

Feature

Health

Where IUD, Copper T or Foam are Not 'No-Nos'

The Star Feature Writer, Fayza Haq, visits a Comilla village to see for herself the progress of family planning campaign among the local inhabitants.

'It was once believed that without proper employment, adequate education and sufficient income the population rate cannot be controlled. Matlab proves that this is not so. With sufficient back up the family planning programme can be a success.'

BEYOND the pale morning glories and the even more exotic water hyacinths is the village of Chhoto Lokhipur in Comilla. One has the misconception that perhaps the women in the village are slow in the pick up. But this is certainly not so when one speaks about contraceptives with them.

While the city women in Dhaka blush deep at the mention of 'periods' or 'breasts', and a century back people hesitated to mention the breasts of a chicken or the leg of the piano, even in the west, these garrulous and uninhibited women from the sleepy thatched huts of Chhoto Lokhipur speak about their problems and facilities with contraceptions without any hesitation. With overpopulation being a major problematic issue in Bangladesh the village is

hard to bear. 'I could not have been contented with the notion of adoption either,' she confides.

Khurshid Begum, from the same village, with her five children—three boys and two girls—takes contraceptive injections once month. She complains that she had very heavy periods once and felt 'I get a raw deal from the Matlab ICDDR. I've been tested for infection in the urine and stools and have spent some money on medicines. Yet I still have period problems and the medical visitors fail to give me satisfactory medicines.' Khurshid's husband advises her not to take injections, but Khurshid is told otherwise by the health visitor and doctors from Matlab. 'I felt the heat intensely

and the issue of white fluid even after using a reliable German brand of contraceptive tablets. The health visitors somehow told her there was no need to contact the doctors despite the discomfort she complains of. Like most other men at Chhoto Lokhipur, Husna Ara's husband too has some lame excuse for not using prophelactics.

Sabina Begum uses the IUD or Copper T. She has had problems of painful blood flow. Each IUD has lasted her three years. There is no need of anaesthesia for IUD insertion. The doctors however, have advised her to stop the IUD since she had the complain of a white discharge.

Mr J. Chakraborty, the manager of the Health Services

years, and being a mother of two children often has a limited knowledge of the contraceptives. Talking to Dr. Shamim Akhtar Khan of the MCHFP project at Matlab, I personally gathered a treasure-trove of information.

'In the pills we have the combination of oestrogen and progesteron—two kinds of female hormones. In the normal adult woman oestrogen hormones are released in the first few days just after menstruation. This causes the maturation of the ovum containing follicle. In the midcycle 15 days,' she continues, 'before the next 'periods', there is L. H. surge and these causes the rupture of the matured ovum containing follicle and delivery of the ovum.'

mones throughout the cycle. The oestrogen progesteron combination prevent maturation of the ovum containing follicle and so the ovulation does not take place. 'Dr. Shamim add "In oral packets included apart from the 21 hormone pills seven iron tablets are also included.

The doctor then comments the Intra Utrine Contraceptive Device is sometimes considered the safest and the most convenient, depending on the health and the metabolism of the patient. She says that after screening of the patient the IUD Copper T is inserted through the cervix into the uterus by aseptic precaution. There is a plastic bore canula with a copper T which is inserted into the uterus after proper lithotomy position. She adds that sufficient lighting is needed for visualisation of the cervix and the OS.

In a tubectomy the fallopian tubes are ligated and severed. There is no risk of getting fat, as is the common belief.

Dr. Shamim further explains the that the copper T acts as a foreign body and it expels all foreign bodies from the uterus. Copper released from the Copper T also causes spermicidal action. "No sperm enters the uterus and so there is no fertilisation," she elaborates.

The Depo Provera (Depo Medroxy progesteron acetate), the lady doctor also says "acts on the ovum containing follicle in the ovary and prevents maturation, of the ovum, as in the case of the pills. No matured ovum come out during ovulation period and fertilization does not take place.

She then tells me "Foam tablets like 'Joy' act as a barrier for spermicidal action. They look like a 'Polo' sweet and are introduced through the upper part of the vagina. They dissolve and produce lather which acts as a barrier for sperms and has spermicidal action.

