

## Time for a Comprehensive Peace

The death and destruction has ended in the Gulf at least for now, and we hope forever. We welcome this cessation of hostilities and urge the parties involved to concentrate all their energies in finding a durable peace in that troubled region. Bangladesh's position in the Gulf War was a principled one. It was to uphold the norm of inviolability of national boundaries and the sovereignty of States. We held these principles to be of utmost importance. Thus we joined the United Nations to uphold them, even at the risk of having our own soldiers die for them.

The Allies, led by the US, mobilized practically the whole world in fighting against Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. As we said, it was a just cause and we supported it. However there is another just cause that requires an equal mobilization of world support behind it and the showing of similar enthusiasm, probably more, in finding a solution to it: We are of course referring to the Palestinian cause.

The onus lies on the victorious powers, especially the US, UK, France and other Western countries, to put pressure on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories and assist in the establishment of a Palestinian State. The zeal with which the implementation of the 12 UN resolutions concerning Iraq was pushed for, must now be directed towards the implementation of UN resolutions concerning Palestine and Israeli atrocities in the occupied territories. The credibility of the US and other Western countries are now on the dock. We earnestly hope that they will show more sincerity this time than they did before.

President Bush has stated that "war is now behind us. Ahead of us is the task of securing a potentially historic peace". We couldn't agree with him more. However the "historic peace" that he is talking about must be one in which the rights of the Palestinian people will be fully protected. This paper has already warned about the machinations of Israel to prevent a just solution of the Palestinian cause. With Iraq humbled and isolated, and the PLO in disarray, Israel reigns virtually unchallenged. The siding of PLO with Iraq, especially the role of Arafat, has made countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE (major financial backers of PLO), Egypt and Syria a bit weary of PLO. There is sign of division within PLO itself. Taking advantage of the split in the Arab camp the US, under the influence of the Israeli lobby in Washington, may try to sidetrack the PLO in working out that "historic peace" that President Bush has talked about. Such a policy will only reinforce the Muslim suspicion of US intention and give rise to other problems in the region.

This paper believes that time is appropriate for the holding of that oft proposed UN sponsored peace conference with the participation of US, Soviet Union and all other countries concerned in Middle East peace. Now that the Western countries have suddenly awakened to the virtue of the UN and have found its usefulness, they should go ahead with the conference aimed at finding a comprehensive peace plan covering all the issues that vitiate peace in that troubled part of the world.

President Bush also said that the war was not against the people of Iraq. It is necessary to follow up this statement with concrete action in helping the restoration of some basic services to the Iraqi people. It is reported that shortage of drinking water, medicine and other essentials are causing havoc to the public, as much a victim of a blind ambition as of the Allied bombing. An international effort should be launched to prevent the spread of hunger and disease in Iraq. A timely action in these areas will go a long way in healing the wound which is nobody's interest to see postponed.

The euphoria of victory should not blind anybody as to the complexity of the problems and the historical roots they are based on. The faster we get started in finding solutions to them, the safer will the world feel.

## Case for Second Channel

A feasibility study is due to be undertaken shortly into plans to establish an Open University. Decisions on the actual structure, and subjects to be offered, will be decided according to findings of the study.

The Open University will provide a much needed opportunity to pursue higher education, especially to those who are unable to continue formal education after a certain level (often due to financial constraints). Whether the courses are offered on TV, radio or through correspondence, it will provide a welcome, and relatively cheap, method of obtaining higher education.

However, it would be quite wrong to suggest that the Open University concept should remain in the field of degree-level education only. The need to provide formal education at lower levels is far greater in today's Bangladesh. The cost of providing secondary and higher secondary education has been a prohibitive factor, and is likely to remain so for some time. The high level of capital investment needed is not readily forthcoming, while running cost can never be met by student fees. Also, the private sector has not woken up to the idea of financing education in low-income rural areas.

On the other hand, great advancements have been made in electrification as well as road and rail links with the remotest parts of the country. Television, perhaps the most effective of media, is now available to a greater part of the population than before, while the postal service has improved dramatically.

While the Open University should naturally be brought to students through regular programmes on TV and radio, offer of college-level courses through the media ought to form a part of the plan. In this connection, serious consideration should be given, at the earliest opportunity, to the possibility of establishing a second channel on Bangladesh Television.

The programming on such a channel can thus be oriented towards the field of education. The thing to remember is, that many non-formal education, such as technical training, advice to farmers on new or more advanced method of farming, public service programmes on community as well as personal hygiene, family planning, health care etc. register better with people when presented visually.

