Dhaka, Thursday, August 27, 1992

# Independent Media and Advertisement Policy

We would like to extend a qualified welcome to the move by the government to set up a special body to work out a framework for a suitable advertisement policy. Qualified, because there are aspects of the committee's work that cause us concern. We would have been able to welcome the move with a greater degree of enthusiasm if it was headed by an independent professional person instead of a bureaucrat. The membership of the representatives of the BFUJ and DUJ and those of the Editor's Council and the Sangbadpatra Parishad will ensure professional input into the deliberations of the committee. What purpose the representatives of the Press Club — and that also two of them - will serve, leaves a big question mark on the minds of everybody who are interested in the work of this body. Some representatives of the advertising agencies—the conduit through which all advertisements ultimately reach the newspapers - may not have been a bad idea. They could bring a different perspective to the deliberations of the committee.

According to the BSS report published in newspapers, the committee will recommend a policy "helpful for the flourishment, qualitative improvement and increased circulation of the newspapers." So far so good. But then it adds ... "also help advance objective social responsive awareness and high standard of journalism. It will also recommend guidelines consistent with the present policies in the light of overall economic situation of the country and available resources."

We regret the inclusion of what appears to us to be extraneous elements into the terms of reference of the committee to formulate advertisement policy. What is the meaning of expressions like "objective social responsive awareness"? In addition to being an example of bad English, the expression can be used as a pretext to impose all sorts of value judgement on news reporting which we think only an independent professional body is competent to perform. Then again what is the meaning of "guidelines consistent with present policies"? Guidelines for whom, and consistent with whose policies?

We fail to understand as to why a good effort is being otherwise complicated by irrelevant issues and burdened with a "personal agenda" totally inconsistent with the values of an independent press. The members of the committee, all of whom have been chosen in their representative — and not personal — capacity, would be well advised to meet with their respective governing bodies and discuss the implications of the issues mentioned above, before participating in the work of the committee. A decision to participate will amount to acquiescing to the extraneous issues which we repeat, need careful study. We propose that seminars and workshops he held on the subject under the auspicies of the Press Institute to solicit the views of media experts and rank and file of the journalist community.

According to reports, the work of the committee will take three months to complete. What happens in the interim? The information minister has already said that the existing system is replete with corruption. So it must be changed immediately and some temporary arrangement must be put in its place. But how fairly and "objectively" the temporary arrangement functions will go to a great extent in establishing the government's, especially the minister's, credibility as to how genuine and fair ultimately the government's advertisement policy is likely to be. The nation and especially the independent media will be watching - very carefully indeed.

## More Dangerous than Murders

On Saturday a cry was raised in the Chashara Balur Math slum area of Narayanganj. Someone shouted 'child lifter' - and a violent crowd of a hundred people, mostly young men, gathered in no time. The mob literally lynched an unidentifled woman of around 45 but not before having had their fill of sadistic cruelty. She was chased and stoned and caught and beaten up and denuded till she lay prostate and still, bereft of all senses but yet not of life. Then her body was subjected to bludgeoning and breaking by iron rods and bars and sticks. Mercy came to her at last in the form of death

It was clearly a case of mass psychosis Narayangani people had run into similar pathological state three times in the last 20 days - all of them on the signal that a child was being snatched. A goodly crowd of kids were witness to the Saturday lynching. And, according to reports published, this included a child Shahana by name, whose missing from her slum dwelling had triggered off the hunt-down. The poor woman happened to be passing by the slum to her now unknowable destination.

Violence, involving or ending up in murder, is by now all too familiar a crime in our country. But the Saturday Narayangani lynching was as if a leaf has been taken out of medieval barbarism.

The same day, at a village in Sabhar, a gang of miscreants attacked the house of Rahmat Ali with the intent of killing him. This was sequel to a continuing family feud. Rahmat who had only a while ago returned to his house accompanied by Rahima, his nine-year-old daughter, fled for his life. The frustrated attackers caught Rahima and beheaded the child by a fell stroke.

Political murders one can understand as simply as one can take other killings with clear motives motives making the murderers convinced that they somehow stood to gain by their cruel, inhuman action. The lynching at Narayanganj and the slaughter at Sabhar, however, do not lend to any easy explanation and rather graphically paints the sad state of our society. A civilised polity is a far cry from the sites of visitation of such mass psychosis. Blaming this on any agency or factor wouldn't help. But an understanding of how such weird eclipse of humanity comes about is necessary to prevent repetitions of the same.

