

Towards a New Kind of Society

The Disability Movement is a growing body of people, who are working towards a new kind of society — a society that shares its joys and sorrows, where everyone has equal rights, where there are options to choose from, and where people are treated with dignity and respect, writes **Naïla Z Khan**.

At the end of the country's twenty-fifth year of independence, we can say with confidence that Bangladesh has come of age. Overcoming almost unsurmountable obstacles such as an overwhelming population, gender discrimination, discrimination against girl-child, absolute poverty, high environmental mortality, and innumerable negative factors, Bangladesh today stands tall amongst its neighbours and internationally with thousands of women joining the work force both in urban and rural areas. Hundreds of thousands of women have been involved in the micro-credit system of entrepreneurship, more children than ever before are coming into the safety net of education for all within formal and non-formal systems of education, and a primary health care system that is at the least ensuring universal immunization of children and pregnant mothers, safe drinking water, and promotion of maternal and child nutrition.

Within the context of such remarkable successes, empowering the disabled is emerging as an important human rights issue and prevalence of disability an important criterion for evaluating the outcomes of development in social, economic, educational and health sectors. The prevalence of disability in a population of 2 to 9-year-old children in urban and rural areas has been estimated at 70 per 1000 for all grades of severity and 22 per 1000 for serious disabilities of motor, vision, hearing, speech and cognitive disability and epilepsy. Given a total population of over 120 million people of whom 45 per cent are less than 15 years of age, the vast majority of disabled children remain unrecognized (Zaman et al. 1992).

Comparative prevalence rates have been found within the same study in other regional countries such as Pakistan (Meher Hasan et al. 1994). Shahin Islam et al have found maternal education, an important social factor, to be a major antecedent for mild intellectual disability (1994); another important predictor of disability has been the number of sibling deaths around birth. A cause for major concern is also the average age of marriage of Bangladeshi girls which in itself predisposes to a lesser formed and immature child. Traditionally, this was 13.5 years (one of the lowest in the world) and has now risen to about 16 years, but still remains well below the age of maturation of a girl for pregnancy, i.e. 18 years. The all-pervasive demonic effects of malnutrition affecting the girl-child, the pregnant and lactating mother and the growing infant still remains a vast 'gray area' of apprehension. All these 'high-risk' factors together with the lack of services for identifying those most affected, i.e. the disabled children, are leading to an area where concerted and emergency efforts are required for survive provision. The drain on scarce economic resources within households and stress on families and on the disabled persons themselves is enormous, and health providers, educators, policy makers, and legislators can no longer choose to ignore it.

Presently in Bangladesh the major stakeholders and concerned groups of the Disability Movement have, however, emerged not from the policy-making groups, but from those who directly are affected by the societal attitudes and discrimination against the disabled. These groups are: the disabled people themselves (who are gradually building a solidarity amongst themselves, and a goodwill amongst the general public, and are working in a consolidated manner for legislation of the Rights of the Disabled), the families of the disabled who have been specially involved in initiating programmes for the intellectually disabled, educators from disciplines of psychology and education, development workers who are piloting various community-based rehabilitation models, and very newly — the health providers such as child health physicians. The partnership of these groups have, so far, been the key to successes of some of the most innovative programmes being run in the country today.

Visibility of disabled adolescents have been most apparent in the recent Abilympics held in the US where some of our athletes won gold medals in track and field events. The Bangladesh Scouts have for the past couple of years opened their movement for disabled adolescent boys and girls, where they are able to participate not only in camps and jamborees, but also in social activities such as the Clean Dhaka, Save Dhaka campaigns. 'Open groups' have been started where those who are not enrolled in any formal schooling system, can easily become members. Such campaigns are providing glimmers of hope to disabled people who find themselves isolated, especially in the most productive years of their life.

To continue listing programmes developed centrally, the Department of Special Education in the Institute of Education and Research of Dhaka University, has been a pioneer step in developing trained teachers for the visually impaired, the hearing impaired and intellectually disabled people. The Special Education Complex under the Ministry of Social Welfare where diploma courses in Special Education are being run is another stepping stone. Short-term physiotherapy courses have been started at the RIHD, popularly known as the Pongu Hospital, catering mainly for adults, and a three-year diploma course for Occupational Therapy has come into being last year at the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed, as an NGO effort.

