

Dhaka Day by Day

In the Spirit of Love and Respect

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

When a friend asked me to write a story about 'MCC', I looked at her blankly since I had no clue as to what MCC stood for. My ignorance must have been apparent for the very next day I found an envelope on my desk containing several brochures and a visiting card that had the name William J Green, Job Creation, Marketing Manager on it. Although the pamphlets were very informative as far as the activities and objectives of MCC were concerned, I decided an interview with Mr Green would be more interesting.

I started with the question 'What is MCC?' to which he gave me a detailed account of the objectives, programmes and goals of the organization. MCC which stands for Mennonite Central Committee is a worldwide organisation with branches in 50 countries. It is the relief and development arm of the Mennonite Churches of Canada and the United States. The purpose of the Mennonites who are a Protestant denomination, is to 'serve in the name of Jesus Christ'. The organisation has been here in Bangladesh since 1970 with work centres in Saidpur, Chuadanga, Matjidi, Feni and Dhaka. The programmes in Bangladesh can be broken down into three main categories: nutritious food production, employment creation and emergency assistance. Family health and planning are also a part of the programme. The main objective of MCC is to help individuals to become self-reliant through acquiring skills which will be useful for a lifetime.

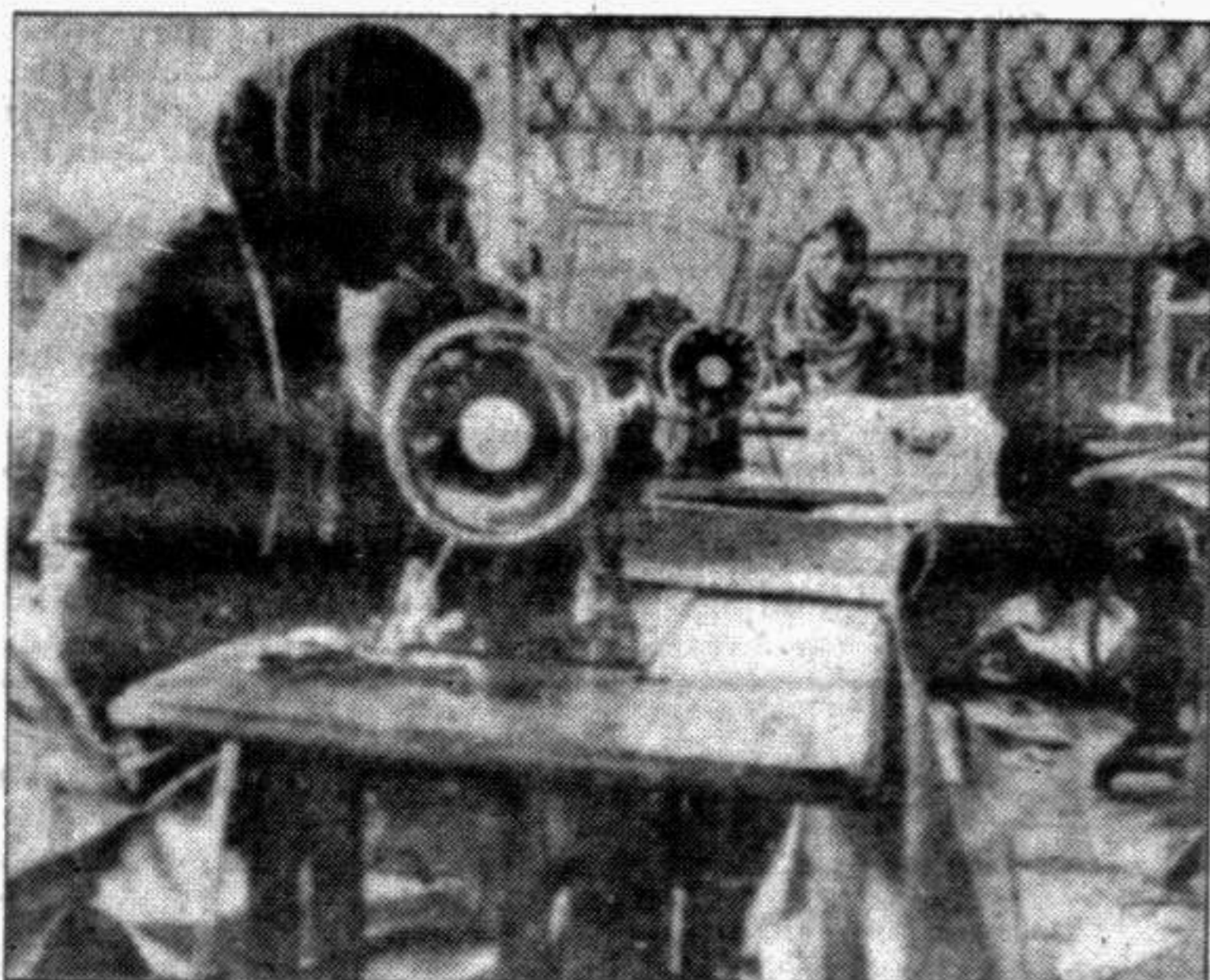
In order to help small and marginal farmers to maximize the potential of the land, MCC has introduced the growing of nutritious and profitable winter crops — vegetables, soybeans etc. In addition there are extensive research programmes to develop and extend technologies that can be adopted by poor rural people. Relief and emergency assistance is under a project called HESS (Health, Education, Social Service) which includes reconstruction of houses and distribution of basic relief items such as food, clothing, blankets etc. MCC has played a major role in assisting the survivors of the great tidal bore disaster of 1970 and of course, the recent cyclone of 1991. As far as health care is concerned MCC has an indirect approach, providing the rural people with vaccination and basic hygiene training. Job Creation, which is a programme Mr Green is directly involved in, has been set up to create employment for world's poor women. The project is targeted at women who are the heads of households — widows, divorcees, women separated from or left by husbands etc. Selection of recipients is based on the level of need of the women. Project development officers have to literally go from house to house of the villages and interview each woman who qualifies as a head of household. The women then go through a training process which provides them with basic education (including mathematics, bookkeeping etc) as well as helps them to develop leadership qualities. The idea is to create producer-controlled business i.e., the women who start off as doing the productive activities, eventually control their own business. This means that they control the management of raw materials, of finances and accounts, of labour and wages, and of marketing. Examples of such producer-controlled businesses initiated by MCC are Action Bag Handicrafts (bags, backpacks, toys, games etc), Surjono Coconut Products (coconut powder, coconut doormats, brooms, carpets etc), and Bari-al Rope and Twine.

