

## The Children Must Go Beyond Basics

by Ekram Kabir



Immunisation: Safe life hence

THE 'future' has always been here, for the children have always been here. It was only in the '50s the world had — after the constellation of the UN — started thinking about the future. That's what the Unicef 1996 Progress of the Nations (PoN) fourth in its series since 1993, says so far.

Child malnutrition still poses as the biggest problem in Bangladesh, including most of the developing countries, even after many national, international and UN level efforts to eradicate the ill. The population census of 1991 says, nearly 17.54 per cent of the total population was in the age group of four or under-four years. Another 17.48 per cent was found to be in the age group of five to nine years, and yet another 11.48 belonged to the ten to fourteen years of age group. These denote that young people — the children — are half the total population of Bangladesh.

This group of population has been, and still is, an immense help to Bangladesh's socio-economy. Children's contributions to the economy in the form of a labour force are towering which last year came under attack by one of the human rights upholders, namely, the USA.

The definitions of "child" are diverse in different concepts and laws in Bangladesh and other countries of the world. But the legal system in many countries has tried to draw a line between boys and girls. The Majority Act of 1875

arrhoal diseases; support for breast-feeding through baby-friendly hospital initiative and ending free and low-cost distribution of breastmilk substitutes; virtual elimination of Vitamin A deficiency; universal iodisation of salt; elimination of guinea worm disease; and the universal ratification of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Among all the mid-decade goals, some areas witnessed appreciable consummation. Salt iodation, for example, is the most noteworthy. According to the Unicef country representative in Bangladesh Rolf C Cariere, it is no small achievement that Bangladesh — a country that had even in the recent past 60 million of its people at risk of iodine deficiency — now iodates 62 per cent of its salt. And the PoN '96 confirms, mentioning Bangladesh's latest official report, that the country's 97 per cent salt as iodated. "It's also remarkable that Bangladesh now pays for over two-thirds of its routine immunisation costs," says Cariere.

Other achievements regarding Bangladesh have not been clearly made understood except for the news that 'essential obstetric services are being decentralised by upgrading district and community facilities and staff skills, development of clinical protocols to guide diagnosis and treatment, and community mobilisation'. A strategy whereby 14 district hospitals were linked with obstetric and gynaecological departments of 11 medical colleges, has played an important role in the success of the programmes carried out so far.

The needs of Bangladeshi children — as citizens — are quite telling and understood by the government of Bangladesh. Their needs came to the lime-light after the UN's Children's Fund set some mid-decade and end-set targets to expedite the process of welfare of the children. The goals that were supposed to be accomplished by 1995 are: raising of immunisation to at least 80 per cent; elimination of neonatal tetanus; a major reduction in, measles cases and deaths; eradication of polio; achieving 80 per cent of ORT (oral rehydration therapy) to stop di-

arrhoeal diseases; support for breast-feeding through baby-friendly hospital initiative and ending free and low-cost distribution of breastmilk substitutes; virtual elimination of Vitamin A deficiency; universal iodisation of salt; elimination of guinea worm disease; and the universal ratification of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

These problems are very much present in the developing nations as well. The UN agencies who are concerned over these issues will not be doing justice if they do not empathise in the same way about the poorer nations. The children are as cherished as the southern nations as they are to the North.

Even in Muslim majority Bangladesh, the children are highly treasured by religion. They are assessed as precious assets of the society. Religion realises the fundamental rights for the young people as: the right to genetic purity; the right to life; the right to breast-feeding; healthcare and nutrition; the right to future security; the right to education, training and self-defence; the right to equal treatment of both the sexes; and the right to be supported by 'fair' share of funds.

The Unicef's PoN '96 reveals the organisation has started to work on 'beyond basics' in the industrialised countries, for the 'basics' have already been achieved there. This can be interpreted as all the children in the wealthy countries are satisfactorily nourished and relish basic healthcare and obtain the explicit education. Yet the PoN '96 says that this doesn't mean all problems are solved; mounting problems — both old and new — face the children in the industrialised world, and new avenues of measuring progress or regression are needed.

