

LIVING



Focus on Feathered Friends

by Fayza Haq

WITH parts of Dhaka soon becoming a jungle of cement and concrete, Monwar Ahmed's exhibition of photographs of birds at the National Museum was a tremendous success. Monwar, who has been in photo journalism for over three decades gives his reason for choosing birds as his subject. The new generation knows the names of only a few birds and can distinguish only a handful of them. This exhibition is to focus on some of the fast disappearing species. Five years from hence one fourth of the birds you see will not be available in Bangladesh. The main cause is that the trees are being felled. When there are no trees the birds do not come. Again, poisonous fish is being used in fertilizers in the paddy fields. Eating them the birds die. Another reason that the birds are going away is that the land is drying up, Monwar explains.

He has gone many days without bathing and there were days he had to work despite being hungry and thirsty. He slept in small boats, empty village school-rooms and run down country hotels where the living conditions were unbearable with the flies and mosquitoes.

Of the 600 species available in Bangladesh 450 are resident birds and the rest are migratory birds, he explains. With the birds being openly sold in the well-to-do sections of Dhaka like New Elephant Road the seasonal birds are less likely to visit our city. "Unless we can make the environment safer for the birds we cannot expect migratory birds to come

back here and soon even the local species will seek haven somewhere. Even the forest department is not doing enough to preserve the birds," Monwar elaborates. The pictures included rare birds like the ring dove, blue throat, rosella, night heron, pallas's fishing eagle, common teal, white stork, little scaly bellied, red winged bush bird, banded bay cuckoo, and red turtle dove. The exhibition has brought in 56 species, the photographer having used 100 reels. The photographs were taken throughout the day and even in the evening.

It is the colour of the features and the voices that fascinate Monwar. "I have captured the owl and vulture as they too are getting rare in Bangladesh — I do not find these birds ominous. I have left out the crow as its voice and appearance have no appeal for me." Earlier Monwar made two special collections of photographs on the language movement and film stars. This time he focussed on birds' as he felt that little was being done by the govern-



ment and people for their preservation — there was not even a proper bird park. He has given a lot of time and

labour to a subject dear to his heart. Monwar spent over a lakh taka on his travels alone for getting the photographs.

HUNGER and greed make one resourceful. This is a good English proverb, just invented by me. So does travelling. Beggars and salesmen are some of the major nuisances of going around strange far-off countries, and the person living out of a suitcase has to learn to deal with these. Over the years, I have developed quite a repertoire of repellants.

Let's start with the more simple, and thus less successful, attempts at making a Father Christmas out of the tourist. In Turkey virtually everybody asked me whether I was interested in buying a carpet. Living in a house with carpets from wall to wall, I always politely said "No, thanks." This certainly did not scare off the more persistent salesmen. Clever as they tried to be, they then asked why I was not interested in buying a carpet. They woke up with carpets, lived amongst carpets, and went to bed with carpets, so they probably could not imagine why somebody would not be interested in these flat beautiful pieces of handicraft. Well, they did not know me yet. I replied that I was interested in carpets. Green, round ones. As all their carpets were brownish and square, this usually ended the discussion. They did not sell flying carpets either.

Demanding impossible specifications helped in Luxor, Egypt, as well. Every tourist seemed to take boat-trip. Boatmen could therefore hardly believe there were less river minded travellers. Declining oilers and even ignoring them hardly helped.

Nokay

by Nico den Tuinder

One man was particularly stubborn. I finally gave in, provided his open air boat had an airconditioning. He was so stupid he continued arguing after that. In India I invented a new reply. "Yes, I am interested in... (fill up as you please). And you are you interested in an editing department? I make editing departments."

When these options do not work, you can always just walk away. Then you have a problem when the vendor is mobile. In a town in the middle of Egypt I foresaw doom to my pleasant stroll along the Nile when a horse car driver offered his services. I decided to ignore him by pretending not to understand English. The man was not a food and kept on blabbering: "Good carriage, Sir. Take you around town, half an hour. Good price." I replied in a language he certainly did not understand. Gujarati. "Mene samaj pade nahi. Gujarati boli." Be careful or firm with this. A reply like this ("No speak English.") infuriated a man in Varanasi, India. His reply was very resolute: "You are a liar. You should not lie in a holy city. Go!" Well, I can have a stone face if I want to, and at the end he left, looking for a more innocent victim.