A second channel will provide the Open University with a permanent home.

Optimism is growing that by the end of 1991 South Africa could well be on the way to a new constitution and a government that embraces all the races. This feeling that events are moving in a positive direction is being reflected in meetings held over several weeks involving all the major players in the complex power game in the region.

At a time when the international focus on the Gulf seemed to have put political events in South Africa on the back-burner for the first time for years, progress has been increasingly encouraging.

The cautiously upbeat mood flows from a spurt of diplomatic activity that has included a meeting of leaders of the Front Line States in Harare, bilateral talks between African National Congress (ANC) Vice-President Nelson Mandela and President F.W. de Klerk, Inkatha Movement leader Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, and the new leader of the Pan African Congress (PAC), Clarence Makwetu and a meeting of Commonwealth foreign ministers in London.

In the middle of all this came de Klerk's action to repeal the acts that entrench apartheid. Although the ANC will hardly believe it till the repeals are law, there is little reason to doubt that de Klerk means business and the expectation is that by the end of

April the hated acts will have gone.

By June an all-party conference could be convened to work out a new constitution. For the blacks unity is essential and Mandela is now giving priority to bringing the ANC, Inkatha and the PAC together to form a united front. A so-called "patriotic meeting" of anti-apartheid forces is to be held on March 21 as a step in this direction.

de Klerk's agreement to release remaining political prisoners and allow the return of exiles by the end of April — the crucial missing ingredient in his speech of February 1 — has boosted hopes for early all-party talks.

In his efforts to ensure that everyone is brought together Mandela has even held talks with the leader of the opposition Conservative Party in the white chamber, Andre Treurnicht.

It was against this background that the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa,

chaired by Canadian External Affairs Minister Joe Clark, held an emergency meeting in London to tackle the thorny issue of how and when to lift sanctions.

The ten-country committee, to which Britain does not belong, decided on a "programmed management approach" matching the lifting of sanctions to real progress in South Africa. It was firmly against any relaxation for the moment, pending the abolition of the apartheid laws, but it gave the amber light to some easing of the sporting and cultural boycotts.

The ministers had before them an Australian paper which suggested a three-phased approach—sporting boycotts to be ended first, trade and investment in a second stage and finally arms sales. Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke is anxious to resume sporting contacts, and although the paper was not adopted it was agreed that a sport-by-sport approach would probably be right.

It will be left to the sporting organisations in the first instance to feel their way. If they are satisfied that apartheid is being eliminated in certain sports then recommendations to resume links should be accepted. In practice, an official of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has already been in Johannesburg to assess whether South Africa could return to the Olympics in time for next year's Barcelona Games.

The International Cricket Council and FIFA, the football body, could be guided by any IOC decision. The progress of unity talks between the South African Rugby Board and the South African Rugby Union will dictate decisions on rugby.

The hope is that the Glenageary Agreement, which was drawn up by Commonwealth leaders in 1977 to end sporting contacts with South Africa, can be rescinded at the next Commonwealth summit, which is to be held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in October. It may even

be that by then sanctions of all kinds, except the arms embargo, can be lifted.

Meantime the expectation is that there will soon be a resumption of "people-to-people contacts." Restrictions on visas might go, along with cultural contacts between actors and musicians, and curbs on air links and tourism restored.

All this could be agreed at a further meeting of foreign ministers to be held in May — after the April 30 deadline de Klerk has put on the repeal of the apartheid laws.

Although the British would have been happier to see sanctions ended at once, they are not likely to make a big issue of it in the coming months. The situation seems to be moving so much in the right direction that the arguments are suddenly now about months rather than years.

A defusing of the sanctions strains in the Commonwealth

is likely to be eased by the return to warmer relations between Britain and the rest of the Commonwealth generally, signalled since John Major replaced Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister.

As the Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeke Anyaoku, put it after the London talks: "The debate has taken on a different nature now. For the first time we are talking of relating sanctions to progress on the ground."

Since Anyaoku took office last July he himself had been involved in talks with all sides on a South African solution. These have involved meetings in Europe with South African ministers C.J. Van de Merwe and Barend du Plessis, with Buthelezi and Makwetu and with British Prime Minister John Major and Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Douglas Hurd.

