

# Khaleda, Hasina hailed for hastening process of democracy

Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas said Wednesday the first budget session of the Fifth Jatiya Sangsad would occupy a unique position in the constitutional history of the country for the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bills reverting to parliamentary democracy, reports BSS.

Delivering his speech just before reading out the prorogation order of the Acting President in the Jatiya Sangsad, the Speaker was happy to say that the legislative and other businesses conducted by the House during the long session had great significance.

Besides the Deputy Leader of the House, Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, and 14 other speakers representing various parties and groups spoke on the occasion.

Expressing his satisfaction over the qualitative standard of deliberations by the members of the present Sangsad, the Speaker said he never harboured any doubt on the efficiency of the members in performing their responsibilities. His confidence in the members, he said, was reinforced by the fact that the present Sangsad was established through a free, fair and impartial election. This Sangsad was bound to be good because its foundation was good, he added.

He said the lively discussions in the present Sangsad belie the apprehension that

its proceedings would be marked by turbulence only. He said he always held the firm belief that the parliament members despite their different ideologies and principles would be able to build a rapport with each other through trials and tribulations.

Abdur Rahman Biswas said it would not be proper to compare the present Sangsad with the past ones because in the past Sangsads, the ruling party ran the country with a brute majority in the House.

There is a balance in the present Sangsad in so far as the number of members of the Treasury and Opposition Benches was concerned, he said adding, the difference of the number of members between the Treasury and the Opposition Benches in the present Sangsad is very narrow, he said.

Biswas said what struck him remarkably was the understanding among the opposition groups. Despite difference of political opinions, the entire opposition sometimes staged a walk-out from the house together. This is a good sign, he opined.

Badruddoza Chowdhury

Paying tributes to the qualities of head and heart of the Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, the Speaker said Prof Chowdhury combined in him a lucid style of speaking and

rare quality of humour.

He also put on record his appreciation for the Leader of the Opposition, Law and Justice Minister, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Chief Whip and the Opposition Chief Whip. Whips and all MPs of the Sangsad.

Showering his praise on Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali, the Speaker said, am, indeed, proud of him that he had conducted the House sagaciously at some of the most important moments of the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bills.

We will always feel proud of the day that saw the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bill. Through this bill the Sangsad will be accountable to the people," he stated.

The Speaker concluded his speech by reciting from the holy Quran.

Earlier in his valedictory speech, Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury said the main spirit of democracy inherent in parliamentary system that was going to be lost had been revived through the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bill.

He said that the present Sangsad had many unique and distinctive features in that the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition are both distinguished women. The narrow difference in the number of the Treasury and

the Opposition Bench members is another distinct as well as a positive feature of the present Sangsad, he added.

The Deputy Leader of the House lauded the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker and said both of them conducted the business of the House in good humour, with acumen and ease. He said special appreciation goes to veteran and distinguished politician and Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz who despite his failing health had worked hard and sincerely to finalise the historic constitution amendment bills before tabling.

The Law Minister created an history in the Sangsad by performing this task miraculously, he remarked.

Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury paid tributes to the leaders of different parliamentary groups in the House for their roles in conducting the business of the Sangsad. He particularly praised the young MPs who kept the proceedings of the House lively by their youthful exuberance.

The ministers, and the Treasury Bench members also came for his commendation for their performances and spirit of cooperation.

He also appreciated the services of newsmen, officials and employees of the Sangsad Secretariat and members of the law enforcing agencies.

Moudud Ahmed

Mr Moudud Ahmed (JP-

Noakhali) termed the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bills, particularly the 12th Amendment Bill as an historic achievement of the present session, the fifth Jatiya Sangsad.

He thanked the Chairman and members of the Select Committee for completing a difficult task timely and efficiently.

The JP leader said with the passage of the 11th and the 12th Constitution Bills, the tradition of the country had been restored. He called for establishing democracy in the Jatiya Sangsad by practising it in its truest perspective. He said seating arrangement in the Sangsad also should be made as per the convention.

Mr Moudud Ahmed, however, said that more time should have been allowed for the passage of important bills.

He said only a few Parliamentary Committees had been formed, though the formation of some other Parliamentary Committees was essential to bring a balance between the executive and the legislative organs.

Taking the floor next, State Minister for Food Mr Najmul Huda said he expected that the current session of the fifth Parliament would end on a note of goodwill and cordiality. But he said, he found that the Opposition had created a "gondogol".

