

Water Sharing of the Ganges

by Amjad Hossain Khan

The outcome of the two foreign ministers' recent meeting in Dhaka caused a surprise to many who are following the water sharing issue. In the euphoria generated by the media over the last two months Bangladesh expected some positive outcome for a solution of the water issue.

THE Indian External Affairs Minister Mr I K Gujral held talks in Dhaka for four days. In his press conference on 9 September, he dealt with various bilateral issues including the crucial water sharing. Highlights of his press conference (concerning water sharing in particular) can be picked up as follows:

• We are going back with the belief that from now on a new chapter in our relationship is opened.

• Both the countries now have new governments and they do not carry the baggage of the past.

• If we look at the history of the past, we will reach nowhere. We must not be prisoners of the past.

• He discussed the water sharing issue at length with his Bangladesh counterpart.

• India has indicated its willingness to solve the problem and experts will start meeting immediately to find a solution to the Ganges water sharing issue before the lean season sets in.

• About the quantum of water, it will be decided by the experts on the basis of three factors:

— to examine Bangladesh's exact requirement.

— how much water is available now.

— what is the actual ground reality on both the sides during the dry season.

Since the election of 12 June, 1996, the new government in Bangladesh announced water sharing as a priority issue for the country and media coverage followed in such a way that the knotty problem of permanent water sharing almost seemed to be solved before the next dry season. Some of the newspapers even reported prospect of better sharing (44,000 or above) arrangements for Bangladesh!

Indian Foreign Secretary Mr Salman Haider came to Dhaka to personally hand over a letter for the Bangladesh Prime Minister from the Indian Prime Minister. He indicated ministerial level meeting shortly to resolve all outstanding issues. This was followed by return visit of Bangladesh Foreign Secretary to India when they discussed whole range of bilateral issues including water sharing. The media in Bangladesh gave high hopes to these talks which would open up new areas of cooperation and are likely to "break new grounds, understanding and cooperation."

Mr Abdur Razzaque, Water Resources Minister, in a press interview with The Daily Star expressed his optimism that the new Government would be able to reach an agreement with India on sharing of the Ganges water soon. He was optimistic that the new Government in India was very positive in improving relations with Bangladesh.

Mr Abdur Razzaque in another press interview said that the present government is seeking a permanent solution to the sharing of Ganges water before the onset of the lean period.

He is on record to say that "we will make an all out effort to arrive at a national consensus on the issue of sharing of the Ganges water". Regarding the position of Bangladesh, he gave three strategies: 1) permanent solution, 2) immediate solution and 3) due share of Bangladesh according to our

necessity. Prior to the visit of Mr Gujral, the Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka in a press statement (The Independent, 6 July, 1996) stated that India was now prepared to discuss with Bangladesh permanent water sharing arrangements concerning all 54 rivers. He made it clear that sharing will be on the basis of water now available in the river without looking into the question of augmentation. He negated the question of involving Nepal in the discussion or any third party involvement on this issue.

Mr Abdus Samad Azad, Bangladesh Foreign Minister, in a statement in the Jatiya Sangsad said that a new and a bold attempt has been taken by the Government to realize the due share of the Ganges water. He further said that the Government will sit in a camera session of the Jatiya Sangsad to reach a consensus between the treasury and the opposition benches to resolve the water sharing issue.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star on 30 August, 1996 in New Delhi, Mr I K Gujral said that India was determined to solve the bilateral problems and its attitude in solving the water issue was positive. "India will go more than half way to solve our bilateral problem". Regarding the many dimensions of Indo-Bangladesh Cooperation, he said that "our seven north eastern states and countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and India will all have to work out a plan as to how we can cooperate and develop the region and create an era of prosperity". He further said "the real challenge is how we can manage together our strengths and make ourselves even stronger. The main thing is that we all have to unite ourselves from the history of the past. It is extremely easy to remain prisoners of the past and not develop".

Citing an example of his talks with Nepal recently, Mr Gujral said that "we melted our frozen relationship within half an hour by the watch". The other outstanding issue with Nepal was solved in 10 minutes.