There is also the more indirect approach, and this is a far better one. There are dozens of them. The point is

to establish a relationship. The most common and therefore tiring is the question: "Where are you from?" followed by "Do you like my country?" and then "Do you like... (my salesware)?" You should resemble the natives to be able to enjoy a country. The question "Excuse me, sir, what's the time?" is far more sophisticated, being one that could be asked in your native country. Just add the previous series, and there you are. The boldest approach is that of starting the guided tour without asking you whether you are interested. It's clever because it puts you in a defensive position afterwards. I showed you everything, so why should you not reward this? A little girl in the old citadel of Ankara (Turkey) cleverly applied this trick after her direct attempt at selling knitting works failed. I am still thankful for this. She put two tiny little gloves to my black and dull bag, giving it some charm.

Sometimes rudeness is the only thing that helps. When a man walking on my left side continues bothering me, I slowly move to the left, walking into something. The nuisance then has to start walking on my right side. Of course, you should then start walking to the right. I shout a four letter word followed by a three-letter word (these would be censored by the editor. I am sure) to ladies of easy virtue. I shout "Hit the road" to drivers.

When in a polite mood though, I say to drivers asking me "I take you to railway station, okay?" just: "Nokay, thanks." I am not that bad.

Dog-fight over Animal Rights

John Carr writes from Athens

GREECE may be a tourist paradise, points out part-time animal rights activist Aspasia Kiasa, but it can be hell for animals. Take household pets, for example: "Too many people here tend to think pets are just moving ornaments to be thrown away after a while." And they often are. The plight of animals, both pets and strays, is appalling. Officialdom remains indifferent, and is even accused of complicity in killings. "I have thought a great deal about why the Greeks, ordinarily a warm people, can be so barbarous to animals", says Kiasa, who heads an Athens-based organisation called Friends of the Cat, a chapter of the Britain-based Greek Cat Welfare Society. A new law could worsen the animals' already precarious position in Greece. Since May this year it has been a crime for pet-owners to even keep their pets in their own gardens, if their mere sound or appearance annoys landlords, neighbours or passers-by. "Politicians simply don't care", explains Kiasa. "Anyone supporting animal rights is looked down on as an eccentric. It's the prevailing culture."