Yet another new form of contraceptive the "Norplant".



Condoms being sold at a typical 'pan' shop.

after the injections, and I wonder if my discomforts are correlated', she confides.

Along with other village women Khurshid elaborates that the men give excuses about their health when asked to use prophelactics. The society being a male dominated one as everywhere in the Subcontinent, explains an ICDDR guide "Women try not to anger their husbands. Some are even scared of divorce in case of annoying their husbands". The "maulvis" in the areas, according to the reports of the women, have also never encouraged contraceptives. Again, elder relatives, women specially, have tried to talk them into giving up the tablets and other means of contraception.

Husna Ara 29, with three children complains of spotting

Programme at ICDDR at Matlab, comments on the contraceptive methods available to the women in Bangladesh 'It is a 'cafeteria system'. There is a choice. They can have the pill or the injection or the IUD'. He comments 'It was once believed that without proper employment, adequate education and sufficient income the population rate cannot be controlled. Matlab proves that this is not so. With sufficient back up the system of family planning can be a success.'

'With better spacing out of families both mothers and children are better fed', says Dr. Mohammad Yunus of the Health and Research Centre of the ICDDR.

The city women of Bangladesh, despite a Master's degree, a career of say ten

Dr. Shamim next explains "then the progesteron causes ripening of the inner layer of the uterus for embedding of the fertilised ovum. After ovulation the ovum is caught in the fibria of the fallopian tubes. This is then transmitted through the tubes and to the ampulary region of fallopian tubes where fertilization does not occur, and the two hormones come down to normal level. This cause destruction of the inner layer of the uterus and results in menstruation."

The lady doctor further elaborated "The pill causes anovulatory cycle and produces the withdrawal of the bleeding. She also informs" The pills contain both the oestrogen and progesteron and these pills, taken daily at the same time, makes sure that the body contains the same amount of hor-

leader in polyols (non-glucose sweeteners), provides betacyclodextrins to various firms. Together with SANOFI, it is working on a cholesterol-free butter which still keeps its taste. Many other astonishing examples could be given.

This butter leads us to the sector of Health. The last decade has seen the arrival of low-fat and sugar-free products. They account for 20% of the present market. It is certain that food tomorrow will be better suited to the needs of each group of individuals: children, sick people, active and inactive people, those practising sports and those who lead a sedentary life, etc, but also according to the needs of each individual and even the climate. The family dish will be replaced by individual dishes.

Surety is also a very important matter. Throughout the food production line, impurities might enter the food and contamination, occur. The major culprit is Salmonella Enteritidis, one of the 2,300 species of this family of bacteria. The number of cases a year in France is estimated at nearly 100,000. In 42% of cases, these incidents are due to the cold storage not being respected, 38 % due to an error in the preparation process and 32 % to there being too long a time lapse between the time of defrosting and the time of consumption.

But fresh produce is not free from such mishaps. Listeria and Yersinia are able to develop between 4 and 10° C, that is to say the usual temperature of refrigerators. In addition to the strictest sterilization recommendations, wide-scale sterilization by gamma rays and/or the use of coloured markers (as for surgical materials) are being considered in order to guarantee the good preservation of products.

On the subject of Service, the very mention of standard, stereotyped food, in a country famous for its gastronomy, obviously makes the French shudder with horror. Thus relations between haute cuisine and the food-processing industry continue to grow.

—Jean Chabrier

Dietetics in the Year 2000

Research labs are making keen efforts in all areas of nutrition with the imperative law of 'Flavour, Health, Safety and Service.' That is what dietetics will be in the year 2000.

SINCE the beginning of the century, everything has changed. First of all, not only do we no longer eat in the same way, but we do not eat quite the same food as at the beginning of this century. Secondly, food-processing has become a real industry which is no longer limited to sharing out the produce according to production and needs, but which modifies, transforms, packages and ensures its preservation, etc. This implies the appearance of numerous technologies, from the chemicals industry to the use of cold.