India considers water sharing between Bangladesh and India as a knotty problem which will have to be solved with political will of both the countries. Mr Gujral mentioned that he was coming to Bangladesh with an open mind and an open heart and would do more that his due to resolve the knotty problem.

The water issue was discussed between Centre for Policy Research (India) and Centre for Policy Dialogue (Bangladesh) in New Delhi, 27-29 August, 1996. Some eminent personalities from Bangladesh and India attended the seminar. Reports indicate that on water issue there was no meeting of minds.

Mr I K Gujral, Indian Foreign Minister, came to Dhaka on 6 September, 1996 leading a high profile political delegation which included Somnath Chatterjee, parliamentary leader of CPM, Mr Chitta Bose, parliamentary leader of Forward Block and Ms Gita Mukherjee, parliament member of CPI. Indian delegation also included Mr Iyer, retired water resources secretary.

The formal meeting of the two Foreign Ministers lasted only 90 minutes. Mr Gujral told

the waiting journalist, that "the water sharing issue has been discussed to the satisfaction of Bangladesh. I am accepting in principle Bangladesh's position in the matter." Regarding the quantum of water for Bangladesh he said, "details will be worked out at the level of experts".

During the talks the Indian side stressed the need for revival of the Joint Rivers Commission to work out the modalities while Bangladesh emphasised the need for a political decision to have its due share of water.

An Expert Committee will be set up by the two countries under the JRC to devise a modality to reach an agreement on the sharing of Ganges water before the next dry season.

They also agreed to empower the committee to recommend a solution to the problem of shortfall in the Ganges flow due to withdrawal of available water at Farakka and to meet the requirements of Bangladesh. The Indian side made it clear that the data on availability of water of the Ganges at Farakka would have to be updated.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister in his press conference on 10 Sept. said that the two sides discussed the water sharing issue and agreed on the need for a permanent water sharing agreement before the next dry season. He also said that the Indian side highlighted the im-

portance of water sharing on the basis of realities. The Indian Foreign Minister emphasised the need for complete transparency and reconciliation of data on water flows. On quantum of water for Bangladesh, Mr Azad said "we told them about our needs and the experts committee will determine it after examination. Our aim is to have a permanent

agreement before the lean period." The Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission was set up in 1972. Its Chairmanship was upgraded to Ministerial level at a later stage. Besides the Chairman, there are two engineering members and Director General (Subcontinent) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Routine works as per mandate

of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission was undertaken.

The Joint declaration of the Prime Minister of India and Bangladesh in May, 1974 decided to study the best means of augmentation of the dry season flows of the Ganges through optimum utilization of the water resources of the region available to the two countries.



The dried up 'Padma' at Hardinge Bridge, Paksey

The two proposals for augmentation as proposed by Bangladesh for construction of storage dams in Nepal and link canal for diversion of Brahmaputra water to the Ganges as proposed by India was discussed. Both the proposals are rejected by each side.

The Ganges water agreement was signed by Bangladesh and India in 1977 for five years. A new memorandum of understanding was signed for two years. The Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission considered the revised and updated proposals for augmentation from 1982 to 1984. In view of difference of opinion on each other's proposal, it was not possible for the JRC to make a recommendation which was acceptable to the other.

A new MOU was signed for three years in 1985. A Joint Committee of Experts headed by the Secretaries of the two countries was formed to undertake joint study and submit their reports on water issue common to both countries.

The Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) held seven meetings and their Technical Committee of JCE met three times to carry out the work assigned to them.

The Secretaries Committee on Sharing of common rivers held six meetings but could not reach any understanding. The Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission failed because of lack of clear directives and strong political will of the Government of India. These are facts and know to both sides.

The outcome of the two foreign ministers' recent meeting in Dhaka caused a surprise to many who are following the water sharing issue. In the euphoria generated by the media over

the last two months Bangladesh expected some positive outcome for a solution of the water issue.

The two foreign ministers decided to reactivate the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission. The JRC was never disbanded nor inactive; Bangladesh repeatedly requested for meeting of the JRC but there was no response from the Indian side. A large number of Joint Committees to resolve border rivers problem could not function due to lack of response from India.