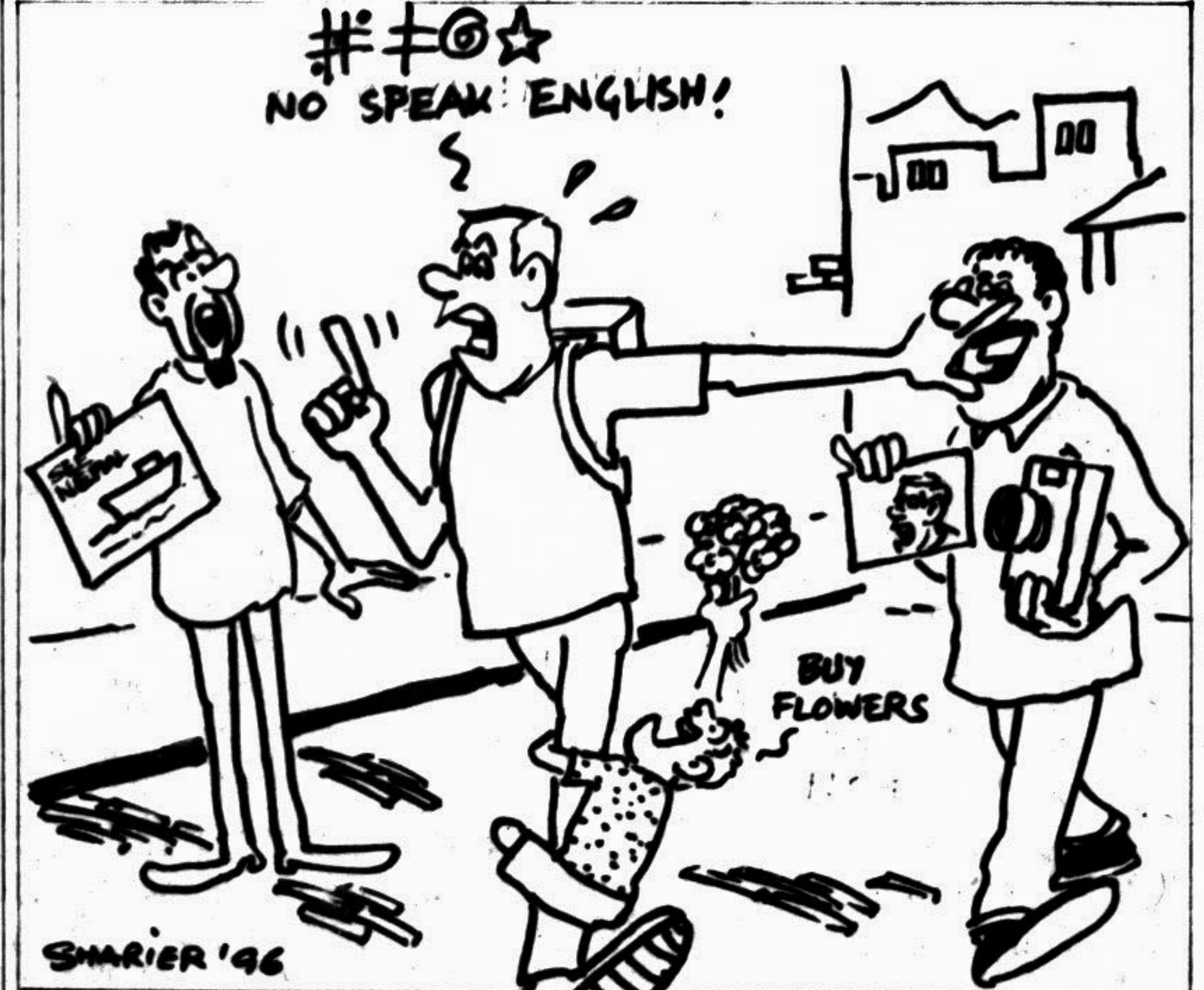
In the past six months thousands of pet owners have been taken to court merely for having, say, three cats in their rented flat instead of the maximum two allowed by law. "They are usually acquitted," says Angelos Angeletos, a lawyer who heads an animal rights group. "But the state and its mechanisms are made to look ridiculous." Nevertheless, says Kiasa, "life has been made miserable for all Greek pet owners." She cites the recent case of an Alsatian dog, the companion and protector of a woman and her aged mother, which had to be put down after a court ordered them to evict it from their flat. Other results of the new law have been comic rather than tragic. Recently, Angeletos says, a woman who fed pigeons in central Athens was arrested for not having a poultry-breeding licence. Another woman was prosecuted for not having a stock breeding licence to look after eight large dogs in a derelict farmhouse. The reasoning was that since the dogs were as big as calves, the cattle laws had to apply to them. The hundreds of thousands of stray dogs and cats that inundate Athens and other cities are regularly the victims of the terrible cruelty, often seconded by city and borough councils and even the Church. Kiasa keeps

a grim record of the worst cases. Earlier this year a parish priest in the Athens suburb of Pangrati allegedly poisoned the stray cats in a local park. Another took offence when a woman regularly fed a group of homeless kittens in his church grounds. When she ignored him, he poisoned the kittens, claiming that feeding them at the church was "disrespectful to God." In the first week of August the inhabitants of the seaside suburb of Glyfada, near Athens airport, awoke to find the entire dog population of the district dead in the streets, deliberately poisoned. At the same time, the mayor of Chysoupolis, a town in northern Greece, issued a bounty notice promising 800 drachmas to anyone killing a stray dog or cat. The story was reported in the Greek tabloids, from where it made its way to European and United States newspapers. The mayor's office was deluged with outraged letters, but plenty of locals acted on the instruction anyway. People are the problem, says Kiasa. "Greeks have an aversion to neutering their pets, because they don't like depriving them of a sex life," she says. "then lots of unwanted puppies and kittens



