

## DOWN TO EARTH

### The Lure of Video Culture

By A S M Nurunnabi

The medium of video has opened up a new horizon in entertainment and education. This has not, however, been an unmitigated blessing. Certain aspects of it have emerged which are looked upon with censure and disfavour in the context of our ethics and morals.

The video culture has been spreading at a fast pace. So much so that nearly all the big and small towns of Bangladesh including even village bazars boast of a mushroom growth of video cassette shops. They are said to do a booming business. It is even felt in some quarters that its widespread reach exercises a somewhat adverse impact on the cinema industry.

A video shop's stock in trade normally consists of several varieties of films, viz. action, thriller, comedies, social, science fiction, cartoon, etc. They are mainly available in the city in three languages, Bangla, English and Hindi. The Bangla films are by far the most popular, although their availability is limited as compared with Hindi films.

Not more than a decade ago, the craze for viewing foreign Hindi and Bangla films rose to such an extent that in attempts to ensure better TV reception from neighbouring country, all kinds of aids were used. Thanks to the current video culture

which ensures easy availability of foreign films, even the latest ones, much of that craze has subsided.

Most of the films that are available in the city's video shops relate to entertainment. Educational films are hard to come by there. A good store house of educational films is the British Council Video Library where a wide range of educational films on various subjects are available to the members.

In the burgeoning video culture, the attractive aspect is its entertainment value. Gone are the days when you had to plough through the hustle and bustle of a cinema house to view a film. Now in the comforts of your home you can enjoy any video film of your choice. The main problem however relates to the prevailing preponderance of the elements of sex and violence on video screen. It is felt that such preponderance is assuming the proportions of a new wave of erosives of socio-jvenile morals which is a cause for concern. Most of the video films which prove popular with the young generation draw upon sex and violence as the chief source of entertainment. The modern deluge of these two elements in video has resulted in youth being soaked by them as never before.

The spectacle of these ele-

ments and other felonies presented in extravagant colours in the video affects the imagination of the young viewers to such an extent that they tend to emulate in real life their screen heroes and heroines. Along with this, pornography does not very much fall behind.

It is apprehended that from the newly acquired habit and from impression's made on the young mind over a long period, violence may turn into a socio-criminal syndrome, as it has already become in some western countries.

For Bangladesh the problem at present may not be as acute as in the western societies. Here people in general have long held to a tradition of decency in matters of sex and social mores and of a sense of revulsion of feelings against violent crimes. But there should not be any complacency in this behalf.

The regrettable fact is that we find no evidence of any control over this medium in any form. According to sober sections of our people, the prevailing vicious circle of terror and distorted culture in video films should be broken and care taken to create a healthy atmosphere of entertainment and education. With the video films drawing expanding multitude of viewers, their sociological impact can well be imagined.



Aftermath of torrential rain in the city for the last three days.

—Star photo

## CPB MPs may join

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MP, is expected to call on the AL high command to express his desire to join the party, sources close to him said.

When contacted, Nazir Hossain and Dabirul Islam confirmed their respective plans. However, Mozahar was not available for comment.

All these five MPs, elected on the CPB ticket and with the AL's election symbol—the boat—joined the reformists led by Saifuddin Manik when the CPB split into two factions in May this year. But following the reformist group's merger with the GF last week, the party MPs are now in a dilemma. The opponents of the merger, including these three MPs are yet to decide on their party stance. They are expected to meet soon to discuss the matter.

"Reformation of the CPB was aimed at creating an ideal communist party on the basis of its past glory and socialist ideology but abolition of the party is regrettable", one source told this correspondent.

Talking to The Daily Star, Nazir Hossain admitted that he was keen to join the ruling party and said he had initiated talks with the BNP leaders in this regard.

"I met the Speaker to know if there is any legal bar against the switch-over", he said.

Ruling out the possibility of preserving the CPB (reformist) segment, Nazir said: "I think, under the current polarisation, the two big parties—the BNP and the AL—should be strengthened. I prefer the BNP, since I find this party's aims and objectives more suitable to address the current needs of the country", he said.

"BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia's leadership is dynamic,

pragmatic and she has a positive attitude towards national politics", he added.

Begum Zia is leading the nation towards development and production, he said, adding, he wished to cooperate with her.

On the other hand, Nazir blamed the AL for its failure to work out a timely course of action along with its allies.

On Dr Kamal's move, he commented that there was no room for any third trend in national politics.

Nazir informed this correspondent that Mozahar Hossain, who shared the same views, was also willing to join the BNP.

Dabirul Islam told The Star last night the AL was his first choice for, as he put it, it was the single biggest party in the pro-liberation camp.

"I am planning to join the AL unless there is any legal bar", he said, adding: "I was elected MP twice with the AL's election symbol. I am indebted to this party."

However, Islam said he will discuss the issue with the other MPs of the erstwhile CPB (reformists).

## Bosnia quiet

SARAJEVO, Sept 3: Muslim-Croat fighting in central Bosnia blocked fuel from reaching the capital Friday. But most of the republic was quiet as the warring sides weighed their response to the breakdown of Geneva peace talks, reports AP.

UN officials in the Bosnian capital said high-priority facilities such as the city bakery were running short of diesel fuel because of clashes to the west, in the region of Gornji Vakuf.

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## Water-logging

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with water from the man-made lake and pond.

But because it was a weekly holiday, vehicular traffic was generally thin and most people preferred to stay at home.

The roads of Rajarbagh, Shantinagar, the Ramna Park Crossing, Eskaton, Elephant Road, Kamalapur, Maghbazar, Plassey, Mirpur Section 10, Gopibagh, Tikatully, Gandaria, Postagola, Neemtolly, Seddique Bazar and Aloo Bazar and other areas had gone under one to two feet water yesterday afternoon.

According to the Met Office showers may continue for another day.

As a result of heavy fall across the country, the temperature was relatively lower yesterday. In the city the highest temperature was 25.9 degrees Celsius and the lowest 24.2 degrees. The country's highest—30.5 degrees—was recorded simultaneously in Teknaf, Dinajpur and Cox's Bazar and the lowest—22.0 degrees—was recorded in Faridpur.

Rainfall recorded during the day time yesterday were: Faridpur 77mm, Jessore 38, Chuadanga 36, Rajshahi 22, Patuakhali 20, Sitakunda 18, Feni 16 and Chandpur 10mm.

The Met Office forecast that the sky will remain cloudy over the country during the next 24 hours commencing at 6 am today.

During this time, occasional moderate rain or showers accompanied by temporary gusty wind may continue at most places over Chittagong, Dhaka and Rajshahi Divisions and at many places over Barisal and Khulna Divisions.

## The Midnight File

### Strike continues in Nigeria

LAGOS, Sept 3: Nigeria's commercial paralysis deepened today, with scant fuel supplies dwindling further as oil workers pursued a strike to force authorities to recognize the outcome of an annulled civilian presidential poll. The powerful oil workers union Nupeng pressed on with its campaign launched in the name of democracy despite an agreement by Nigeria's new unelected interim administration to postpone the introduction of a new type of fuel and of a reported tenfold petrol price hike, reports AFP.

### Decision on Israel—PLO recognition soon

LONDON, Sept 3: Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation could agree on a formula for mutual recognition within hours, a PLO official said today.

"I think a decision will be taken tonight," PLO executive committee member Yasser Abed-Rabbo told Britain's Channel Four News in an interview from Tunis. He said a formal announcement and wider comprehensive deal could come next week.

Abd-Rabbo said direct talks on recognition were still going on late on Friday through Norwegian mediation, reports Reuter.

### Intruder held at Sugandha

By Staff Correspondent

Evading the hawk-eyed securitymen, a man yesterday intruded the Sugandha office of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

Bachchu Mia entered the Bailey Road office of the Prime Minister at around 11 am when Begum Zia was presiding over the concluding session of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) national council.

Police detained the bearded intruder inside the office compound and sent him to Ramna thana.