One thing we can be certain about even at this stage of complete ignorance of and abject indifference to the problem - when all that the government and most in the society can think of this is that it is a police matter or to put it in opposition parlance a matter of deterioration of law and order. We all are being inured to violence. A sense of revulsion and outrage that should have been the most usual reaction to such crime is fast yielding ground to apathy. This is far more dangerous than the gruesome crimes themselves.

# It's Gathering Storm over the Adriatic

UGUST is the holiday season of the West. Yet A events have dynamics of their own and they seem to be gathering momentum. The most dramatic but little noticed event has been the birth of Kurdistan in northern Iraq. This was a direct result of the defeat of Saddam's forces at the hands of the allied forces led by the US. It may be recalled that as debacle started Saddam in the face and his forces were in full flight from the advancing allied forces, and the Iraqi forces were being decimated by allied bombing, Saddam's army was driven beyond the 36 parallel. Thus a no man's land was created, which has now become, in living memory, Kurdistan The birth of Kurdistan has been engineered solely by the will of the US.

The two Kurdish leaders Mr. Masud Barzani and Jalal Talabani have come together and seem to co-operate. Lately they came to Ankara and met the Turkish leaders. Noises emanating from Washington concerning the Kurds appear

more to confuse than clarify. Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel and members of his cabinet have repeatedly stressed that the territorial integrity of Iraq was inviolable. At the same time Turkey has stressed her ethnic and other ties with brethren in north Iraq and that it could not remain indifferent to their fate. At the height of the war against Iraq, a US sponsored force called poised hammer was created at the incirlik base in Turkey whose avowed purpose was to prevent Iraq from any kind of operation in newly created Kurdistan. Recently this agreement was renewed by the Turkish parliament amid noses of disquiet.

## Kurds: Pivotal Role

In this entire enterprise it is evident Turkey has a pivotal role. A look at the map is sufficient to prove that Kurdistan, hemmed in the south by hostile Iraq, depends for her sur vival on Turkey Kurds live largely in Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria, with Turkey coming first with nearly 15 million

Arshad-uz Zaman writes from Istanbul

The large concentration of Kurds is in the south-east although most of the Turkish Kurds have been integrated in the mainstream Turkish society. President Ozal declared sometime ago that he was a Kurd and the coalition leader in the Government of Mr Demirel, Mr Erdal Inonu is a Kurd as well.

For several years now the Turkish army has been locked in battle against an uprising in the south eastern part, with the group known as the PKK (Turkish Workers Party). This terrorist group has been trying to disrupt the social fabric by daily acts of murder, arson and violence of every description. For several years they have been carrying on cross border raids and the usual sanctuary has been Syria and Lebanon. With relations with Iraq suffering from a high degree of ambivalence, Turkey has been very keen to starlighten her relations with her other neighbour Syria. The Foreign Minister of Turkey Mr Hikmet

Chetin, recently paid a visit to Damascus and by all accounts is was a complete success. Syria has been worried by a off the cuff remark of Mr Demirel at the recent opening of the giant Ataturk Barrage, where he said that he was no difference between the waters of Euphrates and Tigris flowing through Turkish and Arab soils. Mr Chetin pacified his Syrian host President Hafez el Assad by saying that Turkey would continue to honour her commitment of supplying water 500 cubic metres per second as stipulated in the 1987 agreement. IN return the Syrian side reiterated that they would continue to honour the agreement of April last, through which they undertook to ban all PKK activities, and the Syrian Foreign Minister categorically asserted that the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan was no more in Syria.

Bosnia-Herzegovina If news from her southern neighbours are one of relative

quiet, such is not the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yugoslavia was an Ottoman province for nearly six centuries. The Bosnians are ethnic Turks and there are nearly three and half million Bosnians in Turkey itself. Emotions are rising to dangerous heights with daily TV pictures of Serbian brutalities. Turkey, so far, has been carrying on diplomatic and humanitarian activities to ease the plight of her kith and kin.

These do not appear to have any impact on the Serbs. Nor do efforts of the international community brought peace any nearer in Sarajevo. The UN threatened other action should diplomatic efforts fail.

The Adriatic Sea, south of Yugoslavia, is now ringed by allied warships including one from Turkey. The Foreign Minister of Turkey is once again going on the road to impress upon the western powers the need for tougher action to stop this bloodbath. The Security Council will have to face up the fact that time has come for decistve action.