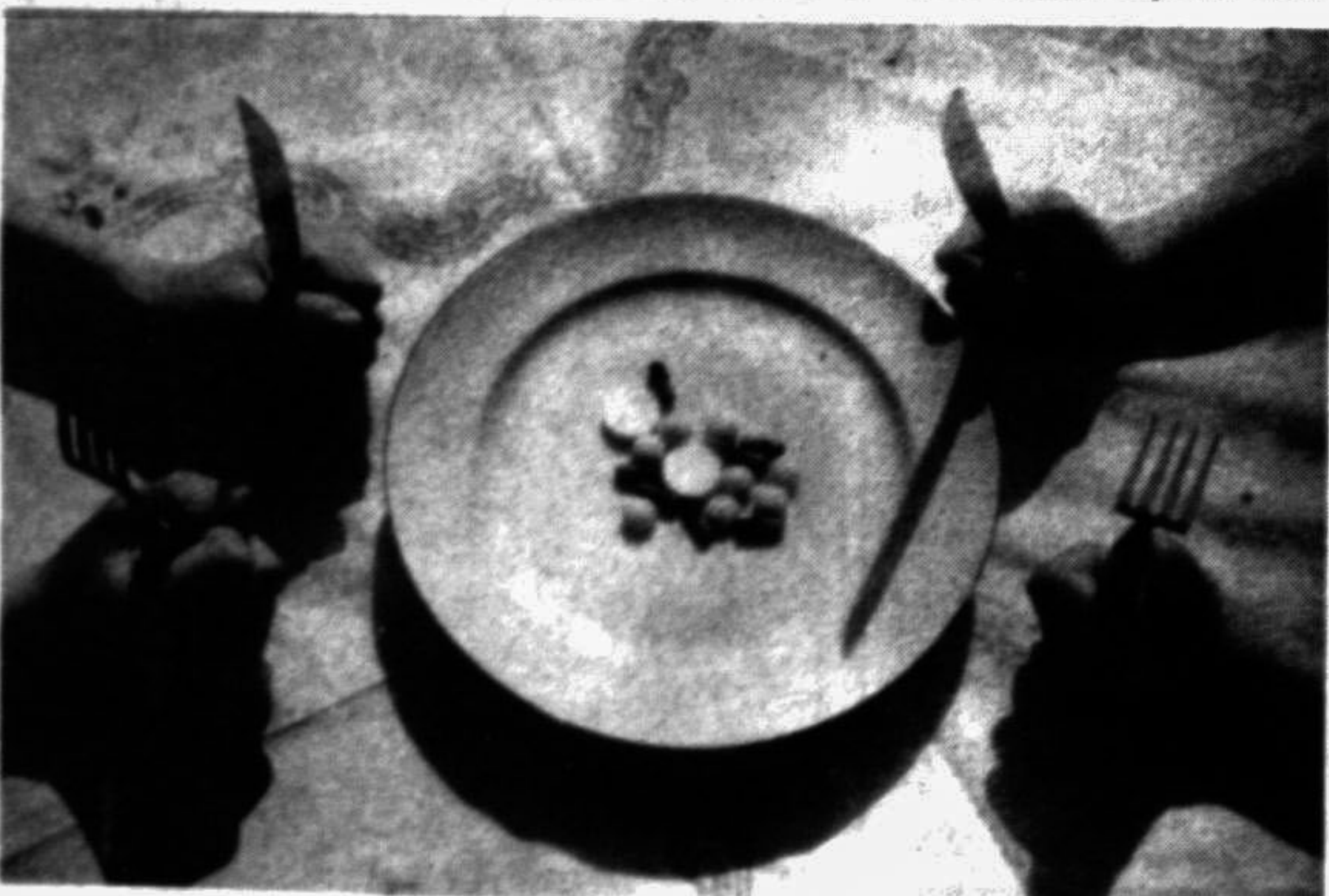
Service." That is what dietetics will be in the year 2,000.

A few figures may fill one with wonder. It is estimated that 50% of the products which will be eaten in ten years, do not yet exist as, at the present time, they are either at the study stage or in the premanufacturing stage. The ratio of processed foods continues to increase. From 30% 40 years ago, it amounts to 80% nowadays. The time spent in the kitchen which, at that time, used to be more than 3 hours a day, is no more than 20 to 30 minutes today. The extraordinary boom in frozen foods or other ready-to-use products accounts for 70% of consumption while, at the same time, spending on food has fallen from 33 to 24%.

