

Outgoing French envoy calls on President

The outgoing ambassador of France to Bangladesh Mrs Renee Veyret made a farewell call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday, reports BSS.

President Shahabuddin said Bangladesh and France enjoyed excellent bilateral relations which had developed over the years.

He appreciated the valuable contribution of the ambassador in promoting bilateral relations, especially in the field of trade and culture.

He recalled with gratitude the support of the people of France during the Liberation War of Bangladesh and said that Dhaka considered France as its important development and trade partner.

The President expressed the view that trade flows between the two countries had increased significantly.

He wished her good health and a happy life.

Mrs Veyret thanked the President for receiving her.

She also thanked the President, the government and the people of Bangladesh for extending sincere cooperation in the discharge of her duties during her tenure.

She said that she was going home with sweet memories of the warm hospitality of the people of Bangladesh.

Man mugged of Tk one lakh at Narayanganj

By Staff Correspondent

Muggers snatched Tk one lakh in cash from a businessman at Chashara in Narayanganj yesterday.

The injured was identified as Anisur Rahman, 52, a resident of Chashara under Fatullah thana, hospital sources said. Anisur was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with stab wounds on his chest.

The incident took place while Anisur was returning home on foot from Chashara Bazar after drawing the cash from a bank at about 10:30 am, sources said.

Wielding knives the gang of four muggers intercepted Anisur and asked him to hand over the cash to them. Following refusal of the businessman the gang stabbed him on his chest and fled with the bag, sources said.

Mohakal Natya Sampradaya completes 16 years

Mohakal Natya Sampradaya, a theatre group, has celebrated the 16th anniversary of its foundation in the city in a befitting manner, a press release said, reports BSS.

A discussion and a cultural function were held at Dhaka University Central Student Union building on Wednesday marking the anniversary.

Presided over by Saiful Islam Mahmood, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Zahid Hasan, Afzal Husain, Mahbubur Rahman, Lutfor Rahman, Nahid Hasan, Shahnewas and M A Azad.

Seminar on computers held at DU

By DU Correspondent

A seminar on "Application and Influence of Computer: 21st Century" was held at the Shamsunnahar Hall of Dhaka University yesterday afternoon.

Baidul Kader, State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs was present at the programme as the chief guest and inaugurated computer training course at the hall.

Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor of the university and hall provost Sultana Shafee were present at the occasion as special guests.

Organised by the hall unit of Dhaka University Students' Computer Association (DUSCA), the programme was also addressed, among others, by Prof Md Lutfur Rahman, Dr Md Alamgir Hossain, Bahadur Bepari, Khairuzzaman Chowdhury, Uzzal Acharjee and Chandana Das.