The bulk of these products is exported through The Source an offshoot of MCC and the centre for marketing and business. This centre establishes contacts between the buyers and sellers and deals mostly in wholesale markets. Other NGOs (not MCC) also use The Source for their business. The buyers of these products are known as ATOs (Alternative Trading Organisations) who make a special effort to buy from least developed and developing countries, their buying decisions being based on environmental functions. The ATOs with the help of MCC then market the products through retail outlets, tear sheets, coloured brochures, telex, fax etc. MCC agencies do business with 20 to 25 ATOs throughout the world.

After listening to such impressive details I asked Mr Green (who is also responsible for overseeing the export side) whether these products were competitive in the overseas market and what MCC did about quality control. To this he replied that previously there had been serious quality problems but during the last couple of years quality has improved significantly thanks to the designers and artists brought over from the US, Australia and Canada. These experts teach the local producers 'what in a 'bideshi's eyes a good product is'. As a consequence, sales have gone up dramatically. The estimated sales target for October 31st (end of the year for MCC) is one crore Taka. The profits of all sales are reinvested to finance other MCC projects.

As a future project, MCC has envisioned a programme called The Peace and Justice which will be concerned mainly with women's rights issues — child marriages, dowry cases etc. Mr Green has decided to be actively involved in this programme after shifting most of his current responsibilities to someone else. At the moment he is involved in a kidnapping case where he is helping a distraught couple to recover their thirteen year old daughter who has allegedly been kidnapped by a 32 year old man. The girl has told the police that she had gone off with her husband on her own will and refuses to go back to her parents. The reason why Mr Green and other MCC members are so interested in retrieving the girl is because of her age and because her husband already has two other wives who have been subject to physical and mental abuse by him. As Mr Green points out, the complicated and often incomprehensible law system of our courts makes programmes such as this, essential for the simple minded rural people of Bangladesh. The Peace and Justice Programme will, therefore, play a sort of advocacy role, providing people with lawyers, helping them through the court proceedings, letting them know their rights and how to assert them.

MCC, therefore, instead of taking the easy way out of just giving alms to the poor, provides a permanent solution to abject poverty and destitution. Its various programmes not only teach people (especially women) to become self-reliant in monetary terms but gives them the priceless gift of dignity and self-respect. As for the people who make this dream a reality, their amazing dedication and commitment to the cause of helping people purely for altruistic reasons, leaves one at a loss for words. Mr Green, for example, is one of many who has left the security and wealth of his homeland (USA) to come to a strange and new land and become totally enmeshed with the sorrows and joys of the people. He has been living in Bangladesh for 3 years, speaks Bengali quite fluently and seems to be perfectly at home here.