Tobacco use in the form of cigarette-smoking among the under-15 has been identified as one of the major 'beyond-basics' problems of the West. Given the studies done and according to the league table, it's one of the major problems in the richer part of the globe. And among 22 rich nations, Finland's 15-year-olds lead the tobacco road. Twenty-five per cent of its under-15 boys and 19 per cent of girls within the same age-group are regular smokers.

What the UN Children's

Fund forgets — among many of its programmes — is that the children of rural Bangladesh, even the school-goers after class hours, who go helping their farmer-fathers very easily grow the habit of smoking bids at a very tender age which continues until they die from tobacco-related diseases. This practice of tobacco use among the countryside kids has been going on for a long time which is very close to be a social norm in Bangladeshi rural areas. Viewed in this context, the PoN report every year has totally ignored Bangladesh.

While giving precautions on the tobacco-related problems in the PoN '96, the WHO programme on substance abuse, Neil Collishaw says, "Most people know that tobacco is hazardous, but few people appreciate how hazardous it really is. Smoking kills about half of persistent smokers who take up the habit in adolescence". Here he, of course, talks about the young people of the rich

countries, exposing the industry to unpredictable market forces. In the world around us, the greatest growth has taken place in telephone services — electronic mail, toll-free-calls and computerised directories. In addition, telephone hardware — electronic switchboards, central office switches, handsets — has brought about billions of dollars in sales figure. As information technology becomes more and more important, the market will expand even more dramatically. By the end of the century, the world telecommunications industry and information technology could represent massive array of advances surpassing records of progress in other fields.

More importantly, the clicking and clacking of electromechanical switches have given way to the humming of electronic digital exchanges designed to speed data, pictures and voices around the world and this has put telecommunications as the most sophisticated technology.

Growth has taken place on such an unprecedented scale that consumers in one country will be able to communicate with consumers in another country like in one big global neighborhood. They will be able to choose from a wide variety of gadgets and conveniences that once seemed like science fiction. Cellular, mobile telephone are already in wide use around the world, while high-speed fibre-optic cables will deliver an array of new services including video-telephones.

However, one must not miss the fact that behind all these spectacular developments of telecommunication industry lay the humble efforts of a group of committed scientists. Various methods of sending messages had been designed by men through the ages. Over 3000 years ago, the Greeks relayed back to Greece news of the capture of Troy by signalling with fires. The American Indians used puffs of smoke for signals, one of the largest of the mounds they had for this purpose was near Mansfield, Ohio.

Tribes in Africa and on the Island of Pacific had for centuries a form of telegraph that made use of specially built

Iodised salt is the cure

in Bangladesh interprets a person below 18 to be a child. But anomalies remained while establishing equity between boy and girl children.

