

# Recommendations of the Special Committee on Foreign Affairs

**Continued from yesterday**  
The Committee is of the view that the performance of the entire Mission including Head of Mission and other officers in terms of achievement of such targets should be assessed individually and collectively.

(ii) Economic Coordination Wing/Division and Inspectorate General of Mission will monitor performances of the Missions against these targets, on a regular basis. The Foreign Secretary will evaluate annually the performance of the Head of Mission and other officers vis-a-vis achievement of the targets, especially in the economic field such as export of goods and manpower, investment, etc. The findings of evaluation should be communicated to concerned Ministers and where necessary recorded in respective ACRs.

(iii) In order to implement the target oriented functioning of the Missions, the system of annual consultation/conference of Heads of Mission may be introduced so that our Ambassadors/High Commissioners remain abreast of developments at home and get the opportunity of regular interaction with different Ministries and Departments at the level of Secretaries/Heads of Department.

(a) In reviewing the personnel strength of the Missions, the Committee gave considerable attention to the structure and organization of the support staff and came to these findings:

(i) home-based staff are not usually well-equipped to function effectively in foreign

environment and not well-versed with local conditions;

(ii) problems are further accentuated by cultural shocks and inadequacies in language skills, etc.;

(iii) it is expensive to maintain home-based staff overseas and employment of local staff in many cases is cost-effective;

(iv) mission staff is often not rationally distributed as different wings insist on their exclusive personnel.

(b) Following deliberations, the Committee recommends the following:

(i) more supporting staff may be recruited locally, preferably from among qualified Bangladeshi expatriates or local residents/nationals in lieu of home-based staff so as to be more cost-effective. Depending on the sensitive nature of the jobs and cost-effectiveness such members of staff may be trained to give better service including preparation of routine reports, performing promotional activities, protocol duties, etc.

(ii) 'common staff pool' in the Mission should be evolved to rationalise number, work load and cost involved in respect of support staff. With the abolition of the wings and integration of personnel (officers and members of staff) in the Missions into one single unit, all members of staff would work in the 'common staff pool'.

(iii) all members of staff should be trained in handling modern office equipment and work procedures including word processor, computer and E-mail. Foreign postings of home based staff will be dependent upon their skill

and necessary expertise in handling of word processor/computer.

(iv) all offers must be computer-literate and well-versed with the modern automation systems so as to lessen their dependence on support staff whose number could be reduced. Foreign posting will be dependent upon their passing the skill test in handling computer. Special allowances may be given to computer literate officers as an incentive.

(v) certain posts like drivers, messengers, security guards, gardeners should be filled locally, unless conditions of special security and cost-effectiveness require posting of home-based staff against these posts in some missions.

(vi) overseas posting of home-based staff should be phased out to the optimum required level over a period of next 5 years.

In the light of its finding (para 12.1) the Committee strongly recommends that MOFA should be either relocated to new premises or the present buildings should be appropriately renovated/rebuilt. This has become imperative not only to meet its present needs but also to provide for future requirements. The building should be equipped with all necessary and modern facilities.

The Committee recommends that MOFA and the Missions abroad should be urgently equipped with the modern automation systems for communication and office management. These should include computerization, E-mail, V-sat, wireline, equip-

ment, Cano-file, automatic encoding/decoding machine, etc (para 12.3 to 12.11).

As stipulated in the terms of reference, the Committee has examined the question of existing location of Missions and has identified as set of criteria as discussed in para 18.3 of this Report. In this regard, the Committee recommends the following:

a) In view of our commitment to regional cooperation to strengthening of SAARC, our presence in all the SAARC capitals is considered important. A full-fledged Mission at ambassadorial level at Male in Maldives should be opened. Following the peace process in the Middle East, rapprochement between Israel, PLO and other Arab countries is becoming a reality. It is observed that Bangladesh should take immediate steps to establish a bridgehead in the area, preferably at Amman in Jordan because of its strategic location and proximity to Al Quds. The Mission in Amman will be required to provide services to a large number of pilgrims from Bangladesh who are awaiting the opportunity to pay a visit to the third holiest place of Islam. This Mission will take over additional responsibilities in the area or be relocated elsewhere when situation permits. The Committee was informed that the proposed mission in Uzbekistan could not be opened as yet due to inability of the host government to provide accommodation. It is felt that efforts should be made to establish the mission in Tashkent as early as possible.