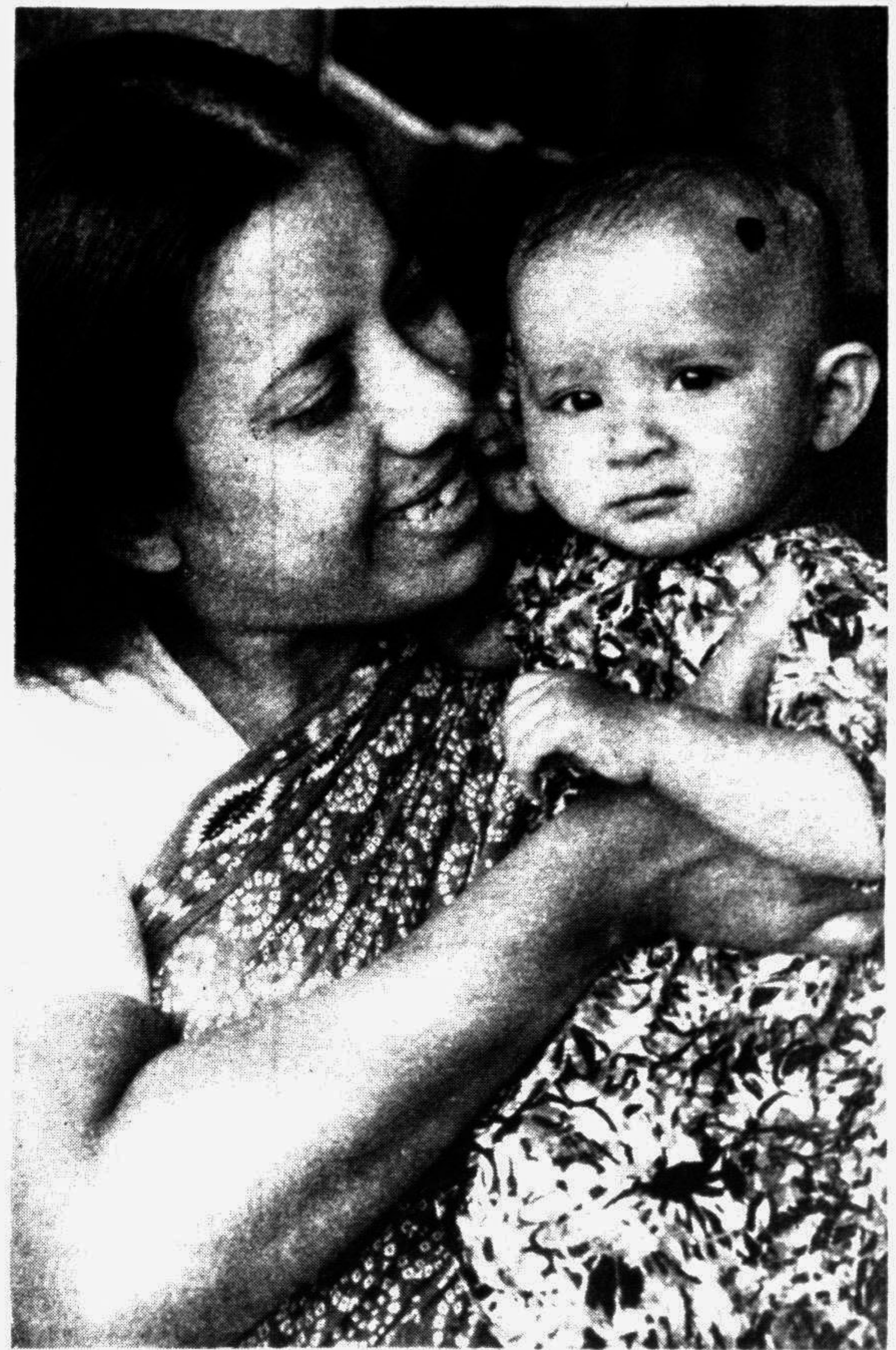
Keeping the Flavour...and saving the taste. All industrial food processing makes it

rather tasteless and in order to compensate for this, artificial flavouring is used. The turnover in this sector has increased five-fold in 15 years and is to double in the five coming years. An example can be given with vanilla flavouring. Natural vanilla costs 17,000 French francs a kilo whereas aroma made from wood waste has a flavouring power ten times higher and only costs 50 francs.