At the tertiary health care level, the Dhaka Shishu Hospital opened a Child Development and Neurology Unit, popularly known as the Shishu Bikash Kendro, in 1992. This was a welcome endeavour, as for the first time a multi-disciplinary team of professionals comprising, among others, of pediatricians, psychologists, therapists and social workers, came together to work for the disabled. Presently, this department, with the help of colleagues from special schools for the hearing, visual and intellectually impaired, and the Bangladesh Institute of Child Health, is planning a diploma-course in Developmental Therapy, combining the various therapy-disciplines, to develop expertise for mid-level workers. These workers would provide comprehensive service to children within the community.

It will not be out of context, at this point, to acknowledge the support that has been lent to us from our regional friends, especially the Spastics Society of Eastern India, based in Calcutta, in providing short-term training to many of our Bangladeshi graduates in the various therapies and in the field of special education. So far these trainings have been the only ones that many of our therapists have received, and their eagerness and good will with the disabled and their families go a long way to prove that dedication and sincerity can compensate to a large extent what is lacking in expertise.

Mid-level expertise is perhaps what we are aiming for if our objective is equity, where all disabled persons of the country have to be reached and provided appropriate help and services. Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) is the method that is being tried everywhere today. In India itself there are several centres that provide CBR training. In West Bengal, which is our closest neighbour, CBR projects have been started in every district. As part of a programme to decentralize expensive education, the Institute of Child Health in London, where the pioneering Diploma in CBR was started a decade ago, has now decided to run regional courses, the closest to Bangladesh being in New Delhi, in association with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Amar Jyoti, Seva in Action etc.

Unfortunately, in Bangladesh the term 'CBR' still remains rhetorical. The Distances Training Package, a pictorially displayed manual for children with various types of physical, language and intellectual disability, has been evaluated over a period of two years. The outcomes show comparable improvement amongst those children who were given the therapy at home using the manual as a reminder, to those children who came regularly to a special school (Sharmeen Habib, Helen McConachie et al. 1996). Distance from the home and cultural attitudes that prohibited mothers from coming with their child on their own were important deterrents for availing services in centres. Evaluation of services, therefore, remains an important component of any service provision, if these are to be replicated on a larger-scale and if sustainability and transparency is to be achieved.

In the same study, not surprisingly, there were major differences in the nature, severity, and natural history of the disability amongst urban and rural children. Rural mothers were universally less 'stressed' compared to their urban counterparts, even at the beginning of the study, before any intervention had been provided. This fact has also been seen in earlier studies comparing rural and urban mothers stress by Zaman et al (1992). The strengths of our traditional cultures have been in their abilities to support, nurture and share responsibilities, coping during stressful times, and when providing love and care to a 'less able' or 'differently able' persons. These nurturing attitudes are increasingly being strengthened in CBR programmes. The ICDS (Integrated Child Development Schemes) is using the 'anganwadi' workers in another such nurturing approach which has shown considerable successes in India.

Every disabled child has a fundamental right to education. Bangladesh has lagged far behind in this field. Pakistan, in the last decade, has done pioneering work in opening a Directorate of Special Education and training large numbers of personnel. Inclusive education, that provides schooling opportunities to all disabled children in mainstream schools, is however, a major aim for service providers today. The theme of the workshop following this ceremony is Inclusive Education. This topic is the first amongst many to come in the future points to its importance for the future of disability in this country. It is hoped that the recommendations of the workshop will be applied by the participants and policy makers in making more space for our disabled children in regular schools.

Today disabled people do not want to be handed down 'alms' or 'pity'. Today they have a voice that is growing stronger everyday. A voice that says that the disabled are differently abled, they have talents that need to be nurtured, latent abilities that will flourish with love and forbearance. Michelle Mason is a disabled woman who lives in London, and she also has a disabled child. She writes: "No one is guaranteed an easy life. It is not part of the bargain we make when considering a new baby. In fact most people will inevitably face major challenges requiring courage, effort, persistence and fortitude, at some time in their life: your family are poor and there is not enough food to eat — your sister gets ill and dies — your house burns down — you lose your job — your husband leaves you with three small children to look after — you are in love, but she loves another — you are not chosen by the football team, and so on. At these times we all need the same things: a rallying round of support, concern, assistance, clear thinking, empathy from one human to another. With these almost everything is bearable".

The Disability Movement is a growing body of people who are working towards a new kind of society — a society that shares its joys and sorrows, where everyone has equal rights, where there are options to choose from, and where people are treated with dignity and respect. If a child can be nurtured in such a society, the foundations for everything has been built.