Seminar on accountability of newspaper held

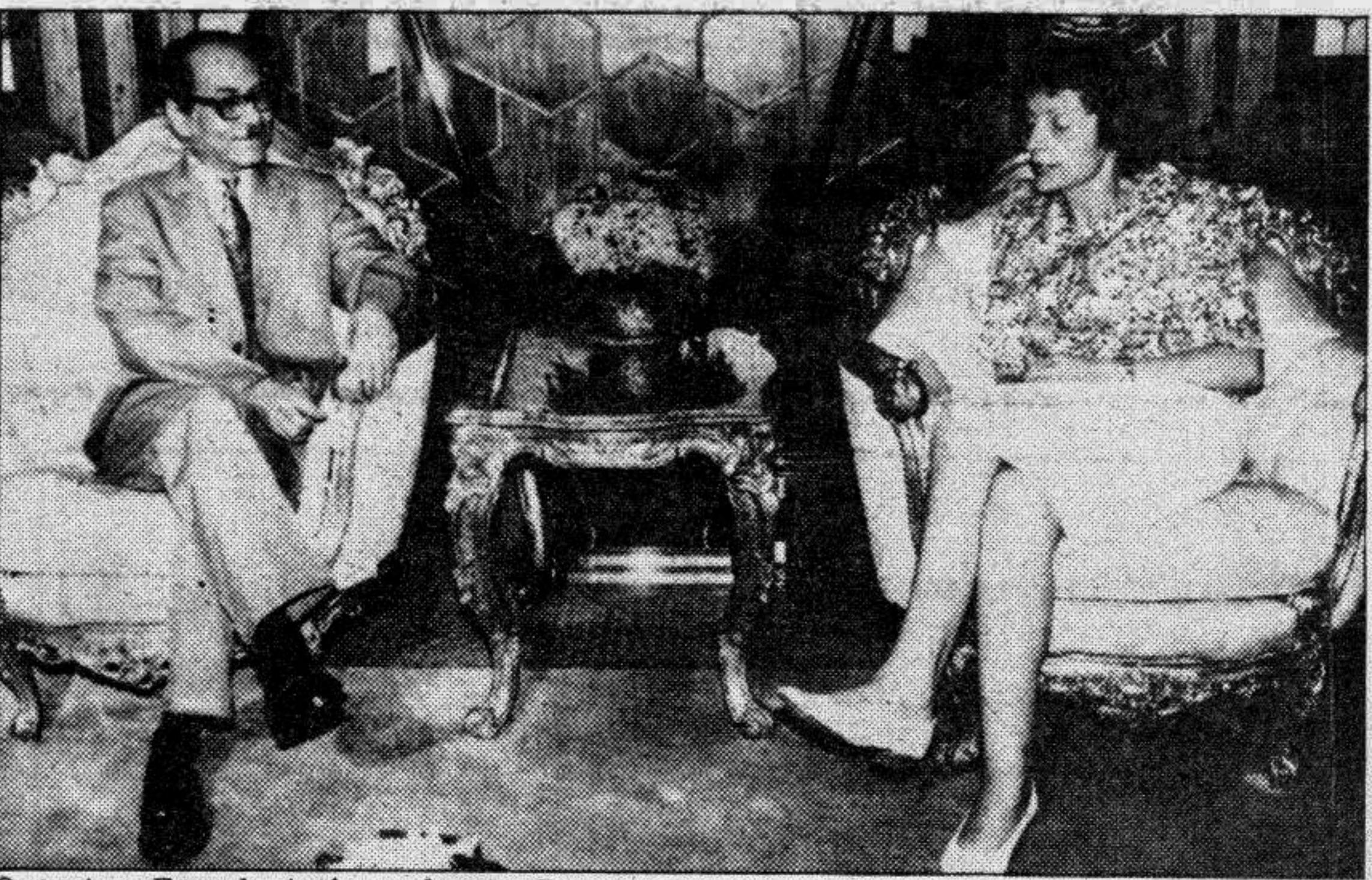
Speakers at a seminar on accountability of newspapers yesterday emphasised on the need for ensuring freedom of the press to protest the right to information of people and to institutionalise democracy in the country, reports BSS.

Presided over by the Chairman of Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) Advocate Gaziul Haque, it was also addressed by Dr Kamal Hossain, A B M Musa, Rashed Khan Menon, Rahat Khan, AMM Muzzafar, Mohiuddin Ahmed, MR Akther Mukul, Hasan Shahriar, Santosh Gupta, Motiur Rahman Chowdhury, Kamal Lohani, Justice Habibur Rahman Khan and Justice K M Sobhan.

The key-note paper was presented by Dhaka Bureau Chief of Associated Press Farid Hossain and moderated by Muhammad Jahangir. PIB Director General Dr Sheikh Abdus Salam gave the address of welcome.

Dr Kamal said press should be free except during the wartime. He said crisis of enforcement of law is much deeper than the crisis of law and Sections 501, 502 and 503 of Bangladesh Penal Code should be repealed as those were being misused by the parties concerned.

ABM Musa said steps should be taken to stop the misuse of those sections.



Outgoing French Ambassador in Bangladesh Renee Veyret made a farewell call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

— PID photo

WFP launches VGD programme for 5 lakh poor women

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Prof Zinnatun Nessa Talukder in the city yesterday formally made the launching ceremony of the new 18-month cycle of the Vulnerable Groups Development (VGD) programme saying it will help the poor women to come out of the vicious circle of extreme poverty, reports BSS.

She said the government has taken various steps to make the programme more development oriented. In this context, she also lauded the WFP for its food assistance provided to the government for implementation of various poverty alleviation programmes.

Chaired by Secretary of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs the function was attended by representative of the World Food Programme and the Executive Director of BRAC.

This new cycle, which started on July 1 will provide food assistance to about 500,000 poor, destitute women all over the country. This is the largest poverty alleviation programme assisted by the World Food Programme (WFP) across the world, a WFP press release said.

The State Minister, in her address, emphasised the important role played by the VGD programme in helping the poor women to come out of extreme poverty. She mentioned various

steps taken by the government in making the programme more development oriented.

Prof Zinnatun Nessa also thanked WFP for the food assistance provided to the government for implementation of various poverty alleviation programmes.