The decision to set up Experts Committee under JRC is surprising. Without a clear directive, it will be near impossible task for the JRC to decide the three basic issues on sharing: 1) updating of data of the Ganges at Farakka, 2) availability of the Ganges at Farakka, 3) requirement of Bangladesh considering the ground realities.

During foreign ministers level meeting in New Delhi in 1991, the Indian side gave a proposal for long-term solution of the water issue. That proposal was made by the then Congress government. Bangladesh expected a better proposal from the present United Front government.

Indian Foreign Minister spoke of regional cooperation. This is very encouraging. This should be followed up by concrete proposals for the benefit of the region.

More rhetoric will help in confidence building process. Bangladesh would like to see genuine efforts being made by India to resolve the water sharing problem.

The writer is ex-Chairman, Bangladesh Water Development Board — USIS Feature

Basic Principles for Building an Information Society

by Al Gore

THE Global Infrastructure (GI) — a massive network of communications networks — will forever change the way we learn, work, and communicate.

This global network would permit the most remote village to browse through the most advanced library. It would allow doctors on one continent to examine patients on another. It would help a family in the Northern Hemisphere stay in touch with relatives in the Southern Hemisphere. And it would instill in citizens everywhere a deeper sense of their shared stewardship of our small planet.

Developed and developing nations in a number of international gatherings have forged a consensus that the best information network would be built on five core principles: private investment, competition, flexible regulation, open access, and universal service. The goal of these guiding principles is to speed the development of the GI and ensure its longevity.

These principles were adopted in Buenos Aires two years ago at the meeting of the International Telecommunications Union and affirmed last year at the G-7 Telecommunications Ministerial in Brussels. They have also been reaffirmed in a wide range of regional and multilateral fora — the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

meeting, the Summit of the Americas, and they were noted at the Information Society and Development Conference.

All five principles are tightly linked and depend on one another for their force. We should think about how these principles can advance both the particular interests of individual nations and the common interests of all citizens of the world.

Let me review the core principles. Let's start with private investment and competition. President Clinton signed into law the Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996, which will open our communications markets to competition among a host of companies. We believe that liberating private businesses to compete with each other has proven time and again to be the best technique for sparking creativity, creating jobs, boosting profits, and bringing an array of new services to consumers.

This is a tremendous opportunity for the private sector — as we have seen in South America, in Asia, and now in parts of Africa. But private investment, wherever it occurs, must be accompanied by robust competition.

We've learned that lesson in the United States. When a federal judge broke up AT&T, the world's largest telephone monopoly, the results surprised even the fiercest proponents of

deregulation. The price of a long-distance telephone call dropped dramatically. New companies, with new jobs, burst onto the scene. And AT&T itself eventually became a stronger company — more competitive and innovative.

Developments in Chile also illustrate the benefits of private investment and open competition. In 1994, Chile put in place a strongly pro-competitive regulatory structure.

The number of long-distance carriers in Chile increased from one to 12. The portion of homes with telephone service jumped by more than 50 percent. And prices dropped from about two US dollars per minute to about one-fifth of a US dollar per minute. The industry's revenues increased too — about twice as fast as the overall economy.

Private investment and competition are essential for the GI's development. So is smart, flexible regulation. In order for investors to take risks and competition to take hold, regulations must ensure stability, freedom, and flexibility, while also offering consumers fair prices and wide choices.

In the United States, we regulate many communications industries through an independent agency, the Federal Communications Commission



The author is Vice President of the United States

(FCC). This expert body has the know-how to make technical decisions. And with other agencies in the US Department of Justice and Department of Commerce, the FCC has the capacity to monitor changing market conditions.

Just as these new technologies are overthrowing the old commercial order, those of us in government must topple outdated regulatory structures while remaining true to their

underlying values and ideals. Another core principle — tightly linked to the principles of private investment, competition, and flexible regulations — is open access. All nations and all parties need to be able to connect to the GI.

The reason can be illustrated, in part, by a principle well-known in computer science as Metcalfe's Law. Metcalfe's Law holds that the power of a computer network increases as roughly the square of the number of people connected to it.