Biotechnology has reached the stage where it has 'flavour' banks not only varying according to the species, but also according to the variety and the qualities. This area is further completed by taste 'keepers', able to trap aromas which then resist various industrial modifications and even cooking (French National Agronomic Research Institute : INRA), while Societe Roquette, world



There will soon be new foods on our plates.



A family small is a family happy.

—Star photo

is a capsular form. It produces a deposit and it is gradually released into the blood and acts on the uterus and ovaries to prevent the maturation of the follicle. This has yet to be introduced in Bangladesh.

Dr. Yunus, also present during the discussion, spoke of the storing and destroying problems of the condom. The men somehow take a physical dislike to it furthermore, he adds. As for vasectomy, the village people believe that it makes them sexually weak. They equate it with castration. Dr. Yunus explains. Since this involves an operation, the women too are afraid for their

missing threads. Earlier "loops" used to be used instead of the copper T. Dr. Yunus concludes the discussion by saying that there is no single answer to contraception. It all depends on the age of the mother, the number of pregnancies and her body's capacity to accept any particular form of contraception. Newly married couples normally prefer the foam or the condom, he elaborates.

In the IUD the bleeding sometimes increases during the normal cycle, the doctors admit. The bleeding increase both in duration and volume they say. There may be further complications of the Copper T

missing threads. Earlier "loops" used to be used instead of the copper T.

Dr. Yunus concludes the discussion by saying that there is no single answer to contraception. It all depends on the age of the mother, the number of pregnancies and her body's capacity to accept any particular form of contraception. Newly married couples normally prefer the foam or the condom, he elaborates.

It is not up to the ICDDR alone to set up ideal situations where contraceptives will improve the health and the economic situation of the family. It is for the government to take firm steps in this direction.

TEACHING MACHO MEN HOW TO CARE FOR BABIES

The Gambia Family Planning Association (GFPA) is waging a new campaign for responsible parenthood and improved child health through active male participation. The first 'Male Motivation Project' is underway in Karantaba district where infant deaths have already dropped in some villages. But, as Gemini News Service reports, many problems remain family planning and won't take part in child health care programmes. — by Rosemary Long

quences. As a result, chastity and virginity are no longer cultural demands." Like other male-dominated societies, very few Gambian men let their wives use contraceptives or any other form of birth control. The husband



will still force the wife to have more children even when she feels she has had enough or is suffering poor health.

The Family Planning Association has realised its campaign may not succeed unless it targets men as well and an 18-month 'Male Motivation Project' is well underway.

In the last 12 months, the GFPA has led counselling workshops for police officers and other male groups dealing with population, education, family planning, maternal and child health, and adolescent fertility management.

The Association campaign received a major boost when Parliament passed a new law establishing a National Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Community Health Nursing.

The improvements in primary health care programmes impressed the World Health Organisation (WHO) representative in Banjul, Professor Hilary Odhiambo, who acknowledges that the Gambia was ahead of many other sub-Saharan countries.

The programme has trained birth attendants and village health workers to supplement services at the Maternal Child Health (MCH) unit at Karantaba. A midwife, a dispenser, two nurses and a doctor hold clinics in Karantaba twice a week, and then move out to the outlying villages.

Each village now has its own birth attendant and health worker, and maternal mortality rates have been greatly reduced. The national average is 10 per 1000 but in Karantaba it has dropped to six per 1000 live births, and three villages have brought it down to one.

The 21 villages around Karantaba will soon have a radio link to the health center and tertiary referral centers and a Land-Rover is available to rush emergency cases to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Banjul.

Even then, the situation is far from satisfactory. Karantaba is just a small part of the country, and many people still snar at family planning and do not participate in child health care programmes. The Victoria Hospital itself suffers from acute shortage of basic equipment and items.