The author is associate professor, Child Development and Neurology Unit, Dhaka Shishu Hospital.

Mean-streets Saviours Spread the Word of Hope

Homelessness is increasing in many countries, causing great misery and destroying thousands of lives. Now, a growing international network of street publications offers a chance for the victims to help themselves build a better future, writes **Khutliso Sekoati** from London.

The past few years have not been kind to Richie Costello. At 19, he lost his parents. His father died from illness and his mother from an overdose of pills. Four years later, after a series of misadventures, he found himself homeless and jobless.

The street can be a cruel habitat, as 23-year-old Costello quickly discovered. But when he hit rock bottom this year, he managed to find assistance in a publishing project that offers hope for homeless people around the world.

The idea came from street papers in North America in the early 1990s. Since then, about 60 such journals have been launched in Europe. An Australian version hit the streets of Melbourne in June, and a South African one began publishing in Cape Town on 12 December.

Costello is one of 2,000 accredited vendors in London, of whom up to 500 regularly sell the magazine. His is one of the many tales of woe that have led at least 30,000 people across England into homelessness.

When his parents died, Costello inherited some money, but squandered it through youthful recklessness and naivete. He went to live with relatives in Holland, but fell out with them, and drifted to London in a vain search for work. He stayed in a hotel until someone stole his last £600.

Then he wandered the streets, and is currently staying temporarily in a squat. He sought help from *The Big Issue* and staff set him up as a vendor. "Being on the street can be dangerous, but there's nothing I can do about it," says Costello, recalling the time when five burglars turned on him when he tried to sell them the magazine. He was hit with a broken bottle, and one attacker pulled a knife.

"I could have been killed if a woman passer-by had not screamed for help," he says.

Other vendors have been robbed at knife-point. Threats and violence increased recently after a mass-circulation newspaper ran a story claiming that one seller was pocketing £1,000 a week. That vendor and his colleagues say the tabloid twisted the truth. They generally earn between £10 and £20 a day, depending on luck and weather. "It is hard to stand there in

the cold, trying to live from hand to mouth," says Costello, wearing his only warm clothing: two old jumpers and winter jacket.

He can keep £0.45 from each £0.80 copy he sells. The rest goes to the publishers, who put profits into a charitable foundation which runs social support schemes, such as help to find housing and job training.

The award-winning magazine, which specialises in news, arts and articles to assist the homeless, sells more than 300,000 copies per week — 80,000 of them as a Scottish edition — and employs 200 people.

Editor-in-chief John Bird and Gordon Roddick, chairman of the Body Shop cosmetics stores and now trustee of The Big Issue Foundation, imported the idea from New York, where they had been impressed by similar ventures.

"There was a dramatic increase of homeless people in the late 1980s in Britain. So there was a need to provide them with



help to get a roof over their heads," says Sinead Hanks, a *Big Issue* press officer.

Mass unemployment and government welfare cuts fuelled the crisis.

Such problems have been growing recently in other countries, such as Russia, where 50,000 people are reported to be homeless, and where hundreds die of exposure each winter.

A St Petersburg street paper called *The Depths* has been struggling to survive for two years. In November, the British Government agreed to fund *Big Issue* officials to help *The Depths* develop financial and marketing plans.

"It was on the brink of collapse," says Paddy Feeny, press officer for Britain's Overseas Development Administration. "Lessons learnt from *The Big Issue* will help it to expand and provide an even better source of funds and self-respect for the homeless of St Petersburg."

Some publications have been criticised for profiting out of homeless people's plight. To try to improve their image, ethical standards and cooperation, *The Big Issue* launched an International Network of Street Papers in 1995. Sixteen of its sister publications have signed up. Among their aims are to

channel all post-investment profits into social support schemes, to promote financial transparency and to resist sales poaching between street journals.

Network members held their second conference in London in late November to discuss projects of cooperation in 1997 and efforts to increase membership. Observers from other street papers attended.

"They want to create an even stronger organisation to promote the message of self-help for the homeless. Selling 20 to 30 copies a day does not earn enough to live a really meaningful life," says vendor Costello. But it provides a base from which he hopes to build.

— GEMINI NEWS

KHUTLISO SEKOATI is a Lesotho journalist with *Mopheme — The Survivor* newspaper. He is currently on a fellowship with *Gemini News Service* in London.

ERRATUM
The writer's name of the article 'Floor Control: From a Farmer's Angle' published in this page on December 31 is A K Abdul Aziz. The by line was inadvertently dropped. Inconveniences caused to the writer and the readers are regretted.