Joint Chief of Economic Relations Department (ERD), a number of presentations were made focusing on new initiatives of the VGD programme. Those who made the presentations include Director General of the Department of Women Affairs, Director General of Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation, Deputy Project Director of Bangladesh Integrated Nutrition Project, Deputy Executive Director of BRAC and Khatun Vonder Mosel, Head of VGD Section.

The VGD programme provides food assistance of 30 kg of wheat to the poor women over a period of 18 months. The beneficiaries will also receive training in income-generating activities, awareness raising on legal rights, health and nutrition issues and credit. After the 18-month food support period, women will become members of NGOs and thereby will get further support to improve their socio-economic condition in a sustainable way.

Started in 1975 as a relief intervention, the programme has shifted its focus over the course of the last years from relief to development. The launching ceremony highlighted its development orientation, its focus and support to the ultra-poor. A total of 8,336,000 poor women received food assistance since 1974 under this programme.

In a discussion session chaired by AKM Khairul Alam,



Employees in the Secretariat brought out a procession on the Secretariat premises in support of their various demands yesterday.

— Star photo

Juveniles and youths speak up about their problems

Juveniles and youths between the age group of 12 and 20 yesterday spoke up about the challenges they face in everyday life. They also asked different sections of society as to why they were being deprived of their rights and wanted to know about steps taken by the government to solve the problems, reports UNB.

Why does weddings of girls take place under the age group of 18 despite legal bar ... why is dowry demanded at weddings?" asked a girl.

Salma Akhtar was among some 150 who, from different parts of the country, joined a daylong workshop at LGED Bhaban in the capital to tell and share their stories.

They raised questions regarding use of juveniles and youths for serving the interest of the politicians, opportunity for further education after class V, police action against street children, child rape and trafficking.

Mozaffar Ahmed of Dhaka University, Employers Union President Rokeya Rahman, chief of education in UNICEF James Jenny and acid survivor Bina Akhtar were among the panelists who participated.

The speakers advised the juveniles and youths to be conscious about their rights and make others aware them as well to face the challenges together.

They also stressed the need for considering the young people's views and thoughts to solve their problems.

"Youths can think on a new line, but the elders are stereotype in a particular trend," Prof Mozaffar Ahmed said, adding that parents should not regulate their children in a way that affects their psychological being. "We should be very careful in this regard," he said.

Jenny said that children who want higher education should be facilitated.



Dr Kamal Hossain speaking at a seminar on 'Accountability in Newspaper' organised by the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) in the city yesterday. Also seen in the picture from (L to R) Advocate Gaziul Haq, Director General of PIB, Dr Sheikh Abdus Salam Farid Hossain and Muhammad Jahangir.

Dacoity at a city house

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of dacoits looted foreign currency, gold ornaments and other valuables worth about Tk six lakh from a house at Kathalata of East Monipur in the city in the early hours yesterday, police said.

The gang numbering about ten entered the house of one Osman Gani by breaking open the door at around 3.45 am.

According to police, the gang wearing masks tied up the family members and took the key of almirah and looted US\$5000, 2.5 tolas of gold ornaments, Prize Bond worth Tk 70 thousand, Tk 20 thousand in cash and other valuables from the house.

Police quoting the FIR said that the landlady recognised one of the gang members when he opened his mask during the looting of valuables.

According to police, the gang is said to be members of *Jangia* party, a party that commits crimes wearing only underwear.

According to police, the gang

Bold and decisive move

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public eye. Was that the intention? We are forced to think yes.

The Rajuk's plot allotment case was so fundamentally flawed, so full of irregularities, so thoroughly devoid of ethics and norms, so blatantly partisan that the members of the public became outraged and totally disillusioned by the absolute lack of morality in that this action exemplified. In the last few days since its surreptitious

announcement in the paper owned by a ruling party MP a storm of anger and frustration swept through the public which had all but destroyed the credibility of the government. It stood out as the most blatant and shameless use of governmental power to serve selfish and partisan interest.

A disturbing element of this land scam is that there is ample evidence to suggest that the list was prepared by a coterie located in the Prime Minister's office with the active connivance of the works minister

himself, who did not hesitate to serve himself first, and had the temerity to say that "I got the plot as a freedom fighter and not as a minister", as if there was no wortlier and deserving freedom fighter eligible for it.

