Tk 40 crore credit programme for building houses for the poor and low income group under which some 20,000 houses are expected to be constructed by the end of the current year, reports BSS.

'There are institutional facilities for building houses for middle and higher middle class people, but this initiative is the first of its kind in the country taken for the poor and lower middle income groups,' the minister said at a meeting with representatives of voluntary organisations.

A total of 30 NGOs have been entrusted with the responsibilities of executing the programme, under which Tk 20.30 crore has already been disbursed to construct 10,200 houses.

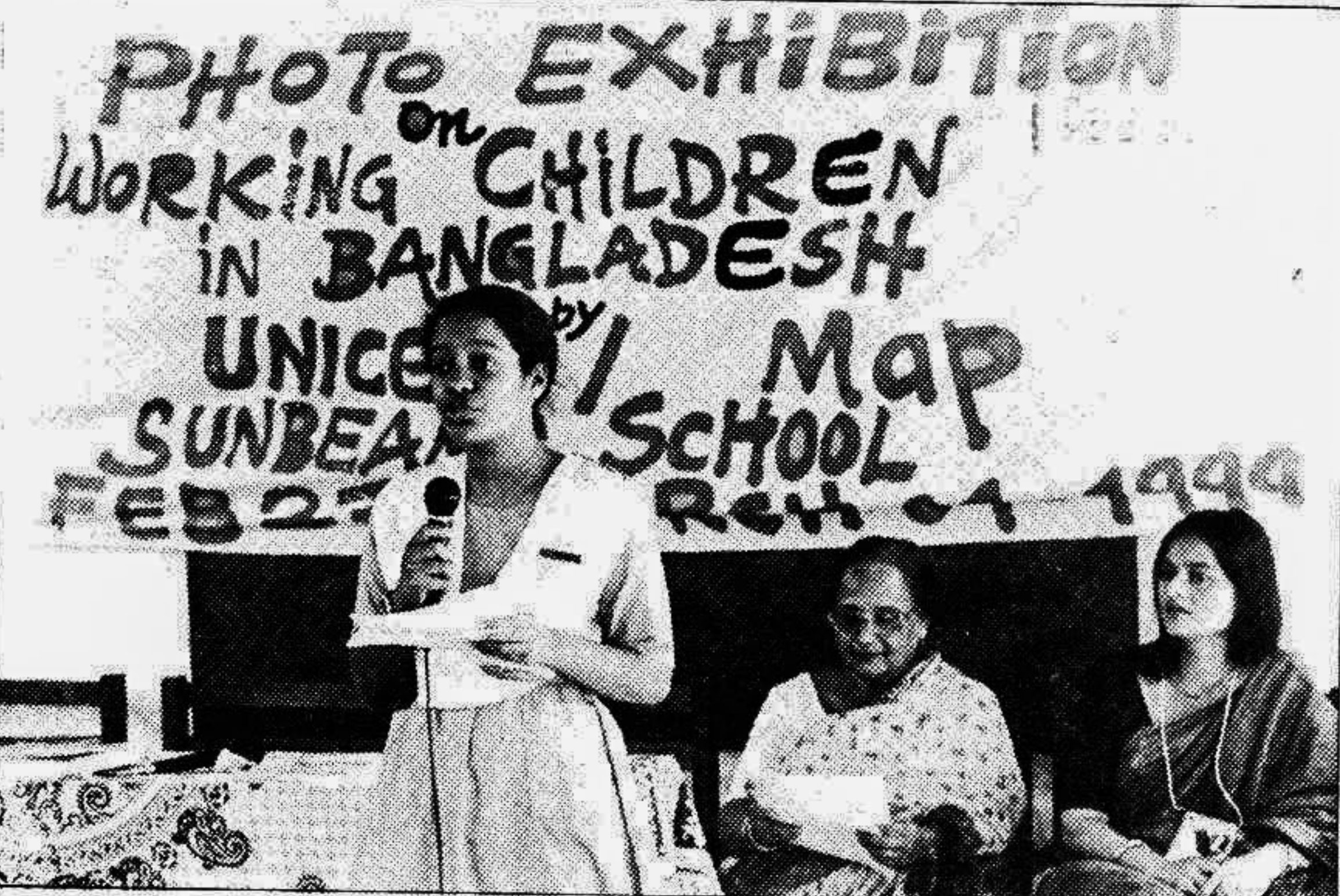
The minister said the fund is a rotating capital which could be used for building more house.