He said this session would

be remembered by the people as it had passed two historic bills. He thanked the Chairman and members of the Select Committee for performing a challenging job and placing an unanimous report on the Constitution Amendment Bills.

The State Minister expressed the hope that democracy would take an institutional shape if the present accommodating attitude prevailed in the future. Everything in the current session had been done after lengthy discussions and accommodation, he added.

Suranjit

Mr Suranjit Sengupta (GP-Suramganj) thanked the Leader of the House and the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina for their significant contributions in the passage of the two Constitution Amendment Bills.

He said the Leader of the House is the leader not only of the Treasury Bench but also of all in the House.

The GP member said the members had discussed various issues from different angles but ultimately arrived at a consensus.

Referring to the passage of the 11th and the 12th Constitution Amendment Bills, Mr Sengupta said the way these bills were passed was worthy to be followed by others in the world.

Termining the Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam

Hafiz and the Finance Minister Saifur Rahman as the key figures of the session. Mr Sengupta said they had carried forward their magnificent tasks successfully.

He also thanked the LORD and Cooperative Minister and Secretary General of the BNP Abdus Salam Talukder for his role and maximum presence in the House.

Mr Sengupta expressed the hope that the House would be able to take decision on the issue of allowing autonomy to the television and the radio.

He called upon the Finance Minister to provide for all the Sangsad employees allowances equal to a month's salary for the arduous task they performed during the session.

Matiur Rahman Nizami

Moulana Matiur Rahman Nizami (Jamaat-Pabna) said the fifth Parliament had made a landmark in the history of the country through the passage of the 11th and the 12th Constitution Amendment Bills.

He said the understanding reached and the sense of accommodation shown during the passage of the bills should be maintained in the interest of the nation.

The Jamaat member said it was difficult to preserve a thing than to achieve it. He called for practising tolerance for establishing democracy on sound footing.

He thanked the Speaker

and Deputy Speaker for conducting the business of the House smoothly. He also thanked the Leader of the House, Leader of the Opposition, group leaders and members of the House for their role in the House.

Rashed Khan

Mr Rashed Khan Menon (WP-Bakerganj) also said the current session had ended a long-standing controversy and helped of the nation regain a lost glory.

He said Leader of the House and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her party could claim the maximum credit for restoring parliamentary democracy in the country.

Mr Menon added, now we have to make a united effort for achieving economic development, utilising the present understanding among the parties.

State Minister for Land Jamrudin Sircar, Mr M A Matin (BNP), Mr Masur Rahman (BNP), Mr A T M Alamgir (BNP), Begum Shamsunnahar Khwaja Ahsanullah (BNP) and Mr Anwar Ali (Jamaat) also spoke in the concluding sitting.

The budget session of the Jatiya Sangsad was adjourned sine die at 3.22 pm. Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas read out the prorogation order of the Acting President, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

## Feature Health

### A System to Break the Poison Circle

ABOUT 25 million agricultural workers in developing countries are poisoned by pesticides, and some 20,000 people die of pesticide poisoning in developing countries every year.

The vast majority of poisonings go unreported, writes health researcher J. Jeyaratnam in a recent World Health Organization (WHO) journal, reports Pesticide News.

Most people suffer from one or more of a wide range of immediate symptoms, from eye and lung irritation to muscle twitches and skin trouble but there may be long-term effects from behavior changes to cancer.

Developed countries are also concerned about pesticide

As pesticide regulations become tougher in the developed world, some companies have been selling banned chemicals to developing nations where there are few regulations. Farmers and consumers have little access to information about the chemicals so are unable to make informed choices about what they want to use or eat. Gemini News Service reports on a proposal a new world-wide system of labelling of pesticides. by Geoff Tansey

calling for adoption of the scheme will go before the International Organisation of Consumer Union's 13th World Consumer Congress in Hong Kong in early July. Already campaigning organisations in 20 countries, including Brazil, Ghana, Malaysia and the Philippines are examining the

chemical association, the IVA.

Some countries have learned the lessons of the pesticides treadmill, says L. A. Thrupp, who studied the Costa Rican banana industry. Too much of the wrong kinds of pesticide were used over too wide an area. The pests developed a resistance and their numbers rose again.

Now, pest levels and pesticide use are monitored, natural predators are encouraged and an entomologist supervises spraying.

