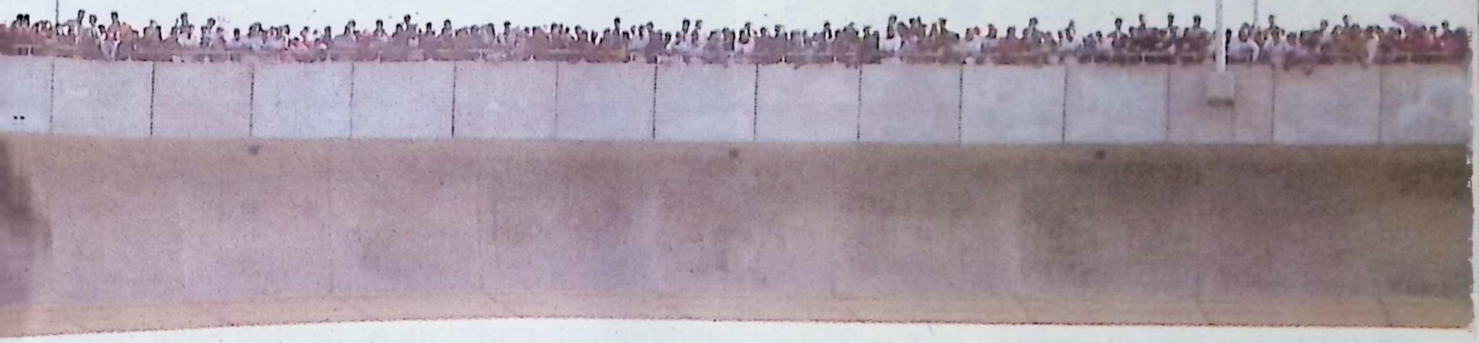
end of the rope to the sunken boat," explains a local boatman. "It will then be pulled out and repaired by the riverside." The two boatmen who had gone inside had to come back up. Panting and trying to catch their breath, they explained to their people that the boat was not there. Once again, large air bubbles were located a little far away from the unsuccessful rescue spot. Chasing those bubbles, once again, the rescue boat along with the two boatmen holding on to the rope reached the spot and performed the rescue procedure once again.

Fortunately, the organisers had taken care of the security and medical emergencies on the river. Several engine boats with police officers, Rab officials and Coast Guard officials were roaming about the perimeter of the contest area on the Rupsha. On one of the Fire Service emergency boats, Mohammad Humayan Kabir was dressed in a scuba diving outfit, complete with underwater breathing equipment and oxygen tanks. "We are from the Fire Service and every year a few of us are always put on stand-by to watch out for boaters and even the spectators in the river during the races," says Kabir. Popularly



Near the Rupsha Bridge, the *baich* was still going on, between the five other racing boats and also the cheering-squad boats that had begun an unofficial competition amongst themselves as well. With strong determination and strength, the racers reached the bridge, coming out with a winner, boat number 2, *Jahangirer Nouka* from Koyra village. The boats filled with spectators, however, met with yet another bit of catastrophe. The Rupsha Bridge was filled with thousands of spectators who were watching below and enjoying the race. As soon as a boat would pass by the bridge, the merry spectators on the bridge would spit on the people on those boats. In a hurry to escape the 'downpours' on them, the cheering boats immediately turned around to go the other way, away from the bridge. Again there was chaos when one boat hit the other, trying to push away as fast as possible. People standing and sitting on the boats had to hold on to the sides, trying not to fall off.

known as '*dubori*', Kabir along with Abdul Razzak and Saidul Islam were selected by the service this year in case of emergency rescues. Placed on three separate boats, the *duboris* were taking turns roaming about the audience and also rowing up and down from the starting point to the Rupsha Bridge and back. While relaxing for a while by the riverside, Kabir confided that even though the work of a *dubori* is extremely important and that there have been several instances where he and his fellow mates had to risk their own lives for others, his job did not bring him much to raise a family. "I have been a dubori for the last six years," he confides. "Practically, our work is more or less similar to the Coast Guard officials. But we are paid a very poor amount. We have children who go to school, but we get to see them only once a year during holidays since we have to leave our families in our village homes. We cannot afford to live with families in the cities."