Minister tells JS 3 dredgers being procured

State Minister for Shipping and Iwta Mofazzal Hossain Maya yesterday said that the government has taken a project for procuring three dredgers and one booster pump to strengthen the present fleet of dredgers to maintain navigability of riverine routes, reports BSS.

Making a statement to call attention notice by Treasury Bench member Master Mujibur Rahman, the minister said the present dredging fleet comprise of only eight dredgers which were procured before 1975. He said despite urgent need of more dredgers to maintain navigability of riverine routes, no dredgers were procured after 1975.

Maya said BIWTA, the organisation entrusted with the responsibility of dredging and maintaining navigability of rivers has taken extensive plan for river dredging.



A discussion session on working children in Bangladesh was held at Sunbeams School recently as part of a photo exhibition on child labour in the country. The exhibition has been arranged by UNICEF to create awareness among the children and will be held throughout the month of March at Scholastica School, Oxford Int'l School and Sunbeams School in the city. The exhibition will also travel to Chittagong.

Denmark to help develop fisheries sector

The government of Denmark has assured of help in developing the fisheries and livestock sector of Bangladesh, reports UNB.

The Danish government is also keen to provide assistance for expanding aquaculture in haor-bar areas of the country, especially in Barisal, Chittagong, Sunamganj, Sylhet and Netrokona districts.

This was expressed by Danish Charge de Affaires in Bangladesh Finn Thilsted, and Deputy Mission Chief Ove Fritz Larsen, at a meeting with Fisheries and Livestock Minister A S M Rab in the city yesterday.

During the meeting, the minister sought Danish cooperation in setting up of small and medium dairy industries and extending aquaculture in 30 thanas of seven districts in Chittagong and southern parts of the country.

He told them that Bangladesh would also welcome their cooperation in expansion of cultivation of 60 types of grass invented by the Livestock Research Institute.

Danish officials also stressed on export of finished products of fisheries and livestock sector and taking up of fisheries development projects in three hill districts.

Referring to the role of NGOs, Rab said a massive change could be brought in fisheries and livestock sector with necessary cooperation.

He also sought cooperation of Danish government to build up 'fisheries village'.

The meeting was told that the progress of Danish funded three fisheries and livestock projects in Mymensingh, Patuakhali and Noakhali district is satisfactory. Denmark is providing Tk 106 crore for these projects.

New Pro-VC of USTC

Prof Lutfor Rahman has joined the University of Science and Technology, Chittagong (USTC) as Pro-Vice Chancellor, reports UNB.

In addition to his duty, he will also act as a professor of Computer Science.

Prof Rahman is basically a physicist and has extensive experience in administration in UNESCO and other international organisations.

USTC proposes to introduce courses in Computer Science under the guidance and supervision of Prof Rahman.

PM greets new Nigerian President

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday felicitated General Olusegun Obasanjo for his election as new president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, reports UNB.

In a message sent to General Obasanjo, the Prime Minister said, 'Under your able leadership, democracy and prosperity will further accelerate in your country.'

She expressed the hope the existing relations between the two friendly countries will further be strengthened in the coming years for the mutual benefit of the two peoples.

Reporter mugged

Azabar Ali Sarkar, a staff reporter of the Daily Bangla Bazar Patrika, was robbed of his money, wrist watch and gold rings and Paikpara under Mirpur thana at midnight yesterday, reports BSS.

Police said a group of muggers stopped the journalist at gunpoint and also assaulted him and snatched the key of his motorcycle.



Three shops in the Baitul Mukarram electronics market were gutted in a fire on Tuesday night. — Star photo