He is also maintaining contact with the United States, where Congress has been strongly influenced by the Commonwealth position on sanctions, and with the United Nations — GEMINI NEWS

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## 'We Have Oil,' Manila Insists

Mary Ann Reyes writes from Manila

After decades of cycling along with pimply deposits, oil exploration in the Philippines might be excused for high-speeding.

The reason: major world-class oil and gas discoveries in its Camago, West Linapacan and Octon wells off northwest Palawan province, southern Philippines.

Camago 1 is estimated to contain recoverable reserves of 1.1 trillion cubic feet of gas. Octon well reportedly flowed gas at the rate of 12.5 million cu. ft. per day and 1,032 barrels of oil condensate daily. Meanwhile last December, West Linapacan well flowed with more than 7,000 barrels of oil.

The explorations triggered remarkable results. Suddenly, the Philippines looks more tempting. Industry experts believe that the country is on the brink of becoming a magnet for foreign oil investments.

According to President Corason Aquino, "There is really only one incentive that will get oil exploration going in the Philippines. And that is the likelihood of discovery."

"We have oil," she says. "There is oil around us — Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. We have found some in the Philippines. Yet our discoveries have not been anywhere comparable to our neighbours."

The Philippines is 97 per cent dependent on imported oil at a cost of over US \$1.3 billion in 1990. The daily oil output of 4,500 barrels per day accounts for 3 per cent of its average daily domestic consumption of 239,000 barrels.

But with the recent finds, foreign oil exploration groups are now expressing renewed interest over some offshore and onshore areas. British Petroleum, Shell, Occidental

Petroleum and other big oil companies are all set to drill starting February, says Alfredo Ramos, president of Philodrill, operator of the Orton well.

The Philippines is still

largely unexplored, oil-wise. At least 80 per cent of its potential oil deposits remain unexplored. According to the Petroleum Association of the Philippines, only 10 million hectares of the country's 54.8

million hectares total basinal acreage has been contracted for by oil exploration firms.

A four-year study of the hydrocarbon potential of the country — made by the World Bank for the Office of Energy

sharing which was practised in nearby oil-producing countries like Indonesia.

The scheme was quite successful in other countries because it allowed the driller to recover cost and get profit

## Suddenly the Philippines looks more tempting

Affairs here — has identified at least six basins that may be rated as having good or very good prospects for the discovery of new commercial oil and gas fields. These basins are marginally explored or not at all.

Petroleum exploration in the Philippines dates back to 1896 with the first oil well drilled in Cebu province. From the 1950s to 1970s, there was wide-spread exploration which produced no significant discovery.

Energy Development Services Director Freddie Rillera says this was largely due to the fact that most wells were drilled based on surface mapping and oil seeps. "Another reason was that the wells drilled were less than 1,000 metres deep and were virtually shallow test holes. Lastly, the existing system then was not conducive to the entry of expensive exploration technology," he says.

The second wave of explorations started after the passage of the petroleum Act of 1976. The new law amended the 1949 version and adapted a service contract concept of

sharing with the government. Oil exploration was accelerated after the introduction of the service contract system.

With the availability of modern exploration methods, oil in commercial quantities were subsequently discovered, foremost of which was Nido, the country's first producing oilfield started commercial operations in 1979 under the supervision of Philippine Cities Services, Inc.