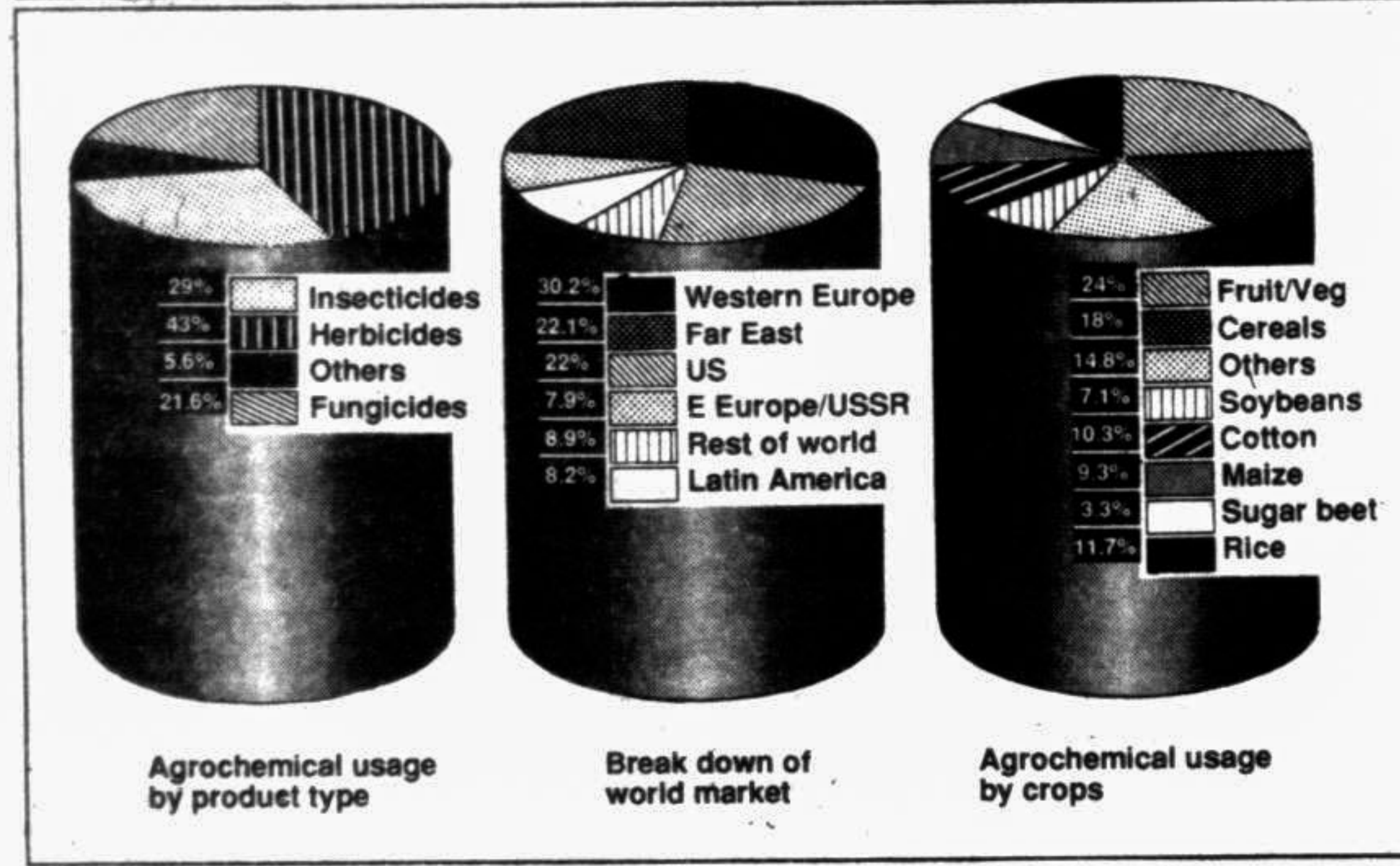
Drs Lang and Clutterbuck are critical of the way pesticide research is done, the way standards are set for pesticides, the secrecy surrounding it and the lack of involvement of those who bear the most risk — farmers and consumers.

"In the negotiations over the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), differences in pesticide residue standards have become highly contentious," says Dr. Lang. A little known United Nations body, Codex Alimentarius run jointly by the WHO and the FAO would become responsible for setting standards.

But Lang believes Codex is not in a good position to do this, because it "has heavy involvement from food multinationals and agrochemical companies." At Codex's most recent meeting in Rome, "over a quarter of the 197 participants were from agrochemical companies, with only two consumers representing the world's mouths," says Lang.