b) As regards the location of the existing Missions, the Committee recommends that the Missions in Bucharest, Dakar and Harare should be closed since our economic interests are no longer being served effectively by these missions. The Committee also recommends that these Missions be re-located to the Hague, Madrid and Vienna where our political, economic and commercial interests are on the increase and as Vienna has particular relevance being the headquarters of many UN agencies and commissions.

c) The Committee further recommends that our Missions in Manila and Baghdad should be upgraded to full ambassadorial level, since keeping them at CDA level does not bring any savings while it reduces our diplomatic effectiveness (India and Pakistan have their Missions at full ambassadorial level in these countries).

d) In view of the presence of large number of Bangladeshis and prospect of increased trade in the area, Consulate General/Consulate in Houston and Osaka may be opened.

e) In the context of our growing economic relations with the countries in the Far-East, our Missions in Tokyo and Seoul should be strengthened.

f) Other important cities in different countries should be covered by Honorary Consulates as widely as possible.

**Human resource development: BCS (FA) cadre**  
The Committee was in-

formed of two main reasons for the state of dissatisfaction in BCS (FA) cadre: (a) the introduction of seniority rules which favoured the lateral entrants and put the core-group of foreign service officers at a serious disadvantage, and (b) the overall lack of promotion prospects. The most pernicious effect of seniority rules is to be seen in the case of lateral entrants from Defence Services who counted their seniority from their teens. The Committee recognizes the urgency of improving the conditions of service in BCS (FA) cadre and recommends the following:

i) The cadre strength of BCS (FA) should be refixed in the light of recommendations contained in the report and in view of the increased role of MOFA in the coming years.

ii) The present anomalies in the inter-se seniority of BCS (FA) officers should be immediately discontinued and necessary amendments in the rules should be made permitting draw of full allowances in keeping with the practice now being followed in India, Pakistan and elsewhere.

viii) Officers serving abroad are perpetually confronted with the serious problems of education of their children. The Committee having scrutinised relevant information recommends that educational allowance at current level does not meet the requirement and should be raised to cover 75% expenses of education of upto 2 children and upto to the age of 23. The maximum ceiling for educational expenses should be raised to US \$10,000 for two children — US \$6000 for the first and US \$4000 for the second child.

ix) The Committee also observed discrimination among officers of different Ministries in the matter of home leave entitlement. The existing discrimination must be removed and all officers should be granted home leave once in 2 years (para 14.24). Wherever possible Head of Missions should combine home leave with their annual consultation for the sake of economy. Officers may be allowed home leave in advance in case of emergencies subject to completion of at least one year of tenure abroad, in place of the required two years (para 14.25).

x) The Committee also recommends introduction of uniformity in mission by elimination of discriminatory practices in terms of emoluments and facilities such as full time use of car, enjoyed by some officers to the exclusion of others. (para 17.3).

xi) The Foreign Service Rules of 1962 which were provisional upto 1971 and adopted by Bangladesh through the Laws of Continuance Order, have become outdated in many respects. The committee has decided to enclose a draft revised version of the Rules (Annexure 9) and recommends that this should be examined by the task force to be set up for implementation of this Report (para 24.38).

Eminent personalities within and outside the Government who addressed the Committee stressed on the importance of selecting the right persons for appointment as our Ambassadors and High Commissioners. The Committee concurs with this view and recommends that due care shall be taken in the selection of Ambassadors/High Commissioners both from the Foreign Service as well as from outside.

The importance of the Mission, our relations with the country concerned, and background of the person concerned, the intellectual requirement of the job and other considerations should weigh prominently especially in the matter of selection of a non-career Ambassador/High Commissioner.

**Selection of technical officers**  
(a) Selection of technical officers for posting in Missions abroad should be undertaken by a Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary and in which the Foreign Secretary should be a member. This would allow greater impartiality and objectivity in the selection of the right candidates.

(b) Currently, officers of the EPB, NBR, etc. are excluded from appearing before the selection committees for the technical posts. Selection process should be open to officers of all cadres and government departments having the requisite qualification.

(c) 20% of the Economic and Commercial posts in the Missions may be filled up from the private sector, as is the case presently with press/information posts.