Action Bag Handicrafts — an MCC programme in progress



Special prayers were offered Friday throughout the country for sustained parliamentary democracy. The special prayers were held at mosques, mandirs and other religious holy places in the city and other parts of the country. At the Baitul Mukarram national mosque, in Dhaka, the special prayer was offered after the Jumma prayer. —Star photo

Two killed in road mishaps

By Staff Correspondent

Two persons were killed in separate road accidents in Dhaka and surrounding areas on Friday.

An unidentified woman was struck by a Dhaka-bound superior coach early Friday in front of the Samad Supermarket under Demra thana. The seriously injured victim died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

A case was registered with Demra police. Police said the driver of the coach belonging to Chengis Paribahan (Dhaka-Ba-3736) fled away from the scene along with the bus.

In another accident, Abdur Rahman (55) was struck by a minibus when he was crossing the road on a bicycle at Bijoyagar on Friday morning. He died when he was taken to DMCH.

Police managed to seize the minibus (Dhaka-Ja-3653) but the driver fled from the scene.

Women shaping political process

Speakers at a seminar held in Dhaka Thursday underlined the important role for women in the establishment and consolidation of democratic process and promotion of a balanced socio-economic order in the country, reports BSS.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdus Salam Talukder addressed the seminar as the chief guest. Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation, Mirza Abbas, Secretary General of the National Federation of Teachers' Associations Prof Shariful Islam and President of Zia Parishad, Shamsuddin Ahmed participated in the deliberations.

Organising Secretary of City BNP, Ehsanul Huq presided. Salam Talukder said, women played a significant role in shaping the political

and socio-economic process in the country. Pointing out that women constitute about fifty per cent of the country's population, the LGRD Minister said, no meaningful political and socio-economic orders could be conceived without involving the full potentials of our women population.

Turning to the emergence of a new democratic process, the Minister said that the two major political parties that spearheaded the pro-democracy movement in the country were led by women. These women leaders, he said, have once again created history by joining their hands for establishing parliamentary democracy through the unanimous adoption of the 12th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 1991.



Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (JAGPA) brought out a procession in city on Friday demanding repeal of all black laws. —Star photo

State Minister for Food Barrister Nazmul Huda has said the passage of the 11th and 12th Constitutional Amendment Bills was the fulfilment of the pre-election commitment of the BNP government to the people aimed at establishing parliamentary system of government to materialise the hopes and aspirations of the people, reports BSS.

He said the BNP, led by the uncompromising leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, always stood by the people on the question of the form of government and it was reflected in Parliament through the unanimous consensus of parliament members.

The State Minister for Food was addressing a large public meeting held at the Shikaripara High School premises under Dohar upazila Thursday, an official handout said.

Barrister Huda urged the people to strengthen the hands of Begum Khaleda Zia

'Pre-poll pledges fulfilled thru' passage of bills'

for building up the country happy and prosperous.

He said the government would implement the 19-point development programmes of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman in realising the basic needs of the people like food, shelter, clothing, education and medicare.

Barrister Huda said the rural economy would be built up and strengthened through increasing agricultural production, setting up small scale industries in the villages and expanding trade and business involving the people in the pro-

duction oriented politics. He said the BNP government would give highest priority to the development of villages through providing physical infrastructural facilities like road communication, power supply and tele-link.

Earlier, the State Minister for Food visited the under-construction bridges at Barillah and Noornagar to see for himself the progress of the construction work. After completion of the construction of these two bridges fifty lakh people will be benefited.

More bodies laud amendment Parties urged to curb terrorism

More organisations in Dhaka on Friday welcomed Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmad, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina on the occasion of switching over to parliamentary system of government through a constitutional amendment, reports BSS.

They also congratulated all Parliament Members and political leaders for their role in this historic transition to parliamentary system as desired by the national, according to separate statements issued Friday.

The signatories to the statements said that the national consensus and unity demonstrated on the floor of Parliament would remain as a landmark in the political and constitutional history of Bangladesh. They also hoped that the country's all political, economic and social problems would now be resolved with the change of the system of government.

They urged the government and the Opposition in Parliament to work with the same spirit that was showed on the Parliament floor to find ways for immediate end to terrorism now gripping the country's educational institutions.

They also urged for shunning politics of conspiracy and opting to politics of cooperation for the smooth functioning of the government in the greater interest of the nation.