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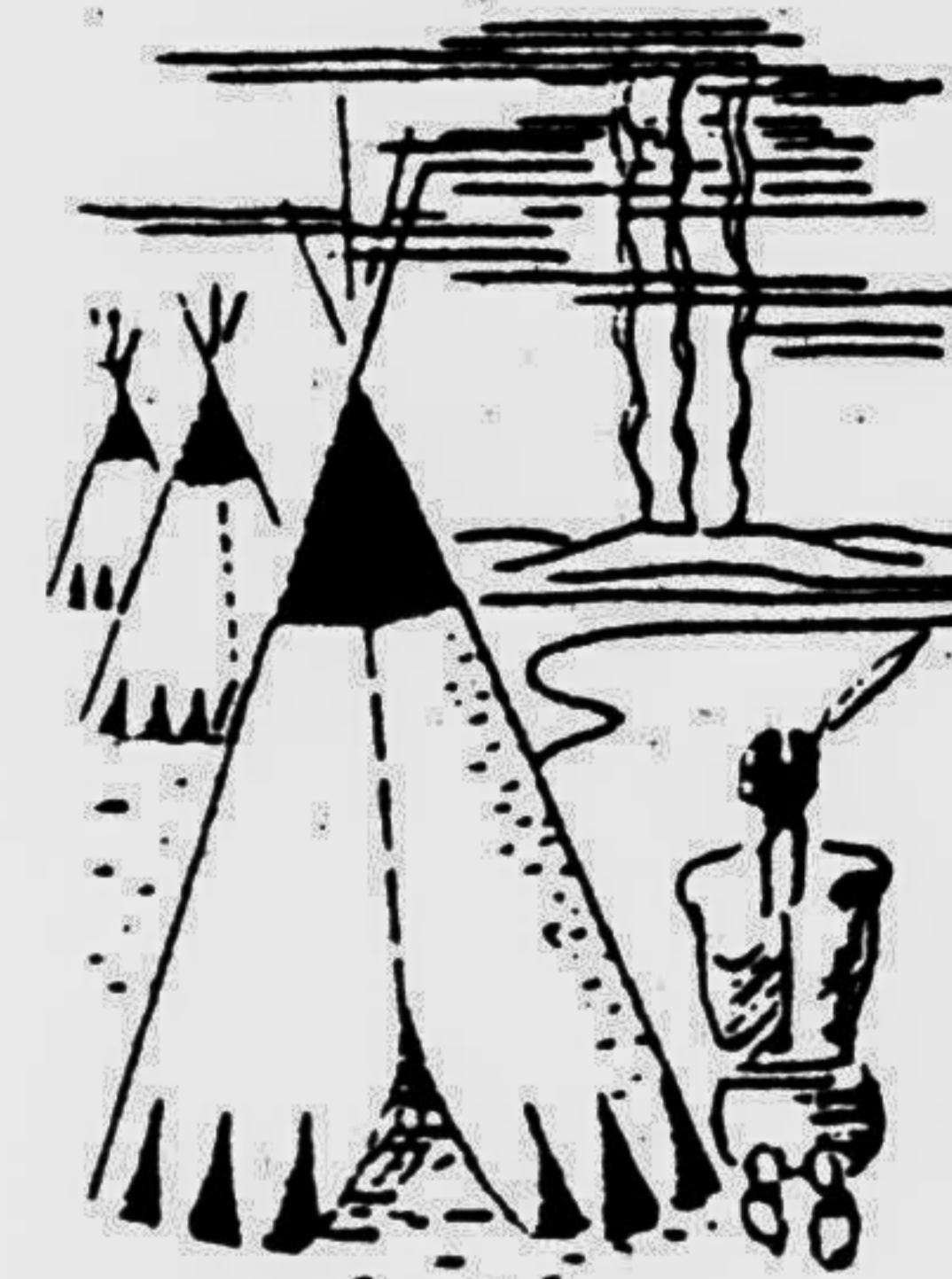
What the UN Children's

## Recalling Progress of Telecommunications from Morse Days

by Md Asadullah Khan



Samuel Morse



American Indians used mounds and puffs of smoke for signals.

by the impact of a new force-electricity. Almost 250 years ago, Benjamin Franklin sent an electric current through a wire stretched across the Schuylkill River and set fire to alcohol at the other end. Oversteed, Surgeon and Faraday, over a period of years, unfolded many of the basic principles of electricity and magnetism. In 1831 Professor Joseph Henry strung nearly a mile of wire around one of the rooms in the Albany Academy. By closing a switch at one end of the wire, he could ring a bell at the other. The stage was being set for the electro-magnetic telegraph.