(d) The current selection procedure which puts more stress on length of service, academic qualifications and ACR ratings need to be revised to give more importance to experience and knowledge of economic work, aptitude of the officers to do field work, ability to adjust in alien environment, competitive spirit and other

qualities which can distinguish a successful salesman from a desk-bound executive. It is recommended that in the selection process, 50% marks should be allowed for interview and 50% marks for academic ratings, academic qualifications, etc. Length of service should not be taken into consideration; rather, in case of selecting First Secretary for instance, officers below 35 years of age should only be considered.

(e) The Committee recommends that no officer should be appointed in technical posts from other Ministries in the Missions abroad unless he has experience of serving minimum of 3 years in the concerned Ministry or 5 years in the Development/Economic Ministries/Departments. On completion of his/her term in Mission abroad the officer should return to related Ministries or fields, where his/her experience will be utilised properly.

**Coordination**  
The Committee recommends that a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Foreign Affairs headed by Foreign Minister should have the opportunity of exchanging views with persons being considered for appointment as our Ambassadors/High Commissioners.

The two existing mechanisms at policy levels are the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Affairs chaired by the Foreign Minister and the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Foreign Affairs also chaired by the Foreign Minister. The Committee is of the view that these two set-ups are adequate in monitoring important issues of our foreign relations if sessions are held at regular intervals.

The role of NGOs, trade and professional bodies, and other non-state actors in providing important inputs in foreign policy making has been emphasized in this Report (para 5.1 to 5.3). The Committee, therefore, recommends setting up of an Advisory or Consultative Committee on Foreign Affairs where periodic exchange of views on our foreign policy issues could take place with these groups. Such a twin-track approach is expected to create closer rapport between the policy makers at Government level and various interest groups at public level.

The Committee recommends that an Inter-ministerial Committee should be set up under the chairmanship of the Foreign Minister to decide on all proposals regarding candidatures and nominations from Bangladesh to international organizations. The Committee noted with concern that at present different Ministries are taking decisions independently and in an uncoordinated manner without keeping in view the totality of our relations with foreign countries and international organizations. Overall picture of our relations and interests are not available with different Ministers as a result of which decisions to contest elections and float candidatures have been seriously flawed, tarnishing the country's image and influence abroad.

The Committee recommends establishment of a Standing Committee of Secretaries comprising the Cabinet Secretary (who will preside), Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of the concerned Ministry/Division which will resolve issues relating to ambiguity in respect of jurisdictional matters between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and any other Ministry. Issues that cannot be resolved by this Committee will automatically be forwarded to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Coordination among different Ministries engaged in foreign relations should be further strengthened by re-defining the channel of communication with foreign envoys stationed in Dhaka. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ambassador/High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the concerned country must invariably be kept informed of all contacts and discussions with foreign Ambassadors in Dhaka. All Ministries desirous of receiving foreign envoys and delegations should notify the MOFA in advance so that it can give its views and its representative can participate in such meetings. Discussions with foreign envoys and delegations should invariably be recorded and the minutes distributed to the MOFA and the Ambassador/High Commissioner of Bangladesh in the concerned country.

**Implementation and follow up mechanism**  
The Committee recommends immediate setting up of a Task Force by the Government to implement the recommendations contained in this Report as soon as possible.

## International

### GIF stresses big dams on rivers of Himalayas

**KATHMANDU:** Increasingly frustrated by the ability of activists around the world to block the construction of large dams, bridges or highways, big business is fighting back with the help of powerful governments, reports IPS.

They are using the same argument the activists use to push for large infrastructure projects: the people want them.

The Japan-based Global Infrastructure Fund (GIF) Research Foundation has been organising a series of meetings in South Asia to look at big construction projects in the next century. Especially in harnessing the region's water resources.

The GIF has already identified "research priorities" which include the ecological rehabilitation of the Coral Sea region and the Middle East "peace water pipeline" in South Asia, the emphasis is on big dams on the rivers of the eastern Himalayas.

The Japanese Foundation has launched a public relations blitz, and says people in neglected rural areas want large projects because they would benefit from them.

Representatives of GIF and South Asian activists met in the Nepal capital Kathmandu in June — the third of a series after similar recent get-togethers in New Delhi and Dhaka. But none of the NGOs involved in protests against the construction of large dams was invited for the meeting.