The signatories to the statements were Sheikh Amanullah, President and Md Azizul Huq Shah, Secretary General of Bangladesh Shikkhak Samity; Justice Abdur Rahman Chowdhury, President of Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights and Legal Affairs and Chairman of Liberty Forum; Janadal Chairman Khandker Mahtab Uddin; President Alhaj A K M Moazzem Hossain of Bangladesh Bastuhara Punarashan-o-Kalyan Parishad, General Secretary Abdour Rouf of Sayed Hossain Ali Smriti Sangsad and General Secretary of Jatiya Juba Council Nurul Abzar.

Eighteen leaders of Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) also congratulated the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Parliament for the passage of the 11th and 12th amendment bills of the Constitution.

Korean rice for cyclone victims

World Vision of Bangladesh, a Relief and Development Agency, received a donation of 714 metric tons of rice worth Tk 29 lakh and 7,160 pieces of new clothes worth Tk 23 lakh from World Vision Korea for the cyclone-affected people in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Banderban districts, according to a press release.

Of the 714 metric tons of rice World Vision handed over 357 tons to Bangladesh government for distribution among the cyclone victims.

In a simple ceremony held at the Chittagong Port Thursday Chittagong Divisional Commissioner, Muhammed Omar Farook, received the rice on behalf of the government from World Vision's Executive Director James Hilton.

In his speech on the occasion, the Divisional Commissioner expressed deep appreciation for the massive relief and rehabilitation schemes that World Vision has undertaken involving over Tk 16 cr for aiding the affected people of April 29 cyclone.

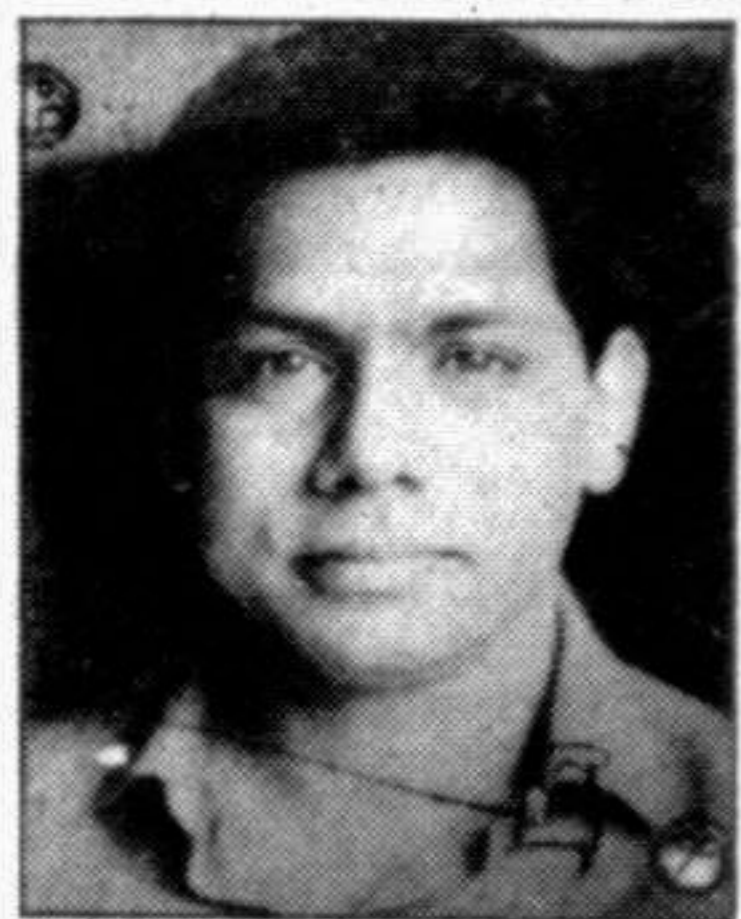
Directive to repair dredgers at N'ganj soon

State Minister for Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Muhammad Ansar Ali Siddiqi has directed the concerned authorities to repair two dredgers at Narayanganj immediately, reports BSS.

The State Minister was visiting the Dredger Sangstha at Narayanganj Thursday, a press release said.

He also asked the officials to make separate lists of the equipment and machinery lying at the Dredger Sangstha and take decision to make those either usable through necessary repair works or dispose of. During the visit, the minister saw huge machinery and equipment lying in the site without proper maintenance.

Deputy Commissioner of Narayanganj and Chief Engineer of Dredger Sangstha were present on the occasion.



Anniversary of Matiur's death today

The 14th death anniversary of Matiur Rahman, former Chief Reporter of the Bangladesh Times and Chief Correspondent of the weekly Holiday will be observed here today, reports BSS.