A recent UK Food Advisory Committee report on labelling recommended that post-harvest pesticides are declared but felt a P-numbering system could be confusing. It is seeking comments on labelling from consumers.

### World agrochemical usage:1990



residues in food, and major food retailers are now telling farmers what can and cannot be used on crops supplied to them.

There is growing concern too, in developed countries, about people over-using sprays in their own yards and poor labelling on these products. Farmers in those countries as well often misuse chemicals.

Sicknesses caused by pesticides are still largely misdiagnosed because doctors know so little about them.

Farm workers in developing countries are often given or buy pesticides which are banned in rich countries. Their governments do not have the resources to police chemical companies or the farmers.

In May, Swiss Chemicals giant Ciba Geigy admitted selling 450,000 litres of an insecticide containing DDT to Tanzania's cotton marketing board, contrary to an international code of conduct and its own internal rules. DDT is banned or severely restricted in 45 countries.

Now, both consumer and farm worker interests are coming together to create 'world-wide pressure for a P-number' pesticide numbering system — reminiscent of the 'E-numbers' for food additives in Europe which gave each additive a standard number and had it printed on food labels.

A resolution from Agrisalut, an Italian consumer group,

scheme.

P-numbers for the 1,000 or so active ingredients used world-wide would help farmers, workers and consumers identify pesticides, and get over the confusion of chemical, trade and national names used for the same active ingredient, says Dr Tim Lang, UK host of the campaign and co-author with Dr Charlie Clutterbuck of P is for Pesticides.

Land believes this could also help developing countries control the import of banned or severely restricted pesticides. Clear labelling with back-up data sheets would help countries exercise "Prior Informed Consent," as agreed in the 1985 Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) code of conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides.

Foods would also be labelled to show what pre- and post-harvest treatments were used but the proposers recognise this would have to be phased in.

In the United States, the recently tabled Circle of Poison Prevention Act seeks to ban export by US chemical firms of pesticides prohibited in the US. Apart from consumer protection, the intent is also to make competition with overseas competitors more fair.

Such moves are being fiercely resisted by the huge agrochemical industry, worth between about \$23 million and \$26 billion in 1990, according to various estimates. The

largest markets are in Western Europe, North America and Asia. Herbicides form almost half the total world markets.

The market fell about eight per cent last year and the land area treated with pesticides is not likely to increase in the future according to Walter Ernst, chairman of the German agro-

Reaching these people with family planning information and services is extremely important but complex, as the State of World Population Report 1991, just published by the United Nations Population Fund, explains.

Eighty per cent of the world's teenagers live in the developing world. And although traditional patterns are slow in changing, there is concern everywhere about high levels of adolescent fertility.

But some countries shy away from confronting the problem of teenage sexuality.

Zambia's President Kaunda noted that 'the provision of family planning services for adolescents is often considered too radical, even though young people are demanding

these services.'

The 1974 International Population Conference in Bucharest reflected this concern in its recommendation on teenage fertility:

'Governments are urged to ensure that adolescents, both boys and girls, receive adequate education, including family life and sex education, with due consideration given to the role, rights, and obligations of parents and changing individual and cultural values.'

Suitable family planning information and services should be made available to adolescents with in the changing socio-cultural framework of each country.'

Cuba is one country that is actively taking the family planning message to teenagers.

It provides a wide range of contraceptives free or at a nominal charge, publishes sex education materials for different groups, trains medical staff and teachers in communication and advice-giving on sexual issues, and includes sex education in the work of organisations such as the Federation of Cuban Women.

Current priorities in sex education are reducing teenage

**M**ALARIA — particularly falciparum malaria — kills one child in 10 in some parts of West Africa, and the death toll is heavy among small children throughout the tropical world.

A cheap and effective vaccine still seems a long way off. Protection against malaria still relies on anti-malarial drugs, and preventing susceptible people from being bitten by the parasite-transmitting 'anopheles' mosquitos.

The malaria parasite itself is a complex organism, which starts developing resistance to new anti-malarial drugs almost as soon as they become available.

Even the widespread spraying of insecticides with the aim of destroying 'anopheles' mosquitos has not had the desired effect, because over the years the mosquitos have developed a resistance to the insecticides. Research workers have therefore been looking for other methods to control malaria.