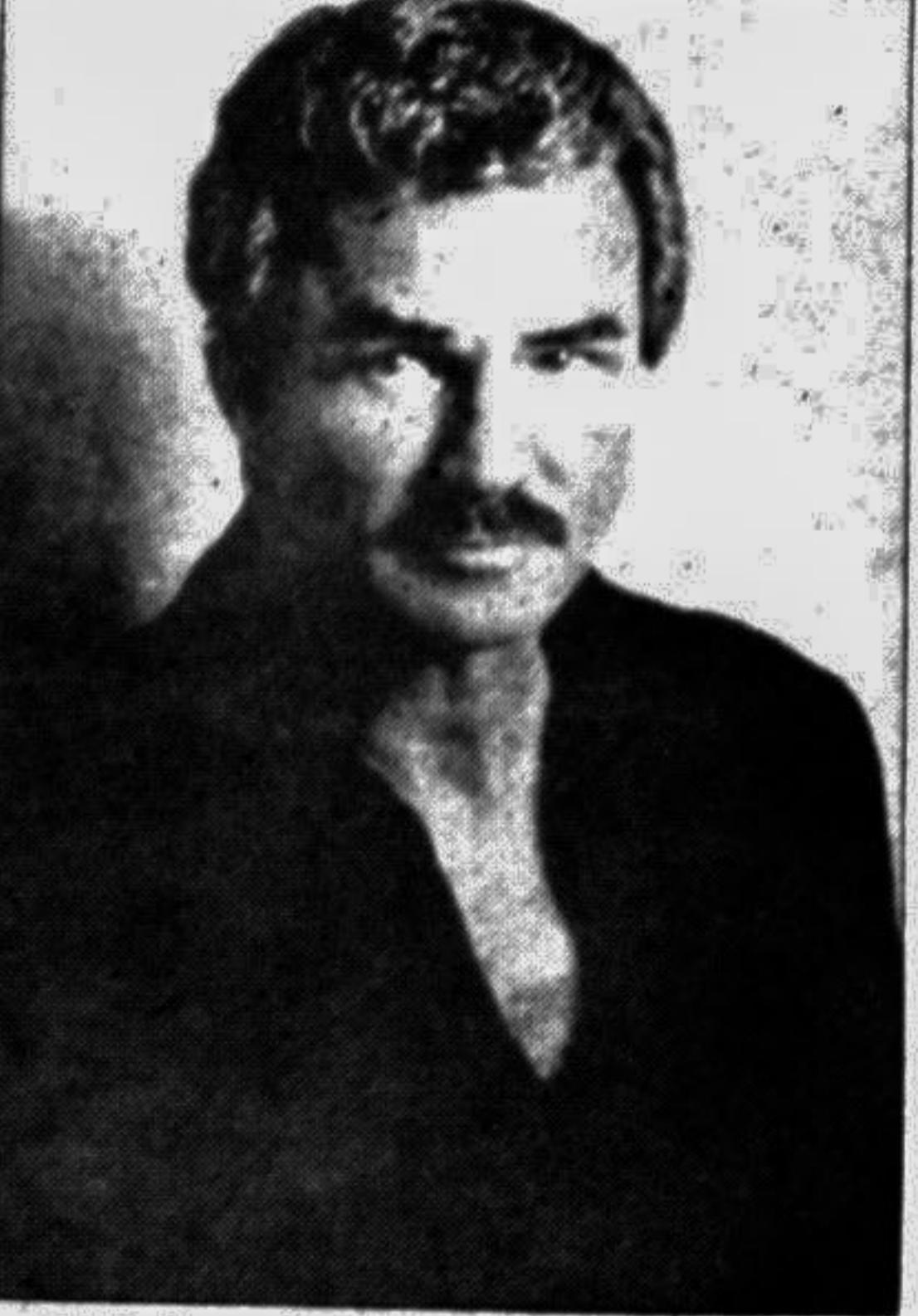
In 1832, a meeting between Samuel Morse, a famous artist and President of the National Academy of Design in New York and Dr Charles Jackson of Boston sparked off a flurry of activities in message communication. One evening at dinner Dr Jackson mentioned that experiment had shown that electricity possesses the ability to pass instantly over any length of wire. In the course of conversation Morse said "I see no reason why intelligence can not be transmitted by electricity".

Obsessed with the idea, Morse almost got away from his painting, using it only as a means of living and providing funds for his experiments. In a garret in lower Manhattan, he ate, slept and worked. He made all possible effort to make use of the information he could get from Professor Henry on electromagnets. Later with the help of Alfred Vail, he managed to develop an instrument that could receive and record dots and dashes on paper. Later they dropped the recording and used the audible dots and dashes. For ten years Morse tried to interest people in his electric telegraph and it was not until 1845 that congress finally provided the money to build a line from Washington to Baltimore. In May, 1844, the first message was transmitted.