Although US presidential election fever is quite a few weeks away, the ripples have started reaching here. A former Turkish Ambassador turned columnist Mr Semih Gunver wrote that Mr Bush. who at present is trailing his Democrat rival by 30 points, needed to "overthrow" Saddam at any cost and hence the ongoing crisis between the US and Iraq. "It is on account of this that he wants to play his Kurdish card to the end," wrote Mr Gunver.

The Kurds with their ethnic and linguistic distinctiveness have been campaigning for long for a state of their own. Saddam's misadventures in Kuwait offered the West the perfect pretext to bring about this state, which nobody is in a hurry to recognize. Countries around Kurdistan have at best an ambivalent attitude. The sky in this region appears overcast with gloomy forebodings.

The writer is retired Ambassador and Assistant Secretary General, OIC.

### TT TE owe it to the world to be frank about what we ▼ have achieved in Rio: progress in many fields, too little progress in other fields, and no progress at all in some

We have opened two important conventions for signature (on biodiversity and climatic changes) and it is imperative that we make them more effective. They will not work un less all major countries sign, ratify and implement them.

We have dealt with a wide range of issues important for sustainable development, but we have not dealt seriously enough with extremely important topics such as the need for more open trade and its environmental and developmental impacts that are so vital for developing countries. These are issues that will remain with us.

We will be watched closely by our constituencies as we cial move in to the field of impletions and we will be held ment Agenda 21. accountable.

There is no turning back from realising that we are heading toward a crisis of uncontrollable dimensions unless we change course. The North as well as the rich in the South will have to change consumption and production patterns.

The poor must be brought home from their exile of bondage and humiliation. Fair distribution of wealth and opportunity must be provided. And we must curb population growth by more effective means than we were able to agree upon at Rio and which recognise and reinforce the links to poverty and the rights

We will decide through our actions how effective Agenda 21 will be. Implementation requires financing and new priorities to be set in all coun-

We are disappointed by the lack of adequate financial commitments made. The 20 year old target of 0.7 per cent

# Assessing the Earth Summit

Summit leaders took neither a small step nor a giant leap in Rio, 📮 Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. Not all major countries signed the Summit's two important conventions, other important topics have yet to be discussed and no adequate financommitments mentation and further negotia- were made to imple-

> of GNP as official development assistance must be reached before the year 2000.

> I say this with confidence since Norway provides 1.1 per cent of its GNP- three times higher than the average Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country. We rejected the 0.7 per cent target some 15 years ago and exceeded the one per cent mark more than 10 years

> Norway, with its four million people, contributes almost US\$5000 million more than what is required to fulfill the 0.7 target. We are the eighth largest contributor to the United Nations in absolute terms and by far the largest per capita contributor.

> We are already providing new and additional resources to counter global environmental threats. These contribu-

tions are not counted as Official Development Aid (ODA). We finance them by having the highest tax on carbon dioxide emissions in the world.

Our development assistance has always had an Agenda 21. It has always been poverty-oriented, focused on health and basic needs, women, children, education, family planning, and increasingly on the environ-

If more countries increase their efforts and improve the quality of their contributions, Agenda 21 can become "Accomplishment 21".

The road from Rio will take us many extra miles together. Burdensharing will remain essential. There are several bills that need to be covered in an unruly, troubled world. Bills for peace-keeping, refugee relief, famine and natural disas-

The environmental threats and poverty, however, are crosscutting, long-term, predictable and unavoidable unless we establish a world order of burdensharing, common perceptions and common respon-

Critical decisions remain to be taken. I welcome the highlevel Commission on Sustainable Development and expect it to become effective under a revitalization of the economic and social responsibilities of the United Nations.

Those difficult decisions that could not be taken in Rio will have to be taken in the very near future. For this to happen, accountable governments must work together with the increasing millions of responsible citizens - in par-

Anwar Hussain Manju after

both of them played a very

dirty game with the biggest oil

company of the World -

'SHELL' were specially re-

quested to study the data of

Sylhet and submit a proposal

ticular when the necessary measures seem costly in a

short-term perspective. It is a challenge that the forces of technology and finance have increasingly taken over the powers that should be vested in people to shape their own future.