are simply abandoned." The Greek Animal Welfare Society estimates that at least 300,000 stray animals roam the streets of the country's cities and towns. The number

rises sharply in summer, when families going on holiday simply throw their pets out the door and leave them to fend for themselves. Some animals are rounded up for a fee and sent to hospital vivisection laboratories. Others are caught to be food for circus animals. Numberless others die from disease, poisons and accidents. The Society, small and overstretched and with precious little money coming in from British sponsors, tries valiantly to reduce the vast scale of the stray problem. In 1994 alone its staff investigated more than 18,000 cases of animal cruelty, mostly in Athens. The cases ranged from the distressingly common poisonings to a colony of tortoises being used as footballs by young boys in a city park. In the same year, vets carried out more than 1,600 neuterings and spraying of stray animals to keep the stray population down in a humane manner. This year the Society printed posters featuring a photograph of a dog, with the caption, "Don't abandon me when you go on holiday." "There is little evidence it did much good. A lot of pedigree pets are thrown out," says Kiasa. "Dobermans, Siamese cats, Angoras — you name it." This year the Foreign Ministry received an urgent cable from the Greek Embassy in Washington. The embassy had been receiving thousands of angry letters from Americans who had vacationed in Greece and seen the plight of strays. The Greek government issued a circular to all the country's police stations urging stronger enforcement of the laws against animal maltreatment. Animal rights activists, however, blame the police for, at best, inertia. At worst, they say, the local authorities themselves procure the poisons to eliminate stray animals — and unlucky pets that might be strolling around — from city neighbourhoods. "Even farm animals have been looked upon here as mere tools," says Kiasa. "In Crete, for example, aged animals no longer useful in the fields are sometimes left to die of hunger and exposure, to be eaten by birds of prey. Old dogs are sometimes hanged." It is a tricky subject. Yet Greek press comment, when faced with attacks in the West European and US press over the Greeks' perceived treatment of animals, is generally sympathetic. "Once more we have showed our lack of civilisation," said one tabloid after the London Times reported the story of the cat-poisoner priest.



fitness royale
with rani padamsee

BODY types are just as much subject to the whims of fashion as hair-cuts and hemlines. But the trouble with our bodies is, although they can lose excess fat on build up muscle, they can't be altered with the same extreme, ruthless abandon that top Paris designers transform silhouettes from one season to the next. Instead, we must come to terms with what our figure-type is, learn how to make the most of it but, most important of all, come to like the way we look. Chances are, if we are happy with our physiques, then our confidence will be projected to others. Looking at all the different figure types that have, over the ages, been upheld as the most desirable forms, it seems ridiculous even to attempt to emulate.

The Three Body Types
Fashion aside, body types have been categorised into three basic groups. **Ectomorphs** are the slender people of the world. They are also inclined to be on the tall side. Some of them are extremely thin and lanky and never seem to gain an ounce of fat however much they eat. As well as finding it difficult to accumulate fat, they often find it equally hard to develop their muscle. **Mesomorphs** are strong, strapping types, sturdily built and naturally physically powerful. They find it quite easy to build muscle and will excel in sports that require strength such as weight lifting. Rugby players with their burly shoulders and well-developed limbs could be classified as typical mesomorphs. Without regular work-outs, however, their strong physiques can run to flab.

Endomorphs are ones who will have to watch their food intake and make regular exercise a part of their daily programme if they are not to become overweight. They are sturdily built — sometimes stout and well-covered with flesh — although by no means necessarily fat. **SPECIAL NOTE FOR ALL STANDING EXERCISES:** Whenever you are instructed to stand with both feet on the floor, you may keep your legs straight but always your and knees relaxed — never locked. a) Starting position. Stand with body in straight line without curving the back in. Clasp the barre with one hand, stretch the other arm out to the side, keep stomach in and breathe normal. b) Bending knees to the side, lower body keeping back straight and stomach in, bottom tight.