Thana sources said the authorities had ordered an investigation into the incident. A number of Prime Minister's Security Forces (PSF), Special Branch police and plain-clothed detectives were on duty around the Prime Minister's office at the time.

During preliminary questioning, the middle-aged Bachchu Mia told police that he came from Kishoreganj and went to the Prime Minister to plead for some relief, thana sources said.

No one obstructed him from entering the office through the main gate, he claimed.

One police official said Bachchu Mia will be sent to court today.

### Salam Talukder

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the sake of improving the quality of the work", he added.

Replying to another question whether only the ruling party leaders would act as the supervisors, Talukder said: "No, if local leaders show willingness to volunteer for the supervisory job, they would also be welcomed."

Energy Minister and Joint-Secretary General of BNP Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Vice-Chairman Tanbir Ahmed Siddiky, Salauddin Ahmed, MP and Haris Chowdhury were present at the crowded press conference.

He termed the fourth council session a 'successful one' and said it would strengthen the base of the party at the grassroots level.

Barrister Talukder said party workers have been directed to work harder to face the upcoming challenges like elections and anti-government campaigns.

He said the horizon of the party is widening with each passing day and new faces are joining the party everyday. The BNP can accommodate those people through its organisational capabilities, he added.

He admitted that a number of councillors criticised the ministers and MPs during the council deliberations. He also said that only one councillor pointed out that the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh was fast becoming a serious political rival for the BNP but the house discouraged his view.

The BNP Secretary General said "The Jamaat is not our political rival. It will take a long time for the Jamaat to pose a serious challenge to the BNP."

Besides organisation matters, another major outcome of the council was the changes in the party constitution.

Barrister Talukder said the councillors unanimously endorsed the amendments to make the party constitution more up to date and systematic. The amendments are also aimed at accommodating the able leaders in the party, he added.

The Secretary General said party chairperson Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will shortly decide on the various committees as well the post of Secretary General.

Asked if the party would change strategy and shift towards a more pro-liberation line, Talukder said "The BNP is always a non-communal and pro-liberation force."

Answering a question regarding alleged corruption by some ministers and the fate of the Indemnity Bill, he said parliamentary bodies were working on the issues and any comment would be unwise.

Barrister Talukder said the chairperson had emphasised rural development and directed the councillors to oversee the development works, mainly the Food-for-Education programme.

### Sartaj Aziz

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pressed the hope that both the caretaker government and the army would maintain neutrality in the polls.

He said the PML, for the first time in 23 years, was fighting the coming polls alone. Earlier it took part in the elections in 1985, '88 and '90 as a constituent of an alliance.

He said he was happy to see that the democratic process was taking roots in Bangladesh and investment opportunities appeared through the adoption of liberal economic policies.

Sartaj Aziz said the situation in Bangladesh was very positive both politically and economically.

He said he was looking forward to more meaningful cooperation between Pakistan and Bangladesh in different fields. He said the present trade between the two countries, which stood at 130 million dollars both ways, could be increased further for the mutual benefit.

Replying to a question on the sharing of assets and liabilities, the former Pak finance minister said the issue was raised during Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's visit to Pakistan and a joint committee was set up to look into it. He said if the PML were voted to power the committee would be activated.

On the question of repatriation of stranded Pakistanis from Bangladesh, Aziz said Nawaz Sharif's government had earlier taken some 3000 families back to Pakistan. He said Sharif's government would resume the process if voted to power.

He described his visit to Bangladesh as very useful and meaningful.

### Arafat

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Nations Works and Relief Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees in Ain Helwe.

After today's Muslim prayers they took to the streets and branded Arafat a "traitor" and a "spy" and rejected the accord.

Members from the Palestinian groups Jamaa Islamiyya and the Islamic Jihad-Bait al-Maqdes took part in the protests which were also attended by members of 10 Palestinian groups, including hardline PLO factions.

In Borj Esh-Shemali, near the southern port of Tyre, another 2,000 demonstrators took to the streets shouting "the traitors have sold out Palestine".

In Jordan's Baqaa refugee camp, protestors set fire to Israeli and US flags, accused Arafat of being a traitor and warned him that the "people are against you" correspondents said.