The idea of government for the people and by the people is gaining ground, but choices about our own future can only be made if governments have budgets and if they can coopcrate internationally where strong forces of power operate

The nation state alone is too small a scene for addressing regional and global challenges. And if national governments are basically unflateral in their attitudes towards global problems, anarchy will prevail over international governance and world order. What should be our global village may turn in a global jungle.

The challenge of the 1990s is to deepen and widen the forces of democracy and to lift democratic decision-making to the international level. Traditional international conferences run by consensus can only advance at the pace of the most reluctant mover in each field. The future requires stronger decision-making procedures. Nothing less will

In Rio, we took neither a small step, nor a giant leap. But the direction of where we are heading has been set.

This is what we face: hard work, more hard work - and never ending efforts, based on human conscience and commitment. The rewards will be high; a safer, cleaner and more equitable future.

IPS: Special Column

# Prize Bond: Time Limit

National Savings Schemes. People buy and hold 50-taka and 10-taka bonds with a fond hope for the betterment of their lot by winning prizes through periodical draws. The government, for reasons best known to them, at first fixed a limit of six years for claiming prizes against the prize winning Bonds and later on reduced the period to one year. Subsequently it was given out that the previous decision of six years limit was restored. Curiously enough, although decisions were taken by appropriate authorities, on no occasion the decision was

given any publicity. It is important to note that when the scheme of Prize Bond was introduced, no such time limit was prescribed, nor was there any necessity to fix such time limit. The fixation of time limit for drawing prize money does not exist anywhere. The method of fixing time limit for prize money understandably does not sound well and need not operate.

List of unclaimed Prize Bonds were prepared in book form and sold to the intend ing buyers which is not being printed and sold these years

The authorities know it well that the persons purchasing and holding Prize Bonds do not get any benefit whatsoever, until and unless they succeed in winning a prize. But yet they hold the Bonds in spite of the fact that they could get certain corresponding benefit monetarily by investing the amount in savings accounts or in any other form.

If anyone succeeds in winning a prize his entitlement to get the prize money should not be forfeited for any reason whatsoever for any period. If the prize winner fails to put forth a claim within any reasonable time, his claim for the prize money must subsist for all the time.

Most of the Bond holders do not find sufficient time to verify their Bond numbers with the prize winning list when published and defer the same for a period to find a comparatively leisure time to attend to it. In such an event, by the government decision, they are surely to forego their right to the prize money. It is the Bond holder who is to suffer for getting delayed payment, and in

Prize Bond is perhaps the fact no one else loses anything most popular among the and the prize money remains in the government exchequer until it is drawn.

Accordingly, it is for the National Savings authorities to take suitable steps to do away with the system of time limit. They should also continue preparing and circulating list of unclaimed bonds as before for the benefit of the Bond holders.

Further, purchase and sale of Prize Bonds as per government scheme is to be done at the banks and post offices. But numerous grievances, appearing in the national dailies show that most of the bank branches do not perform this part of the job and they simply regret that Prize Bonds are not available there. They perhaps think that it is an extra and avoidable burden. The Bangladesh Bank and the Ministry of Finance who have positive role of su perintendence over such institutions also do not appear to have taken any notice of such accusations.

As Prize Bond is an important saving system that plays dominant part in the growth of national capital, any decision of the like taken by government is bound to retard the efficacy of such a scheme which is not desirable. The matter deserves careful consideration of the authorities apart from other matters relating to Prize Bond drawing etc that also come in the national dailies from time

It is for the appropriate authorities to study the statistics to examine whether the Prize Bond is gaining or losing popularity day by day due to imposition of time limit and it is easy for them to find out what were the number of Bonds in circulation before and after such decision.

Moreover, the matter of time limit for drawing prize money is totally unwholesome. And when the same was not imposed at the time of floating the scheme, it is a bad piece of decision to impose it subsequently. It is unfortunate that the imposition of time limit and stoppage of preparation and circulation of unclaimed list of Bonds have done positive damage to the scheme, which ought to have been taken notice of.

> S M Hussain Motijheel C/A, Dhaka

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 communica tions must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

## **Budget: Felicitations** and some suggestions

Sir, On the passing of the budget of production, progress and savings at the prevailing juncture of financial crisis, political and social turmoils the expatriates feel happy. The expatriate community of all ranks and files including the Probashi Shilpa Uddyog' congratulate the honourable Finance Minister and the hon-, gestions are put forward :ourable Prime Minister.