"The discussions were essentially project-centred. There was very little academic about it," says Ajay Dixit, an engineer working for the Nepal Water Conservation Foundation who was present at the meeting.

"The GIF has identified the Ganga Barrage Project in Bangladesh, the Timpaimukh Project in India's north-east that will dam the Barak River and the Kosi High Dam in Nepal as priority schemes. But sharing of cost and benefits of water projects is a sensitive issue in South Asia, and all three schemes have implications that are trans-boundary in nature.

South Asian activities are already arming up to counter this move, which they see as an alliance of big Japanese companies with donors and powerful governments to

push through environmentally and socially unsound projects on the region's weaker communities.

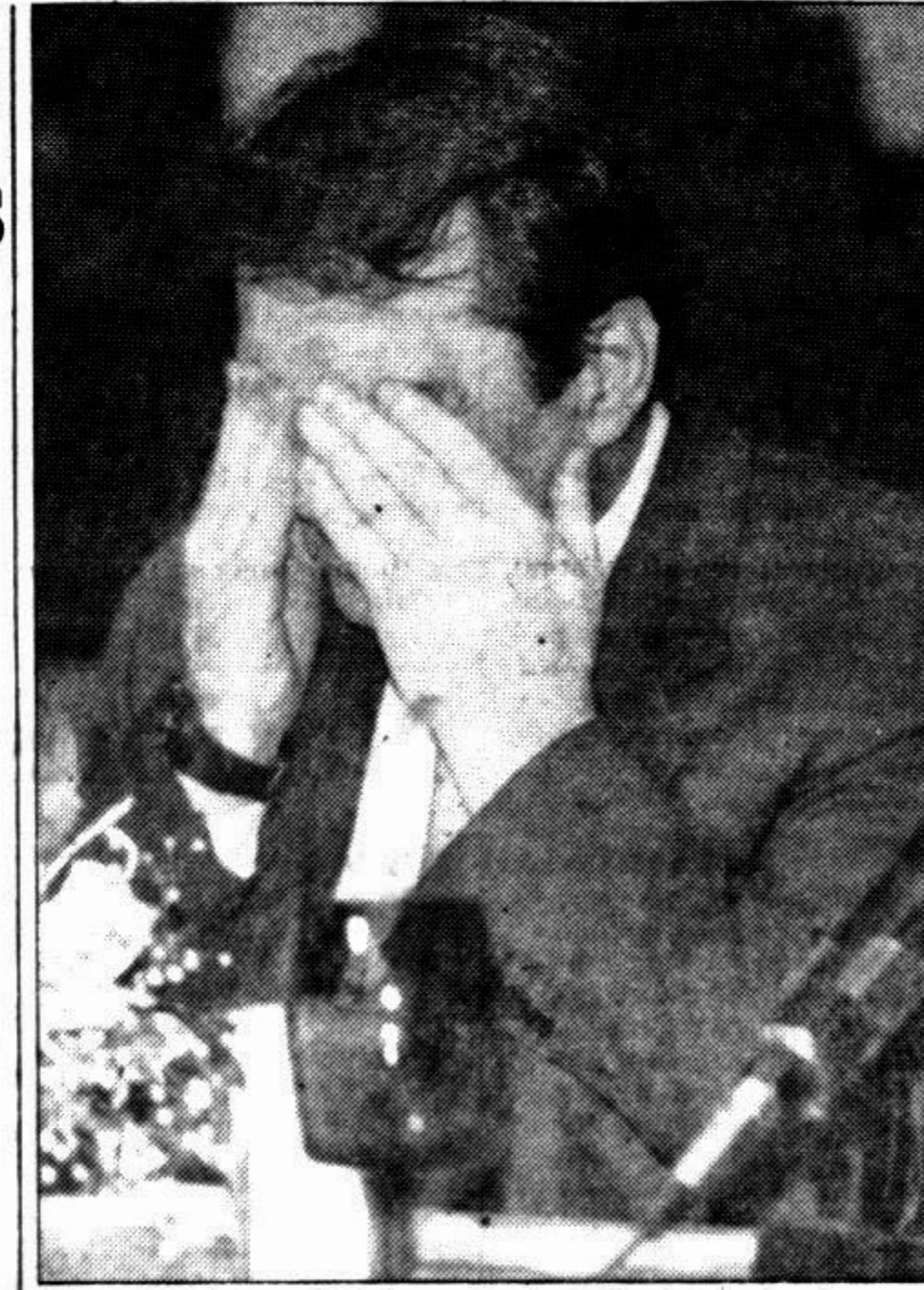
The GIF is working on a wrong institutional premise. It is effectively cloning the foreign aid machinery whose defects are well-known," says Dipak Gyawali, a water expert with the Royal Nepal Academy for Science and Technology.