Sources said Begum Zia advised the local leaders to take preparation for contesting the polls, form BNP committees at grassroots level and for polling centres, alongside gearing up party activities. She also suggested them to keep in touch with central leaders and make success all political programmes of the party. She also urged them to remain alert against preparation of "fake" voter list and ID cards.

Referring to alleged harassment, she said the government has resorted to unprecedented repressive measures on opposition BNP throughout the country. "Not a single BNP man is free from government's harassment. BNP is doing politics under an adverse political situation, created by the ruling party."

She said BNP is an election-oriented party and always wants to participate in election. BNP will participate in the upazila and city corporation elections and workers and withdrawal of "false" cases, she told the local leaders.

She said BNP will definitely show better performance if election is held free and fair. She however said no election under the present government and the Chief Election Commissioner can be free and fair.

BMSP calls for proper rehabilitation of Tanbazar inmates

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Gumti recorded fall. All the rivers in the south eastern Hill Basin registered further fall. Out of the 39 monitoring stations of the FFWC, five points were above danger level, 15 recorded rise and 24 points

recorded fall.

The Ganges at Farakka point marked sharp rise, at least 35 cm by yesterday evening. It rose by 13 cm on Wednesday, reports from India received by the FFWC said. The river is slated to rise further but not so alarmingly in the next one and half day, a FFWC source told the Star yesterday.

The Brahmaputra in Goalpara in Assam had marked fall before it entered Bangladesh and remained steady. But it would also start falling at Dhubri point, the reports said.

In Bangladesh the Brahmaputra which takes the name of Jamuna before meeting the Padma started falling, declining by 12 cm each at Noornkawa and Chilmari. The Jamuna registered slight rise at Bahadurabad and Aricha while recording slight fall at Serajganj.

Naogaon

Our correspondent from Rajshahi writes that 27 more villages in Krishnapur union of Manda thana on Wednesday night were flooded. The Atrai knifed through its guide-embankment at Krishnapur's Karnabhaba mouza, wiping about 70 feet of the flood wall, freeing the swollen river sweep.

UNB said that troops from the army were reinforced at Korpai and Nimsai points at Korpai-Chittagong highway where locals protested stacking of sandbags at the damaged Korpai culvert. They feared that if the flood water was not allowed a free flow it would submerge their homes.

A Bailey bridge was taken to Korpai to help the smooth flow of traffic on the highway. The floods so far claimed lives of four people and affected 468,000 people, damaged 4,474 homes fully and 17,310 houses partially. A 2.5 km section of the flood protection embankment had been fully damaged and 37 km of it was destroyed, partially. Four bridges and culverts were battered and 41 partly damaged.

Rare goat

Our correspondent said that Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru had expressed dissatisfaction over the inefficient management of the embankment on the Gumti. He directed officials, Wednesday night, to take immediate measures for repair of the major embankment and gear up river activities.

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Most of the caprinae population

is particularly vulnerable to extinction because of three main factors: Genetic isolation, specialised habitat and low reproductive rate. There are threats from heavy hunting pressure by locals and the loss of forest understorey due to clearing and collection of fuelwood.

The serow is listed as an endangered species in the IUCN red list of threatened animals and is also listed in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade and Endangered Species). It is nationally protected under Section 3 of the Bangladesh Wildlife Preservation Act (BWPA).

NGO sector

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said to behave like village *ma-hajans* perpetuating the 'patron-client relationship' or they are insatiable as 'let a thousand flowers bloom' to try programmes with an ideological bent. It is beyond the scope of this paper to research and take a position on these points," said Dr Sattar.

Dr Mahabub Hossain noted that public sector has its importance despite private sector's growing interest in agriculture as protection of public interest

was crucial for government when the private sector tends to ignore that aspect as they are tempted by profit maximisation.

The government has sanctioned Tk six crore to protect the embankment, the agency said.

Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir stressed on water sharing settle-

ment of 53 common rivers other than Ganges so that Bangladesh can proceed fast with plans for irrigation and flood protection infrastructure development.

Dr Z Karim told the seminar

that Bangladesh was lagging behind in GO-NGO co-operation, particularly in agriculture sector. Only 122 NGOs were now working in liaison with NARS (National Agricultural Research System), he informed.

dry fish

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dry fish and packaging are yet to be available to the dryers.

Nonetheless, the export is growing. From Tk 3 crore 5 lakhs and 47 thousand in 1995-96, it has risen to Tk 7 crore 92 lakhs and 48 thousand in 1996-97.

Most of the dry fish went to

the Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia

and the