The local daily Gulf Times published that the Bangladesh Government had invited its expatriate members serving in the Middle East countries including Qatar to come forward for actively participating (investing) in the Development Bond, in establishing new industries, to buy old industries of the public sectors, and also to participate in the Financial Loan Advancing Authority, after it is turned in to as non-Govt

organisation. The expatriates, with particular attention, have also noticed that the Finance Minster has kindly recognised the hard earned foreign exchange of the expatriates as one of the means of development activities of the country.

Since long the expatriates and repatriates have been exposing their earnest desire for contributing the economic development activity by participating in bodies like the Probashi Shilpo Shangstha, Probashi Investment Trust, Wage Earners Investment Corporation, Probashi-O-Prothyagoto Bank, Probashi

Kollyan Tohbil etc.

As effective and convenient ways and means for implementation of the investment programme, the foreign exchange earned by the expatriates and repatriates have been counted vital. also some principles in this regard have been indicated by the Finance Minister to be exercised. To provide physical shape to all these development works a few sug-

With a view to attaining the greater interest of the people of this group in particular and the country as a whole, these people are needed to be well organised on a single platform. To achieve that end, opportunity is needed for exerting joint effort by the Manpower Ministry, Foreign Ministry, Finance Ministry and the expatriates-repatriates organisations to - establish the Probashi Shilpo Shangsta jointly by the expatriates and the government; for implementation of the Wage Earners Investment Corporation; to establish the Expatriate & Repatriate Bank under their proprietorship and management; for implementation of the Probashi Kollyan Tohbil, causing required amount of modification, ensuring their proprietorship and management; to induce Govt initiative, help and co-operation in implementing the Gramin Shilpo

Uddyog (Doha). It is worthwhile to mention that like other projects in implementing the Gramin Shilpo

Prokolpo proposed by the

Probashi Bangladeshi Shilpo

Prokolpo there is no dearth of financial and administrative capability of the initiators. If the government extends cooperation and help, like that to other projects, it is practicable to establish it Shilpo Prokolpo.

Md Abu Ishak Bhutyan Convenor, Probashi Bangladeshi Shilpa Uddyog Doha, Qatar

## "Drishtikon"

Sir, Attorney General Mr Aminul Haque in his informal talk with BTV's 'Drishtikon' on August 7 has made two useful observations on (i) importance of conducting impartial, active and attentive inquiries by the IOs of the Police department; (ii) enthusiasm, dedication and honesty of the PP and other lawyers to defend their respective sides in order to win the cases. I very much appreciate Mr Haque's observation and hope that the concerned persons will take a note of it.

Meanwhile, we extend our heartiest thanks to the compere of 'Drishtikon' for his follow-up notes. But those seemed rather theoretical, we would be interested to watch audio-visual fellow-ups on the previously aired reports. We wish a long continuation Drishtikon.

M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka

### Foreign oil exploration companies

Sir, The recent visit of

Occidental president, Mr Martin, to Bangladesh is a good sign. However, there inclination to work in Sylhet area cannot be encouraged as this is reserved for Petrobangla. It was given to "SCIMITAR" by Ershad and

and while this was going on, officials were sent to Abu Dhabi to sign the deal with 'SCIMITAR' in a clandestine manner which is known to the present Energy Minister who was very vocal against this deal during the autocratic days. The present Government had to digest lot of unpalatable stuff VIZ: KAFCO, SCIMITAR and ATP Aircraft purchase etc and must have reservation in

talking with any foreign oil company about 'Sylhet'. We do not have to give this area to any foreign oil company. We should ourselves mobilise the necessary funds to do exploratory work here. We know for certain that there are plenty of gas and oil in Sylhet Further, it is good to be courteous and prompt in our dealings with these foreign oil companies but we should not

anybody at the airport which is a regular feature at the ZIA.

Finally, Pakistani Lakhani, his Bangladeshi second wife and mysterious American (?) Mr Hany M Salam have polluted the atmosphere further and the foreign oil companies are now hesitant to come to Bangladesh. Therefore, let us

One who knows

be on our knees when they approach us. The Chairman, Petrobangla could have refrained from going to the airport to receive the Occidental president. Thousands of Company Executives in USA and other places in the world travel in their own jets and there is nothing to be overawed about it. An officer could have been sent to ensure that he was not inconvenienced by

do without them.