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Thursday 2nd January
(All programmes are in local time. There may be changes in the programmes)

BTV

3:00 Opening Announcement Al-Quran, Programme Summary
3:10 News in Bangla 3:15 Patriotic song 3:20 Recitation from the Geeta 3:25 Re-tearcast of selected programme from TV Archive 4:10 Sports programme 4:45 Tom And Jerry 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 National Television School Debate 6:30 Roder Alo Meghar Chhaya 6:50 Religion and Life 7:00 The News 7:25 Sandha Malatee 8:00 News in Bangla 8:25 Arabian Nights 9:00 Ai Prethibee 9:05 Chhaya Chhanda 10:00 The News 10:25 Switch 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Friday's programme summary 11:40 Close down

BBC

6:00am BBC World News 6:30 BBC World Review 1996 7:00 BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report/Asia Today/24 Hours 10:00 BBC World Headlines 10:05 World Focus: Pole to Pole 11:00 BBC Newsday 2:00 BBC World Headlines 2:05 BBC World Review 1996 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: The Travel Show/Holiday 4:00 BBC Newsdesk 6:00pm BBC World Headlines 6:05 World Focus: Horizon 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC Newsroom Asia and Pacific 8:30 Time Out: Top Gear 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05

World Focus: Pole to Pole 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Film '96 11:00 BBC World News 11:30 Time Out: The Clothes Show 12:00m The World Today 2:00 BBC World Headlines 2:05 World Focus: Assignment 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 4:00 BBC World Report inc. World Business Report/Asia Today/24 Hours

CHANNEL V

6:00am Frame by Frame 7:00am Rewind VJ Sophiya 8:00 Frame by Frame 9:00 Jump Start VJ Alessandra 10:00 Frame by Frame 11:30 The Vibe VJ Luke 12:00 Rewind VJ Sophiya 1:30 The Hard Rock Featuring Richard Marx 2:30 First Day First Show 3:00 BPL Oye 4:00 Planet Ruby 4:30 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 1:00 Haysan 2:00 The Hard Rock Featuring All 4 One 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:30 BPL Oye 5:30 Jump Start Alessandra

STAR PLUS

6:00am Home and Away 6:30 The Sullivan's 7:00 Aerobics Oz Style 7:30 Star News 8:00 Sky News 8:30 Star News 9:00 Sky News 9:30 Aerobics Oz Style

10:00 Today's Gourmet 10:30 E! TV 11:00 Kate & Allie 11:30 The Oprah Winfrey Show 12:30 21 Jump Street 1:30 Santa Barbara 2:00 The Bold & the Beautiful 3:00 Tehkikat 3:30 Khandaan 4:00 Home and Away 4:30 Lost in Space 5:30 Adventures of Black Beauty 6:00pm Kate & Allie 6:30 Today's Gourmet 7:00 Destinations 'Morocco' 7:30 Star News (Hindi) 8:00 Small Wonder 8:30 The Bold & the Beautiful 9:00 Ghutan 9:30 Star News 10:00 Family Towers 10:30 The X Files 11:30 The Bold & the Beautiful 12:00m Santa Barbara 1:00 Baywatch Nights 2:00 21 Jump Street 3:00 Quincy 4:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 5:00 Barnaby Jones

STAR SPORTS

6:00am World Windsurfing 7:00 International Motorsports News 7:30 Preview 2nd Test Match 8:30 Indian Football National League Dempo vs JCT 10:30 Sports India 11:00 City Jump Contest 11:30 TTU Tradition World Cup 12:30noon Eisnerhower Cup Day 1,2&3 H/Ls 1:30 Preview 2nd Test Match 2:00 Live India Tour Of South Africa India vs South Africa 2nd Test Match Day 1 From Cape Town, South Africa 9:30 WWF Raw 10:30 Futbol Mundial 11:00 The Race of Champions H/L From Gran Canaria, Spain 12:00 Watersports World 1:00 India Tour Of South Africa India vs South Africa 2nd Test Match Day 1 H/L 2:00 World Wrestling Federation Raw 3:00 Indian Football National League Dempo

STAR MOVIES

7:30am Family Best of Friends 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 9:30 Classic: Seance on a Wet Afternoon PG 11:30 Romance: Kentucky Woman 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Adventure: Avalanche 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Family: The Human Pets 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Classic: Animal Crackers G (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Adventure: D-Day - The Sixth of June 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 US Top Ten 9:30 Romance: Something Wild 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 11:30 After Dark: Dance of The Damned 18 1:30 Action: Robocop 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Thriller: Rainbow Drive 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 5:30 Classic: The Diary