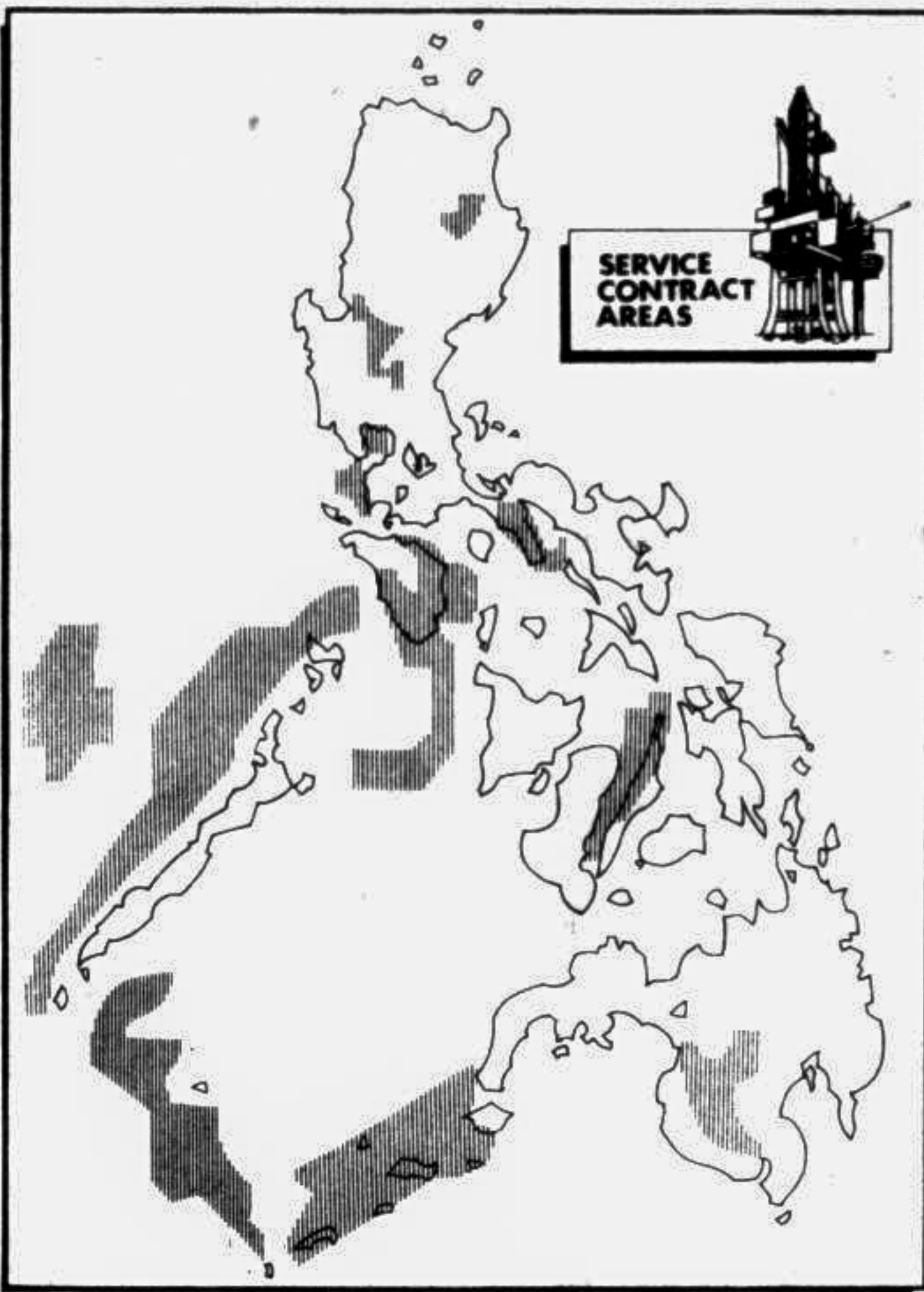
But production from the celebrated oil well decreased

with the government.

With the recent discoveries, however, the country's oil exploration prospects, industry experts say, will continue to boom.

Some say quickly, some say slowly, but the direction is clear. The day is not too far off when the Philippines will be self-sufficient in oil. In five to six years," Ramos predicted.

— *Depthicus Asia*



## To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

### Age of superannuation

In Bangladesh government servants retire at 57 years of age, while teachers in Universities at 60 and Judges of Hon'ble High Court/Supreme Court at 65. Chairman and the Members of P.S.C. also serve upto 62 years of age. Anomalies are apparent.

It is said a person working as a teacher for 12 years is not accepted in Courts as a witness. However rightly or wrongly it is said, it means to indicate teachers working continuously for a considerable period of time are likely to lose over the years required patience and mental alertness. In spite of it, University teachers work upto 60 years of age. Judges also require immense wisdom and perfect balance and heavy concentration of mind in discharging their duties perfectly, but for which the murderer may be acquitted and an innocent man may be sentenced to death. If the Judges of Hon'ble High Court/Supreme Court are expected to have all the above traits even at 65, why others in govt./semi-govt./autonomous bodies will not be able to do their jobs well beyond 57 years of age is not well-understood.

Average longevity of a man has now risen to nearly 60 years from 35 of a quarter century back, because of de-

velopment in health education, increase in medical facilities and improvement in sanitation in modern days. Retirement age was 55, 25 years ago. Since longevity has by now jumped upto near 60, it is desirable that retirement age may also be enhanced to 60 in place of present 57.