Fortunately for the world, other than providing a new form of communication, the electric telegraph stimulated science, industry, commerce and invention. It paved the way for the development of Atlantic cable, the telephone, the radio and television. Small wonder, each of these methods of communication has helped develop a new field of its own and each contributes to the progress and success of the other.

The world at this stage of fantastic development in information technology and communication explosion has got to be indebted to Samuel Morse for his pioneering work. He braved all the hardship, poverty and discouragement and was superbly fired with dynamism and courage to explore the possibilities of fast and effective communication system that has heralded growth and development around the world.

## The Daily Star Entertainment Guide



BL Stryker on Star Plus at 12:30 am tonight

1996 World Motorcycle champion Netherland Grand Prix From essen, Netherlands 3:00 Prime Boxingights TBC 4:30 Thai Kickboxing 5:30 Gillette World Sport Special

### STAR MOVIES

8:00 100 Years Of Cinema Japan (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Classic Anne Of The Indies 12 (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Comedy Don't Look Your Head In (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Family Rock & Doodle G (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Comedy Doctor In Distress 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Adventure Escape From The Planet Of The Apes 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Family Hol Nolt, Hol Nolt Volt (English Subtitles) 9:00 The Preview 9:30 Battle Cries: Above Us The Waves PG? (Hindi Subtitles) 11:30 Comedy House Party III 18? (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Fright Night - Hellraiser II 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 After Dark Judicial Consent 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Action: Gun Crazy 18 (Hindi Subtitles)

### ZEE TV

5:30am Infotainment (TMM) 6:00

News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED

Management 8:00 ZED-Naya 4 To

Z 8:30 All Out For No Loss 9:00

Bournival Quotient Contest 9:30

Bhajans 10:00 Ad Mad Show

10:30 Gaane Aajnega 11:00

Captain Cook Shakti Dawaat 11:30

Cartoons 12:00 Tel Mol Ke Bol 1:30 Asian

Sky Shop 2:30 Nerolac Ashiana

3:00 Positive Health Show 3:30

Zaike Ka Salar 4:00 No Problem

4:30 TV Sa Re Ga Ma 5:00

Galaxy 5:30 Game Aajnega 6:00

Commander 6:30 Turnbare Lye

7:00 FLU 7:30 Sur Tai 8:00

Helping 8:30 Ma 9:00 Asian

Paints Yaadon Ke Rang 9:30 Tora

10:30 Tanay 10:30 The News

11:30 Tanay 12:00 Ghoomta Aana

11:30 Action HFF 1:30 Colgate

Geet Yodha 2:00 Shakti 2:30

TM

Rajesh Khanna Special 6:30

Bac The Man Ke 7:30 Sur Sar

gan 8:30 Guzara Hua Zama

9:30 Dance Dance 10:00 Lakhan

Advar Boopking 11:00 Zero Se

Hero 11:30 Shudh Detergent

Karz 12:00 Asha Bhosle Special

1:00 Pyar Hi Pyar 2:00 Guzara

Hua Zama 6:30 Fat Or Fit 3:30

Karm 4:00 Ten Bhu Chup, Men Bh

Chup 4:30 Moova Usha Uthup

Show 5:00 Society Navras 5:30

6:00 Devotional Music 6:30 Dhamar

Ha Special 7:30 Zaika Ka Safer

8:00 Jawab 8:30 Frooti Its My

Choice 9:00 Wonder Wings Amar

9:30 Fantasy Kal Bh Ag Bh

10:00 People's Club 10:30

Liberty Public Demand 11:30 Hit

Paars

10:00 Siddhi 1:30 Kaash 2:00

Sunday Ki Sunday 2:30 The Nirlep

Rasoi Show 3:00 Khoja Khoya

Chand 3:30 Movie Mania 4:30

Humsa Barkar Gong 5:00 Rangeela

Re 5:30 Mere Massege Meri Geet

6:00 Aana 6:30 Video CD Premier

7:00 Good Shot 7:30 Ja B

Hamman 8:00 Surf Wheel Of

Fortune 8:30 Cine Prime Hindi

Feature Film 11:30 Jagduar

6:20 Auto Courses 7