The Baqaa protest was organised by Jordan's powerful Muslim Brotherhood and attended by supporters of the Islamic resistance movement, Hamas.

In Paris, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Friday that an accord between Israelis and Palestinians could be a catalyst for other talks, including with Syria, and predicted that complete peace was at hand.

"We are very near to complete peace", Peres said after a three-hour meeting with President Francois Mitterrand at the latter's country home in southwest France.

"It is the only way out for the Arabs, for us and for the world. I am convinced we will reach it", Peres said. The peace between us and the PLO must be transformed into peace for the entire region.

Meanwhile, the UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Chali offered today to send peacekeeping troops to the Gaza Strip and Jericho following an Israeli withdrawal foreseen in a draft peace agreement.

"The United Nations is at the disposal of Israel and the Palestinians if they need an international or a UN presence in Gaza or Jericho," he told reporters after meeting French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe.

Russia today welcomed a draft peace accord aimed at ending 45 years of bloodshed in the middle east and said it might send Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to visit the region.

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## Methane gas project

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in the proposed Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge.

Presently and in the near future, there is no other energy resource available in western zone other than coal. The government has taken steps for coal extraction from Barapukuria which will produce one million tons of coal per year.

Eighty per cent of the extracted coal from Barapukuria will be used for producing electricity and the rest 20 per cent for other uses. This is insignificant to the actual energy requirement for the western part of the country, experts said.

The water level of the western zone is very low and getting lower every year due to the Farakka barrage in India. Earlier, shallow tubewells and hand tubewells were used for agricultural purpose in this region. But in near future, only deep tubewells will be used requiring high energy due to lower level of water.

Experts pointed out that will be rapid increase of demand for energy with more industrialisation and growth of agriculture.

Most parts of the country, specially the western and northern parts, are experiencing a fast desertification process due to the wanton felling of trees for domestic and commercial uses as main sources of energy. To stop the process alternative source of energy like methane gas extraction is needed.

USA and the countries in Europe/Africa and Latin America are using coal-bed methane extensively. In the USA alone, coal-bed methane reserve is about 400 TCF.

The methane gas will be used for power plants, industrial plants and also for household uses. Extraction of methane gas will greatly reduce mining hazard and at the same time keep the quantity of coal unchanged.

Though the country is trying to attract private companies in exploration ventures, it may not yield the desired result unless the government can pay world prices for any contractual priorities to cover indigenous demand, according to an international expert.

Such agreements are more likely for crude oil than for natural gas. Consequently, private

sector funds may not be forthcoming to sustain the country's gas production.

The expert suggested to undertake a rigorous review of the existing gas fields, both producing and underdeveloped, in order to generate a strategic plan ensuring maximum gas recovery and as a consequence, an optimum utilisation of the capital investment projects already constructed or agreed.

It is an urgent need to redirect international attention, effort and investment away from gas utilisation projects and into medium to long-term supply issues.

Under the current scenario, new gas pipelines, NGL facilities, Turbo-expander plants and the like could have less than 10 years operation life at maximum capacity before production difficulties affect the supply, the expert said.

## Khaleda asks

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be co-opted in the Jubo Dal.

During her 35-minute speech, the Prime Minister said the central leaders should not always stay in Dhaka but must go to the villages to reinvigorate party activities.

She said a democratic government should be run democratically and the party workers should cooperate.

Meanwhile, most of the councillors felt that the fourth council was a total success and had raised the morale of the party workers and leaders.

"It is a moral and organisational boost," Hasina Malek, Pijpur district president of the BNP and a councillor, told The Daily Star.

About the new leadership she said the party chairperson would announce it shortly.

Advocate Kamrul Islam and Bilal Sarker from Matlab thana echoed the same sentiments, adding that they got a new direction for future politics.

Joyal Abedin of Chandpur said the chairperson assured delegates of a new leadership and direction which would really enliven the party.

## Student shot at in city

By DMCH Correspondent

A student received bullet wounds when a group of musclemen fired gun shots in the city yesterday afternoon.

## PLO's self-rule is a correct first step

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part of the occupied territories during the interim period.

