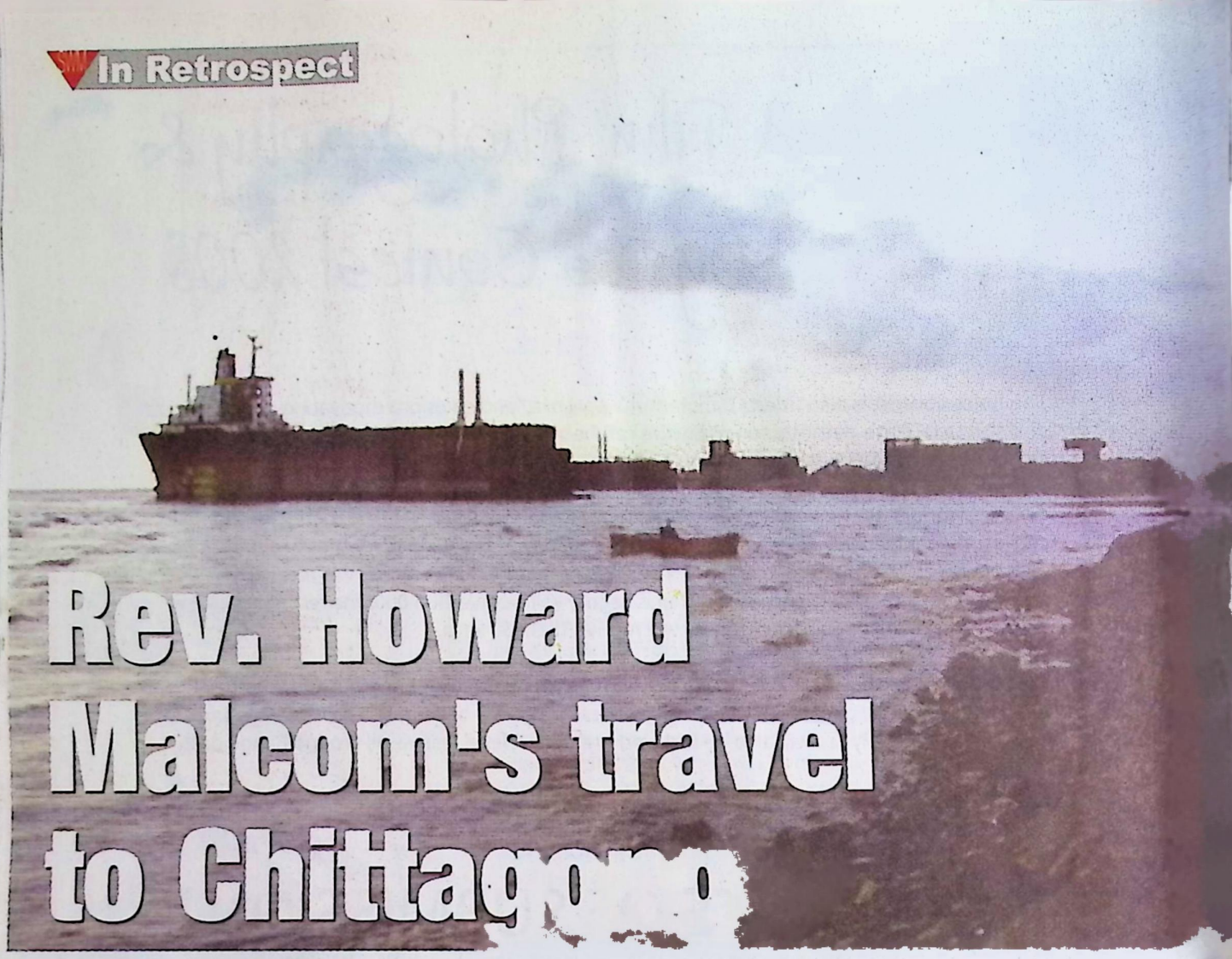


Rev. Howard Malcom's travel to Chittagong

ABDUL MANNAN

Portuguese traders were the first Europeans to come to Eastern India. Historically Portugal being situated on the Atlantic was a sea faring nation. However, the arrival of Portuguese in India, especially Eastern India, was facilitated through the Arab traders. In 1517, with the help of Arab traders, a Portuguese trader named Joao Coelho arrived in Chittagong aboard a ship that belonged to an Arab trader named Gromelle. According to the historians Joa Coelho was the first European to have come to Chittagong. For next two hundred years trade in Eastern India was practically monopolised by the Portuguese traders. After the battle of Palasey in 1757 the English traders started to arrive in Chittagong in greater numbers. The entry of Portuguese in any country normally followed a common pattern. First came the traders, followed by the Jesuit priests. The priests would normally be Roman Catholic. Their main task would be to preach their religion (Christianity) and convert the local poor people into their faith.

Seeing the success of the Portuguese priests, American priests also started to arrive in India towards the beginning of nineteenth century. These priests would normally belong to Protestant church and was based in Boston. They would set up bases in different parts of India and try to imitate the success of the Portuguese priests. Senior priests were often sent from Boston to visit and inspect the activities of their missions based in different parts of the world. One such visitor to India was Rev. Howard Malcom who set sail from Boston Harbour in the month of September 1835. The ship sailed on Wednesday September 23, 1835. After calling in the ports of West Africa, Western India, Arakan it reached Calcutta in the month of November 1836. Wherever the ship berthed Rev. Malcom disembarked and visited the area and called upon the American missions. On November 27 Rev. Malcom left Calcutta for Chittagong. Except coming by sea there was no other easy route to come to Chittagong. The ship took 15 days to reach Chittagong port. After his return to Boston Rev. Malcom published his travel diary in the form of a