That's why the Internet is growing so fast. The more people who connect, the more other people there are who want to connect. If you double the number of people on line, you quadruple the number of possible ways to link people and combine their talent and ideas.

That is why open access is so important. Keep people off the network, and the networks won't be as valuable. Let people on, and the value everyone derives will soar.

Therefore, the owners of networks must charge non-discriminatory prices for access to their networks. The only way to realize the true promise of the GI is to guarantee that everyone who connects has access to thousands of different information sources — from video programming to electronic newspapers to computer bulletin boards — from every nation, in every language.

The fifth and final principle is perhaps the most important — universal service. We believe that universal service can be a natural outgrowth of the first four principles. Certainly the combination of open access, flexible regulations, competition, and private investment will tug us in that direction. But by themselves they will not take us fully to that destination.

That is why President Clinton and I have challenged our nation's private sector to help connect every school in America to the information superhighway by the end of this decade. And that is why I renew my call for the creation of a Global Digital Library, so all the world's citizens will have quicker and richer access to all the world's information.

Of course, in each nation the exact contours of universal service will differ. But its basic shape should be similar in most locales. For instance, providing basic service at prices people at all income levels can afford, making high quality service available regardless of a person's geographic location or physical ability, and teaching consumers how to use these technologies effectively.

The GI is a historic undertaking. It is strengthened by openness, and fortified by strong nations and talented people pursuing dreams of a better tomorrow.

Saturday 21st September

(All programmes are in local time. There may be changes in group programmes).

BT

3:00pm Opening Announcement Al-Quran Programme Summary 3:10 Recitation from the Tripitak 3:15 Movie of the Week 4:00 News in Bangla 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Ban-shor: Folk Songs 6:00pm News in Bangla 6:05 Angkor 6:30 Moner Mukure 7:00 News in English 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Multi-o-Manush: Programme based on Agricultural Development 9:00 Bharat Nadir Banka 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shasthastha: Health Programme 10:35 Drama Series: Dynasty 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tomorrow's programme summary 11:40 Close down

BBC

6:00am BBC World News 8:20 The Last Days Of The Wall 7:00 BBC World News 7:10 Newnight 8:00 BBC World News 8:20 Window On Europe 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 Correspondent 10:00 BBC World News 10:20 Face To Face 11:00 BBC World News 11:20 Window On Europe 12:00noon BBC World Headlines 12:05 BBC The Matter 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 White Heat 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: The Travel Show 4:00 BBC World Headlines 4:05 Window 5:00 BBC World News 5:20 The Last Days Of The Wall 5:30 Earth Report 6:00am BBC World News 7:00 BBC World News 7:20 This Week 8:00 BBC World News 8:30 Time Out: Film 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 Correspondent 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: The Clothes Show 11:00 BBC World News 11:20 This Week 12:00noon BBC World News 12:20 Face To Face 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 Horizon 2:00 BBC World News 2:30

Time Out: Jeremy Clarkson's Motorworld 3:00 BBC World News 3:25 Window On Europe 4:00 BBC World News 4:25 This Week 5:00 BBC World News 5:20 Face To Face

CHANNEL V

6:00am Frame by Frame 7:00 Rewind VJ Sophiya 8:00 Frame by Frame 8:30 Asian Top 20 VJ Nonie 10:30 Big Bang Weekend VJ Alessandra 12:30 Billboard US Countdown 2:30 The Ride VJ Trey 3:30 Rewind VJ Sophiya 4:30 House Of Noise VJ Luke 5:30 [V] 1's 6:00pm Classic Rock 7:00 Top of the Pops 8:00 BPL Oyer 9:00 The Ticket 9:30 Family Extra 10:00 Time Pass 10:30 Rewind 11:00 V Spot 12:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 12:30 The Ticket 1:00 Over The Edge VJ Sophiya 2:00 Music Update Tokyo 2:30 The Ride VJ Trey 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:30 V Spot