Body Types

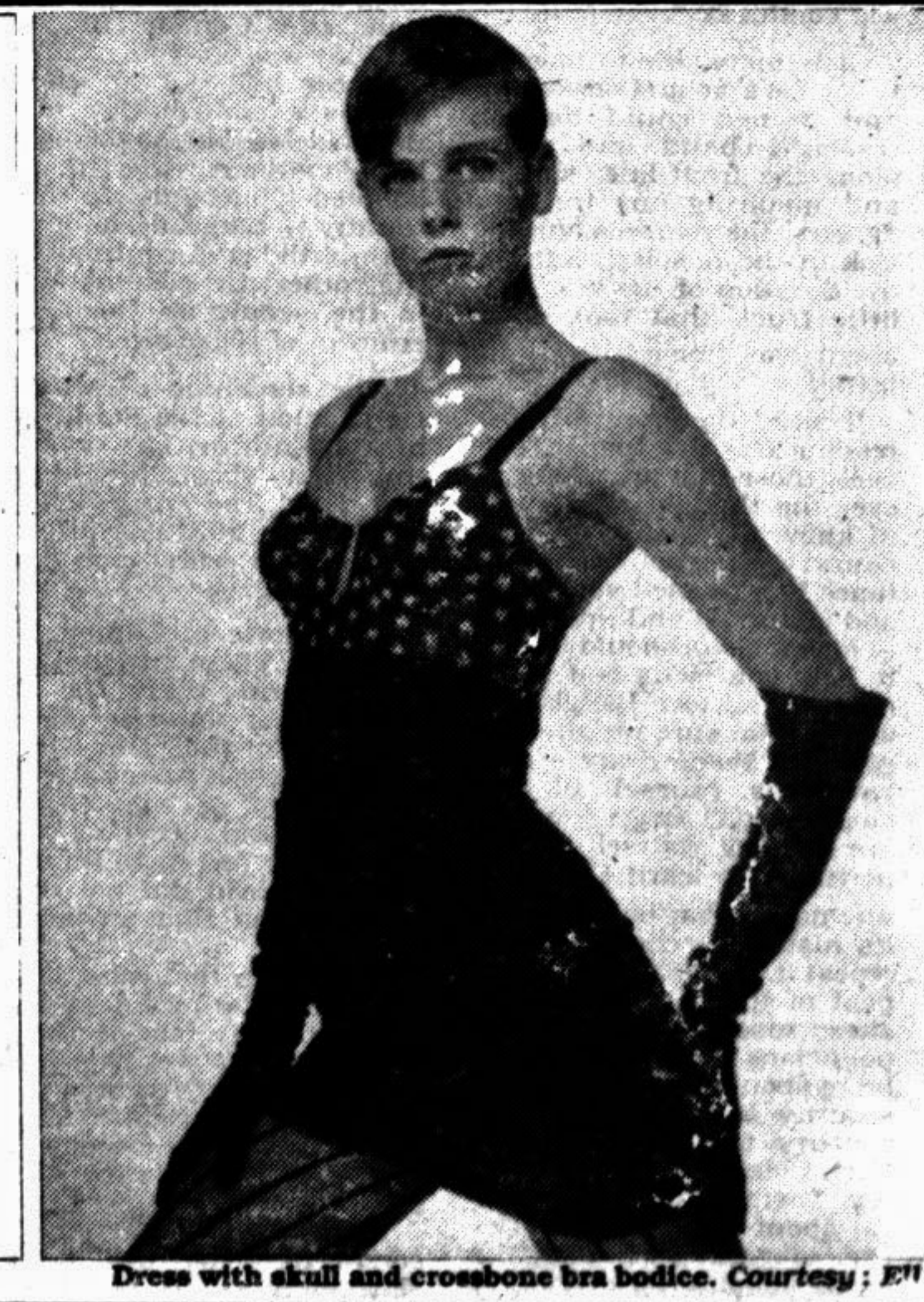
WE ARE ALL CAST IN DIFFERENT MOULDS AND MUST LEARN TO LIKE WHAT WE'VE GOT

Model: Shomen

Photo: Shu-Feng Ngortant



Laced body with felt hat.



Dress with skull and crossbone bra bodice. Courtesy: EPI