He also responded to questions on the PLO recognising Israel, the possibility of the PLO being dissolved, about appeasing certain Arab nations and PLO factions opposed to the plan, and his personal expectations about the possibility of the Palestinians and Israelis living together in peace.

When asked if the proposed accord between the PLO and Israel is likely to be signed soon, Sourani said: "I really don't know because things have moved very quickly during the last three days I have been here in Bangladesh."

However, the 70-year-old PLO leader expressed his scepticism and distrust about Israel's intentions as, he said, the Israelis occupied Palestine to turn it into a Jewish land and to end "any trace" of Arab or Islamic civilisation.

The Israelis did this, he charged, by changing not only the demography of Palestine but even the geography, damaging all traces of the old cities, mosques and sacred places, and by building new settlements "As it was during the time of David and Solomon."

"So, we should not be in a hurry in trying to understand what is going on," he cautioned. "We must take a long breath before giving a judgement on what is going on or what has been done during the past few days."

Providing a background to the current Israeli proposal, he pointed out that the Israelis have time and again publicly said they were fed up with the upheaval in the Gaza strip because of the Intifada uprising by the Palestinians.

He quoted Rabin as recently wishing that the Gaza would "disappear" while Peres reportedly said that Israel might take a unilateral step to withdraw from the Gaza strip.

Acting on a Palestinian national council resolution, adopted in 1974, to implement Palestinian authority on any liberated land, Sourani said: "The PLO grasped at this declaration and said we are ready to take over the Gaza strip without an interim period of three years during which the future of the

occupied territories would be negotiated, as it was suggested for all Palestinian territory."

Moreover, he added: "To stop the fears of anybody, Palestinians or non-Palestinians, that the Gaza is the first and last step in the process, the PLO said it will also take Jericho in the West Bank and the interim period will only cover the rest of the West Bank, including Jerusalem."

Which means, he noted, that the Palestinian self-government authority would be responsible for the rest of the occupied territory, including Jerusalem.

Sourani also said the proposed accord would include the Israeli forces from the Gaza and Jericho and 'complete' authority for the Palestinians except on 'foreign affairs and security matters.'

"So, the liberation of the Gaza and Jericho being a first step is, in fact, the implementation of the PNC resolution of 1974."

On the question of recognition, he said that it has to be mutual and added "Our problem is not a protocol problem".

Secondly, he noted: "We understand the balance of power at this stage and what we will get is not what is our ambition to get but what the balance of power gives us."

He pointed out to the "very bad" situation in the Arab and the Muslim world and also the international situation.

On the possibility of the PLO being dissolved after signing of the accord with Israel, Sourani replied: "I don't care whether the PLO is dissolved or not after we stand on our soil. The PLO is a means to an end and not an end in itself."

The PLO, he said, achieved what it sought out to do and that is to preserve the Palestinian entity. "I look to the future of the Palestinian state in which we will stick to our democracy and the PLO may continue as a political party, but not the only party."

the PLO as it would affect the whole region."

Noting that it is a "two-way traffic", he added "any steps they take also affect the Palestinians".

As an afterthought he added "I hope that if there is really any misunderstanding the PLO would be quick to remedy the situation and to continue what we have worked hard to reach together with Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, as an inner circle."



Jamal Sourani

On opposition to the accord from within the PLO, Sourani said: "The PLO is a democratic body and there are many ways of thinking, we believe that this is a healthy situation and is real democracy."

The PLO, he added, was never a dictatorship or else it could not have continued thus far. "And if the PLO now turns into a dictatorship it will stop being the representative of the Palestinian people."

Asked if he is optimistic of returning to his homeland in the near future, the PLO leader, who was driven out of his home in Jerusalem in 1948 and again from the West Bank in 1967, said: "I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but I am a realist and I read what is on the ground, and reality tells me I have been driven out of my home."

"I don't care how long it takes for me to return to my homeland," he continued, "46 years have passed and I have not stopped the struggle since 1947 and it will continue till I or my son or my grandson go back to my home."

Sourani, who now lives in