STAR PLUS

6:30am Voltron 7:00 Kids Movie 'Code Name: Robotnik' 8:30 Count Duckula 9:00 Sabar Rider & The Star Sherri 9:30 Zoofie With Jack 10:00 Katts & Dog 10:30 Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea 11:30 The Wild Wild West 12:30 Movie: 'Dad' 2:30 E TV 3:00 The Wonder Years 3:30 Civil Wars 4:30 Hardcastle And McCormick 5:30 Fantasy Island 6:30 Charlie's Angels 7:30 The Addams Family 8:00 The Simpsons 8:30 Baywatch 9:30 Sirens 10:30 L A Law 11:30 Code 3 12:00noon COPS 12:30 Mystery Movies Inspector Morse-Servic Of All The Dead 2:30 Movie: 'The Master Touch' 4:30 E TV 5:00 The Sullivan 5:30 Wild Wild West

STAR Sports

6:00am World Wundersurfing HL 6:30 Australian Football League Highlights 7:30 Sports India 8:30 World Wrestling Federation Raw 9:30 NBA-Inside Stuff 10:00 Live — Hong Kong Cricket 6's 1996 Day 1 6:00 Inside PGA Tour '34



Dynasty On BTV at 10:35 PM tonight

ZEE TV

6:30pm Asia Sports Show 7:00 NBA Fantastic 7:30 Indy Racing League New England 200 9:00 Gillette World Sport Special-16 9:30 SDD FT Wild Champ 1996 Portuguese Qualifying 11:00 ATP Tennis Wimbledon's Hamlet Cup 1st Semifinal 12:30 Hong Kong Croquet 6's 1996 Day 1 HL 1:30 NBA Fantastic 2:00 World Cup Classic 1982 England vs France 4:00 Australian Football League Highlights 5:00 Pro Beach Soccer Okinawa, Japan

STAR MOVIES

7:30am Action The Domino Principle 15 (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Western The Lone Texan 12 (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Family Who Has Seen The Wind? 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Adventure Remo Williams (Unarmed and Dangerous 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Family The Sandlot 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Comedy Heavily Pursued 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Family The Chipmunk Adventure PG (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 Bollywood 9:30 Giobretrotting Australia Spider and Rose 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 11:30 Action Royce 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Fright Night: Children Of

ZEE TV

The Corn 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Thriller Blink 18? (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Comedy Emerald City 18 (Hindi Subtitles)

PTV

8:00am Titawat Al Tarjuma/HamdNaat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabrain 8:45 Visitors Book 9:10 Phool Khushbo 9:25 Dastarkhwan 9:40 Mahman 10:05 Aap Ki Anwar Masood 10:30 English Film Tarzan 10:55 Milli Naahma 11:00 Khabrain 11:10 Meri Pasant 11:35 Janun 12:55 Quran-E-Hakeem 1:02 Bismillah

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

1:15 Grind 2:05 Lazwal Ep-43 2:55 Husool-E-Insaf & Sports Coaching 3:20 TV Encyclopedia 3:40 Sports Time 4:05 Dastarkar 5:05 Medicine 5:25 Computers 6:20 Aicu Courses 7:00 English News 7:20 PTV Music Library 7:30 Virsa Pakistan 7:55 Ghazal Us Naye Saare 8:25 Dentonic World Of Sports 8:45 Anta 9:00 Break For Headlines News 10:00 Khabrainama & Commercial News 10:35 TBA 11:55 The Fish Pond 1:05 Urdu Feature

Film Khas Khabrain-Close Down

SONY ET

8:30am Kuch Dil Ne Kaha 9:00 Yaadon Ki Baar 9:30 Cine Matinee-Hindi Feature Film 12:30 Chamatkar 1:00 Siddhi 1:30 Kaash 2:00 Sunday Ki Sunday 2:30 The Nirlep Rasoi Show 3:00 Khooya Khooya Chand 3:30 Movie Mania 4:30 Humse Barkar Gong 5:00 Rangoela Re 5:30 Mere Message Meni Geet 6:00 Aaina

6:30 Video CD Premier 7:00 Good Shot 7:30 Jai Bir Hanuman 8:00 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune 8:30 Cine Prime-Hindi Feature Film 11:30 Fortune Hunter 12:30 Humse Barkar Gong 1:00 Hospital 1:30 Aahat 2:00 Kuch Dil Ne Kaha 2:30 Closed