There are other reasons too for proposed enhancement: (1) Late marriage is the go of the day. Hence many govt. servants who marry late at 30/35 years of age can hardly find their children properly educated and settled in life before retiring at the age of 57. (2) Session-jam in Universities/Colleges very often cause delay in completion of educational career of the children and consequently delay their settlement in life, for which they need to be fed and maintained by their parents longer. (3) After retirement a govt. servant finds himself abruptly without any work and so feels useless in the society which tells upon his mind and body. His health condition suddenly deteriorates and he dies soon. Prolonged stay in service might, in many cases, prolong longevity, other things remaining the same. If death is considered to be pre-determined by God, prolonged stay in a job might at least prolong the period of his healthy mind in a healthy body.

Youngsters or junior govt. servants may agitate against enhancement of superannuation age for reasons, inter alia, that belated retirement of existing incumbents may delay the employment of those unemployed or promotion of those already employed. But how long this delay? Obviously only for the period of extension if it occurs once, and not all the years ahead. But once they enter into service of government and semi-govt./autonomous organisation they may also enjoy benefit of the extended superannuation age as much as the present or old incumbents will do. Besides, those waiting to be employed may be fed by their parents in job for extended period of superannuation or for the extended period of unemployment.

Over and above, apprehended gap in new recruitment arising from delayed retirement of existing incumbents may be substantially compensated by (a) filling up innumerable posts (1.09 lac as per Ministry of Establishment statistics of 1989), gazetted and non-gazetted, lying vacant for financial constraints or other reasons and (b) removing the discriminatory system of extending service of some govt. servants beyond 57 at will off and on.

In mid-90, however, the government thought of increasing the age of entry from 27 years to 30 and that of retirement from 57 to 60 (including LPR period) but that has not yet taken any shape. We hope the government now will properly judge the facts focused above and dispense with due justice and do the needful towards equal treatment to all concerned in all

professions, so far as superannuation is concerned.

Amin Uddin Chowdhury  
18, College Street,  
Dhaka.

### Open manhole

Sir, The cover of a manhole in our locality has been missing for a couple of weeks. It's a narrow lane and thus an uncovered manhole there poses more hazard for a passerby as well as a rickshaw too, when some times at night light goes off. Children are more vulnerable to the danger.

Moreover, this open manhole exposing its filth is polluting the air and atmosphere of the locality. And over and above it is being filled with garbage over the days. Just who cares. But being filled with garbage it is now choking the flow of sewage from our toilets rendering them out of use.

Should the City Corporation authorities or their department concerned take immediate measure to relieve the tax-payers of the concern and suffering?

Subhasish Banik  
North Moishundi, Dhaka.

### Short film makes long impression

Sir, What difference does the length make when it comes to a story? A successful story can be of any characteristics. Like the conventional movies, Short Films are also capable of

propagating the message equally effectively and can generate lasting impression about national values that make the purpose worthwhile.

Evidently, that purpose has been well served by the Second International Short Film Festival held in Dhaka recently, participated by over two dozen countries and the UN presenting documentaries, experimentals, fictions, and animations.

Alongside regular participations in the international festivals of this nature, increased projections of national culture through "artistic expression" based on "social realism" will enrich Bangalee heritage.

M. Rahman  
Mymensingh 2200

### The zoo habit

Sir, I admit that our zoo does not have a rich variety of animals compared to many other countries of the world. But it is still a place where once in a while we can with our family and friends, go for an outing. It is good for the children, it provides them with uninhibited entertainment and pleasure. It is informative also, as it helps children identify the animals. At the same time, they enjoy rides on a pony or an elephant.

In a city which does not have many such places for outing, this provides relief from the mundane boredom of everyday life. The

entire zoo is a large area, and one can spend a whole day just wandering around the vast space, which itself is a treat.

Those who have not yet had a look at the place, my suggestion to them is to make out some time from the daily busy hours, and make a trip to the zoo. It may not be as good as those in other countries of the world, but it is not too bad. A beneficial zoo habit can also be developed here.

Alamgir Khan  
Mirpur, Dhaka.

### Health at stake

Sir, We stay in the old part of the city. The road is Sheikh Saheb Bazar. For sometime now a drain has been overflowing, polluting the thoroughfare and spreading germs and thus causing a serious threat to the health of the people of the area.

Children unknowingly soak their feet, or just play in the dirty water. Time and again this matter has been brought to the notice of the Municipality, but to no effect as yet.

If this situation continues for long, then the question of survival of the residents will be at stake.

Therefore, it is our ardent request to the concerned authorities to please look into the matter and take prompt action.

Shirin Akhter  
Sheikh Saheb Bazar Lane,  
Dhaka.