Recently, a team in Gambia undertook a study to see if a simple low-tech method — soaking mosquito nets in insecticide — could be used on a large scale to reduce deaths from malaria. The study centred on 73 villages east of the town of Soma on the south bank of the river Gambia, about 200 km from the Atlantic coast.

The environment is typical West Africa savannah, with mangrove swamps bordering the river; the climate, characteristic of the sub-Sahel region, has a long dry season and a short, heavy rainy season from June to October. It is shortly after the rains start that the 'anopheles' mosquitos start proliferating — and it is during this period from July until December that most deaths due to malaria take place.

The habit of sleeping under bed nets for protection against nocturnal insects was already

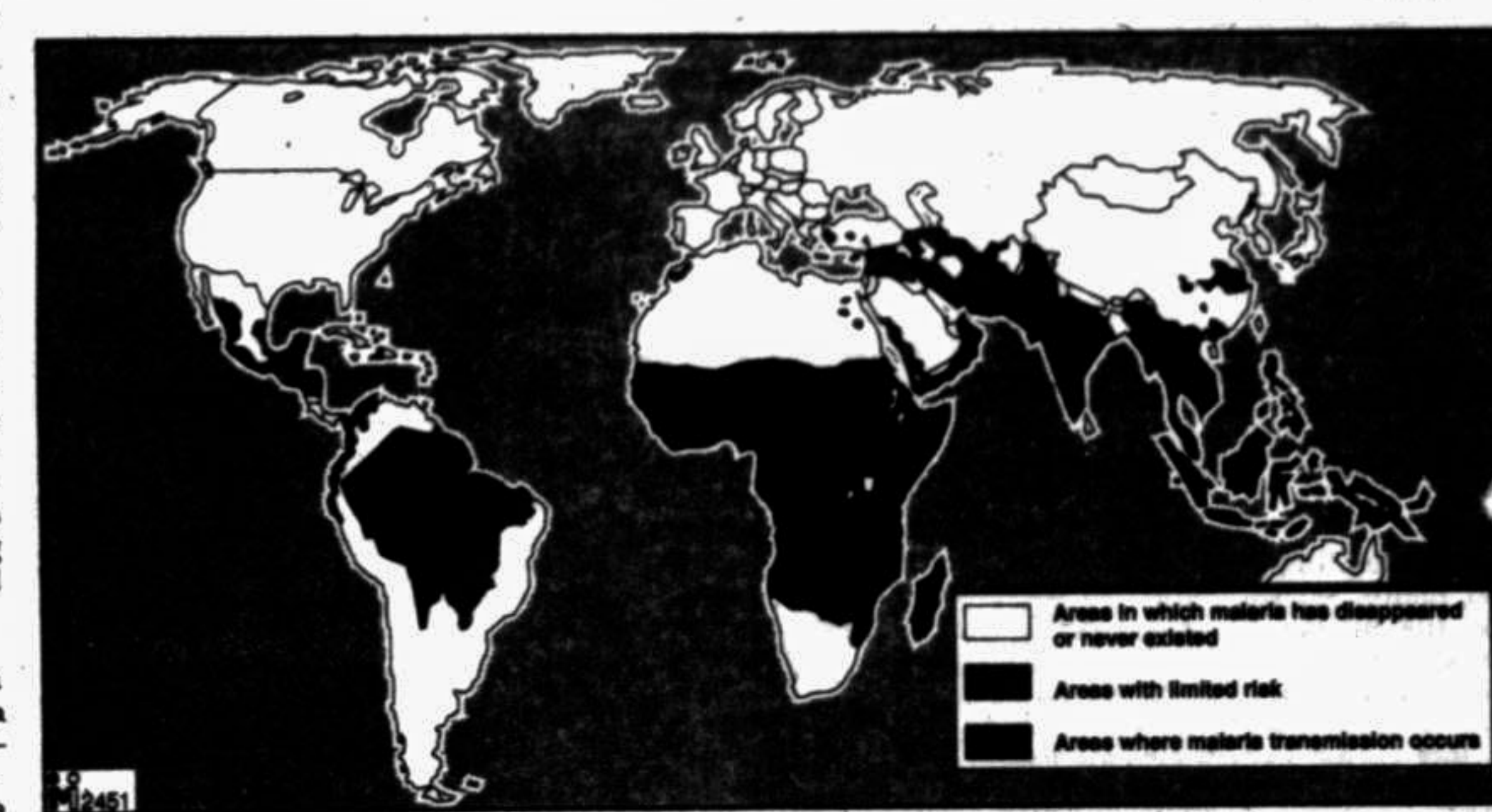
well accepted in these communities — although this seemed to have had little effect on the prevalence of malaria.