Before Independence Matiur Rahman joined the then PIA as Public Relations Executive and continued as Public Relations Manager in the Biman Bangladesh Airlines. He worked as stringer of the New York Times and was also associated with Sandhani Prokashani.

Khatme Quran, milad mahfil will be held after Asr Prayers (Saturday) at 166, Shantinagar resident of his family.

Khaleda visits ailing MP

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Friday visited the ailing member of parliament from Jhenidah, Shahidul Islam, at the PG Hospital where he is undergoing treatment for infectious disease, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister enquired about his condition and asked him to be free from anxiety. She said all steps would be taken to ensure necessary medicare for him.

The Prime Minister also talked to Mrs Islam and other members of the family of the ailing MP. Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Mrs Sarwari Rahman, MP, Director of PG Hospital, Dr TA Chowdhury and the attending physician were present.

DU Librarian dead

By Staff Correspondent

Acting Librarian of the Dhaka University Central Library AKM Shamsul Huda Miah died of cerebral haemorrhage at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) Friday Noon.

He had been suffering from the disease since long and undergoing treatment at the Suhrawardi Hospital prior to be shifted to the DMCH.

His namaj-e-janaza was held at the DU Central Mosque after the Magreb prayer Friday.

Leaders and members of the DU Teachers' and Officers' Associations attended the Janaza.

Late Shamsul Huda Miah was also a member of the DU Academic Council.

TV Saturday

- 5.00 Opening announcement. Al Quran, Programme summary.
- 5.15 Recitation from the Tripitak
- 5.20 News in Bangla
- 5.30 Sports World
- 5.55 Cartoon film: Gilgiance Planet
- 6.30 Mati-o-Manush
- 7.05 Banshari
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 8.30 Chena Sur
- 9.00 Anirban
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.25 Drama series: Dallas
- 11.30 Khasar / The News
- 11.45 Closing

Cassette of poems opens

Begum Sufla Kamal Friday inaugurated a cassette of poems recited by promising reciter Kazi Khasru Iqbal at a simple function in Dhaka, a press release of Awami Shilpi Goshthi said, reports BSS.

The function, arranged at

the residence of Begum Sufla Kamal, was also attended, among others, by President of Awami Shilpi Goshthi Salauddin Badal and young rhymist Lutfor Rahman Riton. The title of the cassette is 'love and revolution'.

Weather

Moderate rain likely

By Staff Correspondent

Light or moderate rain or shower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places over Chittagong and Rajshahi divisions and at a few places over Dhaka and Khulna divisions during the next 36 hours commencing 6 pm on Friday, reports Meteorological Department.

The day temperature till Sunday may remain nearly unchanged over the country. On Friday, the highest temperature recorded at Rajshahi and Srimangal was 34 degree Celsius while the lowest temperature was 24.5 degrees recorded at Feni and Mymensingh.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Rainfall activities likely to increase. Extended outlook for another five days: No marked change.

Temperature and humidity in some cities and towns of the country on Friday were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	maxi	mini	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	31.8	26.6	80	81
Chittagong	32.2	25.5	82	79
Rajshahi	34	26	81	75
Khulna	33	27	82	82
Bairali	31.2	26.5	79	79
Feni	31.7	24.5	74	75
Sylhet	32.9	25	82	83
Srimangal	34	25.5	72	85
Mymensingh	33.4	24.5	85	75
Cox's Bazar	28.6	26	85	85

Puja Committee greets Khaleda

The Mahanagar Sarbajannin Puja Committee congratulated Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who is in charge of the Ministry of information, for the arrangement, to telecast programmes on September 1 on the Hindu religious festival 'Janmastomi' for the first time this year, reports BSS.

At a meeting of the committee Friday, requests were made to the Acting President, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and other political leaders to issue messages on this occasion as they do on the birth anniversaries of the preachers of other religions.

The committee has also taken up a three-day elaborate programme to celebrate the festival.

Besides, the committee urged the government to take up the repair work of the mandirs and other Hindu religious places which were damaged on October 30 and 31 last year.



Are you planning for tomorrow?

Times are changing. Values too. Now a woman can make her own choices. Express her own individuality in many ways. There's so much in life to do and enjoy every moment in doing so.

So make each moment a cherished one. Each activity an expression of your own self. Fully content. With OVACON.

OVACON—the carefully formulated contraceptive pill—gives you the desired capacity to plan for tomorrow.



OVACON—genuine low dose birth spacing pill to suit your lifestyle.