"The GIF apparently assumes that the problem of development in the Third World is money," he adds. "That is not true. Money is necessary but is secondary, the trick is working through local institutions."

They say large donor-driven projects are simply a ruse to give employment and business to recession-hit companies back home.

The GIF itself was conceived in 1990, just when the real estate bubble was bursting and Japan's economic growth was shrinking fast.

Top officials from major Japanese conglomerates were represented in the GIF, and experts say their strategy was to seek construction ventures overseas.



Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic rubs his eyes during a press conference Tuesday in Sarajevo. Silajdzic declared that the Bosnian authorities would accept to negotiate the conditions for the turnover to UNPROFOR of their forces weapons in the enclave of Zepa. — AFP/UNB photo

### "Nasser 56" a tribute to the hero of Pan-Arabism

**CAIRO:** Forty-three years after the 1952 revolution of the free officers which brought him to power, former President Gamal Abdel Nasser, hero of Pan-Arabism, has returned for the first time to Egyptian television, reports AFP.

State television will soon broadcast the black-and-white feature film "Nasser 56" which it produced and

screened at a television festival last week.

The film depicts the 100 days preceding the 1956 Suez crisis in which Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt after Nasser's decision to nationalise the canal.

The decision, made in response to the United States refusal to finance the high dam at Asswan, and the short war that followed, launched

Nasser as the popular hero of the Arab world.

"Nasser 56" has finally broken the taboo on dramatising the lives and the characters that have shaped the political life of Egypt," the English-language, government-run Al-Ahram weekly wrote.

"For decades it was practically impossible to even mention the names of past leaders," the paper said. "If Nasser appeared in some shot, the entire sequence was edited out."

"It even reached the stage where the Nasser period would be referred to in the press as 'the distant past,'" the paper said.

The current government of Hosni Mubarak, which pushes a privatisation programme aiming to reverse many of the socialist reforms installed by Nasser, has had an unsteady stance towards its political heritage.

In 1992, the government allowed the creation of a Nasserist Party, a move seen as an official break from the ideology of Egypt's first pres-

ident. The Nasserist Party, now with some 60,000 members, is one of Mubarak's loudest critics.

But state media have resumed playing over recent years the numerous patriotic songs praising Nasser, dropped from playlists during the presidency of his successor Anwar al-Sadat (1970-1981). Now it is the paeans to Sadat which have disappeared.

In a televised speech on Monday commemorating the July 23 revolution led by Nasser's free officers, Mubarak praised "the eternal leader Gamal Abdel Nasser" and called the revolution "one of the greatest in human history."

Tape cassette of Nasser's speeches still sell in the thousands and his photo is hung in many cafes, shops and homes.

"My father died when I was one year old, but Nasser was my father," Ahmed Zaki, who portrayed Nasser in the movie, told the government weekly Al-Mosawwar.

The actor, one of Egypt's biggest stars, has won extensive praise for the performance in which he meticulously recreates the expressions and mannerisms of the president, who died in 1970.

"Nasser lives again," lauded the weekly Sabah Al-Kheir, adding that the film "marks the end of the humiliating practice of blacking out and denigrating everything connected with the past in hopes of glorifying the present."



New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani (L) shakes hands with Michael Jackson on Tuesday at a news conference in New York. The two were together to announce the nominations for the MTV Video Award Music Awards that are scheduled to take place 7th September in New York. — AFP/UNB photo

### Most of Angolan civil war victims are children

**LUANDA, July 26:** Most of the victims of Angola's civil war were children and nearly 100 youngsters under the age of five are still dying each day from disease and malnutrition, according to a United Nations study, reports Reuters.

The study on the effect on Angola's children of nearly 20 years of civil war said the country had the worst infant mortality rate in the world at 320 deaths per 1,000 children.

In Angola, 95 children under five years of age... die from malnutrition and disease daily, said the report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).