DD 7

10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Movie Club Film: Mukh Masal 1:00

Movie Club Film: Kamallata

1:00 Nirjan Dupure Premier Gaan (Magazine) 1:30 Nijer Sange Dekha 2:00 Prathingsha 2:30 Bandhu Chhe Bhalo 3:00 Kemon Aachen 3:30 Comedy Quiz 4:35 Movie Club Film: Shakha Proshakha 5:00 Jishu 5:30 Nijer Sange Dekha 6:00 Nirjan Dupure Premier Gaan 6:30 Prathingsha 7:00 Nandanak 7:30 Bangla Sambad 8:00 Dhitang Dhitang Boie 8:30 UJALA: Surer Asar 9:00 TBA 9:25 Classical Music 10:00

Drama 10:30 News and Bengali Sambad

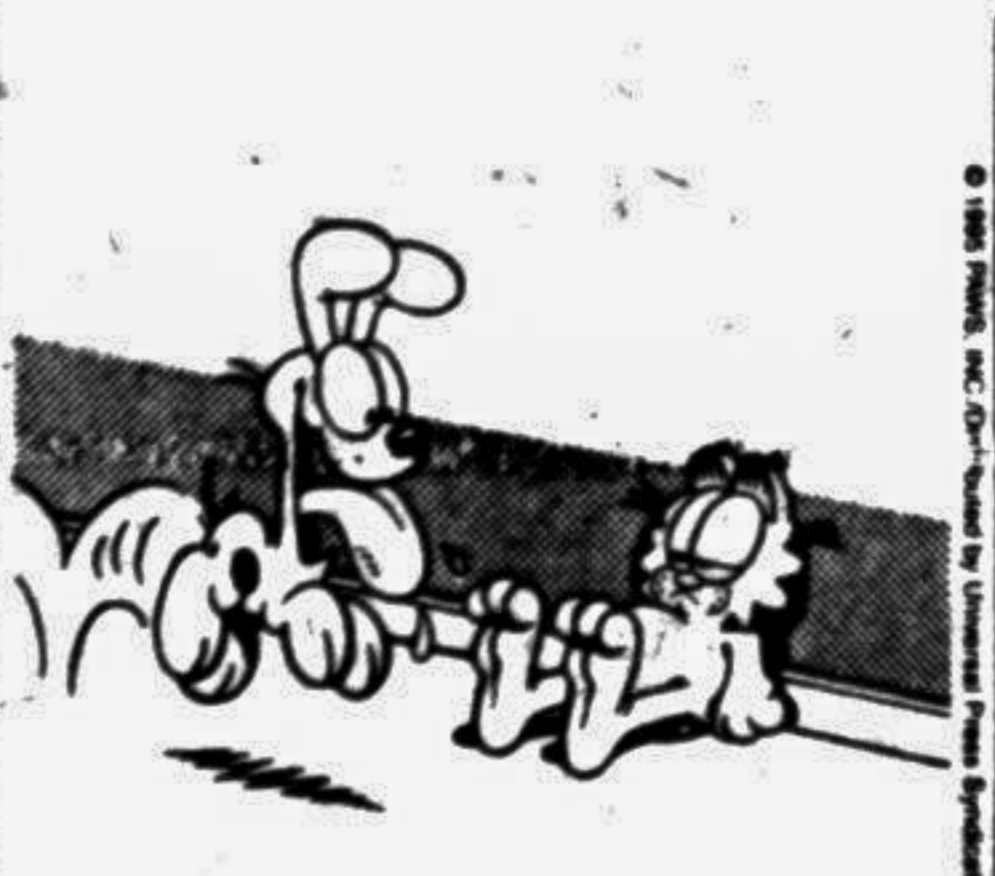
ZEE CINEMA

06:30 Tarana 08:00 Film: Hansie Kalle 10:45 Off Screen 11:15 Film: Oh Bewafa 02:00 Ikk Pe Ikk 02:30 Film: Adhikar 5:15 Songs 06:00 Preetam 08:45 Box Office 09:30 TBA 12:15 Trailers 12:30 Film: Ye Kaisa Insaaf 03:15 Songs 03:45 Film: Free Love

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