Part of the problem may have been that even a single small tear in the net allows mosquitos to enter — and even a hole just large enough to allow a single mosquito to enter would negate the whole purpose of sleeping under a net.

From July 1989, all the nets in 17 selected villages were impregnated with a mosquito-repellent chemical called Permethrin at the beginning of the malaria transmission season. Similar studies done on a small scale in Gambia and Kenya had suggested that the insecticide-impregnated nets

### Closing the Net around Malaria

Malaria remains a major health hazard in much of the world, particularly in developing countries, and a vaccine still seems a long way off. In the meantime, researchers, with the help of local communities, seek other ways to repel malaria-carrying mosquitos. In Gambia, reports Gemini News Service, villagers have been impregnating their mosquito nets with insecticide. by Sanjiva Wijesinha



might be effective.

The process of dipping the nets in the chemical solution (40 mls of insecticide were used for each net) was done by village women, supervised by a local woman who had undergone a six week course in primary health care.

All items used in the dipping process except for the chemical itself, were provided locally; the women dipped their own nets after they were washed, excess fluid was wrung out, and the nets dried indoors on the top of a bare mattress. All the treated nets were marked after drying with an indelible pen.

Children over six months and under six years were to sleep under these treated nets — and at the end of the study it

was confirmed that 92 per cent of the children had in fact regularly done so.

During the period of the study, children in the remaining 56 villages continued as they had always done, with 77 per cent of them sleeping under nets — important difference being that their nets had not been treated with the insecticide.

Comparison of the two results was startling. Malarial deaths in the 17 villages, prior to intervention, were approximately 21 per 1,000 in children aged 1 to 4 years; with use of insecticide impregnated nets the deaths fell to around 3 per 1,000. In the untreated villages, malaria deaths remained roughly the same, around 11 per 1,000.

### Teenage Mutant Ninjas

ALL over the world adolescents are reaching puberty earlier. As a result, their span of reproductive years is increased and so is their potential for having more children than previous generations. And with around one billion teenagers in the world-one-fifth of humankind — the implications for population growth are very serious.

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Zambia's President Kaunda noted that 'the provision of family planning services for adolescents is often considered too radical, even though young people are demanding

pregnancy and encouraging men to take part in family planning.

The country is proud of its low birthrate, currently 17 per 1,000 population — one of the lowest in Latin America and not far behind the industrialized countries (US is 14 per 1,000). The low rate stems partly from the government's success in improving the status of women. On the other hand, teenage pregnancy and young single motherhood, although not new, are increasingly being identified as social problems.

The government is now worried about the high abortion rate. Between 1968 and 1974, with the liberalization of the law covering abortion, the rate of abortions for women 15-49 almost quadrupled, from 17 to 70 per thousand women. And although the number of abortions has declined since, almost a third are still for women under 20 years old.

Ease of access and lack of emphasis on pregnancy prevention, have led to over-reliance on abortion as a birth control method. Although they know about contraception, only about one fifth of 15-19 year olds use it. One young

### Targetting men

Providing contraceptive and sterilisation services to men is cheaper and simpler than for women. There are fewer side-effects. Virtually no medical follow-up is needed. This both saves money and spares women from yet more visits to the doctor. Men should join women in taking responsibility for contraception.

**Men can take responsibility for contraception**

In 1990 in developing countries reliable male methods of contraception (the condom and vasectomy) accounted for just 15% of contraceptive use.

- 141 million women in the developing world have had sterilisations after completing their family, but only 30 million men have vasectomies — yet this is a much simpler procedure.
- 23 million men use condoms compared with 93 million women using IUDs and 46 million women swallowing the Pill.

**Barrier to disease — the male contraceptive**

The male barrier contraceptive, the condom, has an advantage over female contraceptives in preventing the transmission of sexual diseases, including AIDS. Yet only 6% of contraceptive users choose condoms.

woman who had had nine abortions said she never used contraception because 'it wasn't natural'.

As a result, a main aim of

Cuba's family planning efforts is to increase the use of contraception among young people. UNFPA/United Nations Population Fund is co-operating with the Government and other agencies in a US \$2.4 million programme of population activities. —UNFPA Feature.