Dastan on Zee TV tonight at 9-30

vs JCT 5:00 Asia Road Racing Champs Malaysia

of Anne Frank 15 (Hindi Subtitles)

ZEE TV

5:30 Suno Bhai Sadho 6:00 News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED 8:30 All Out For No Loss 9:00 Ghu-mta Aaina 9:30 Hindi Feature Film Show 12:00 Gaane Anjaane 12:30 Chahat Aur Nafrat 1:00 ZED 1:30 Asian Sky Shop 2:00 Hum Paanch 2:30 Tara 3:00 Raahat 3:30 Low Cal Show 4:00 Helpline 4:30 Mere Ghat Ana Zindagi 5:00 ZED 5:30 Teer Kaman 6:00 Nestle Jhalpat Khana 6:30 Hum Honge Karmyaab 7:00 Gaane Anjaane 7:30 Raahat 8:00 V-Zara Si Jhalak 8:30 Chutki Baja Ke 9:00 Yeh Kahan Aa Gaye Hum 9:30 Dastan 10:00 Gravera Ki Ummed 10:35 News 11:00 Pakeezah /EK

Nazar 11:30 Hum Paanch 12:00 Tara 12:30 Parampara 1:00 Apcolite Aap Ki Pasand/ Shapath 1:30 Hi Zindagi Bye Zindagi 2:00 Celeste 2:30 TMM 4:00 Zee Horror Show 4:30 Sunan Safar 5:00 Jagran

EL TV

00:30 Tarane Aur Fasane 01:30 Geet Bahar 02:30 Guzra Hua Zamana 03:30 Dharimendra Special 04:30 Kishore Kumar Special 05:30 Tarane Aur Fasane 06:30 Geet Bahar 07:30 Tarane Aur Fasane 08:30 Dharimendra Special 09:30 Kishore Kumar Special 10:30 Boroplus Real Countdown 11:00 Nukkad 11:30 Shatranj 12:00 Archies Top of the Tops 12:30 Brigadier Balwant Bhawan 1:00 Ajnabi 2:00 Shradhanjali Kishore Ku-

PTV

8:00am Titawat Aur Tarjuma/ Hamd/Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabram 8:45 Cut Piece 9:20 Aahang & Roshni 9:45 Phool Chandi 10:05 Sona Chandi (Drama Serial) 10:30 Buttons &

mar 3:00 Vipul Ka Amar Prem 3:30 Chehre 4:00 Akanksha 4:30 Song Yara 5:00 Dear EL 05:30 Main Nashe Mein Hoon 6:30 Sorry Men Lory 7:00 Prafull V3+ 7:30 Boroplus Real Countdown 8:00 Fat Of Fit 8:20 Kinetic Pride Haseen Pal 8:30 Library Public Demand 9:30 Gambler 10:00 Peoples Club 10:30 Stand By 10:40 Humrahi 11:30 Snowchem Kal Bhi Aaj Bhi 11:30 Kannos It's My Choice 12:00 Kinetic Pride Haseen Pal 12:10 Newsline

PTV

8:00am Titawat Aur Tarjuma/ Hamd/Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabram 8:45 Cut Piece 9:20 Aahang & Roshni 9:45 Phool Chandi 10:05 Sona Chandi (Drama Serial) 10:30 Buttons &

Rustys (Eng. Film) 10:55 Milli Naghma 11:00 Khabran 11:10 Aabshaar (Music Programme) 11:55 Tele Play (Drama Serial) 12:45pm Qawaali 12:55 Quraan-Hakeem & Bismillah 1:15 Muqaddar (Drama Serial) 2:00 Puljhar (Drama Serial) 2:45 Perspective & Health Forum 3:40 Taleemi Maloomat 4:35 Aurat Aur Qanoon 5:05 Home Economics 5:25 Humaray Saath 5:55 Yarna (Drama Serial) 6:25 Anou Courses 7:05 Mubtillah Hai Aana 7:20 Ainaik Wala Jim 7:45 English News 8:05 Jawaan Sangeet 8:45 Eandhan (Drama Serial) 9:00 Break for Headline News 10:00 Khabarnama & Commercial News 10:35 Mast Mast Sanyo 11:15 Urdu Feature Film & Khas Khas Khabrin/ Close down

SONY ET

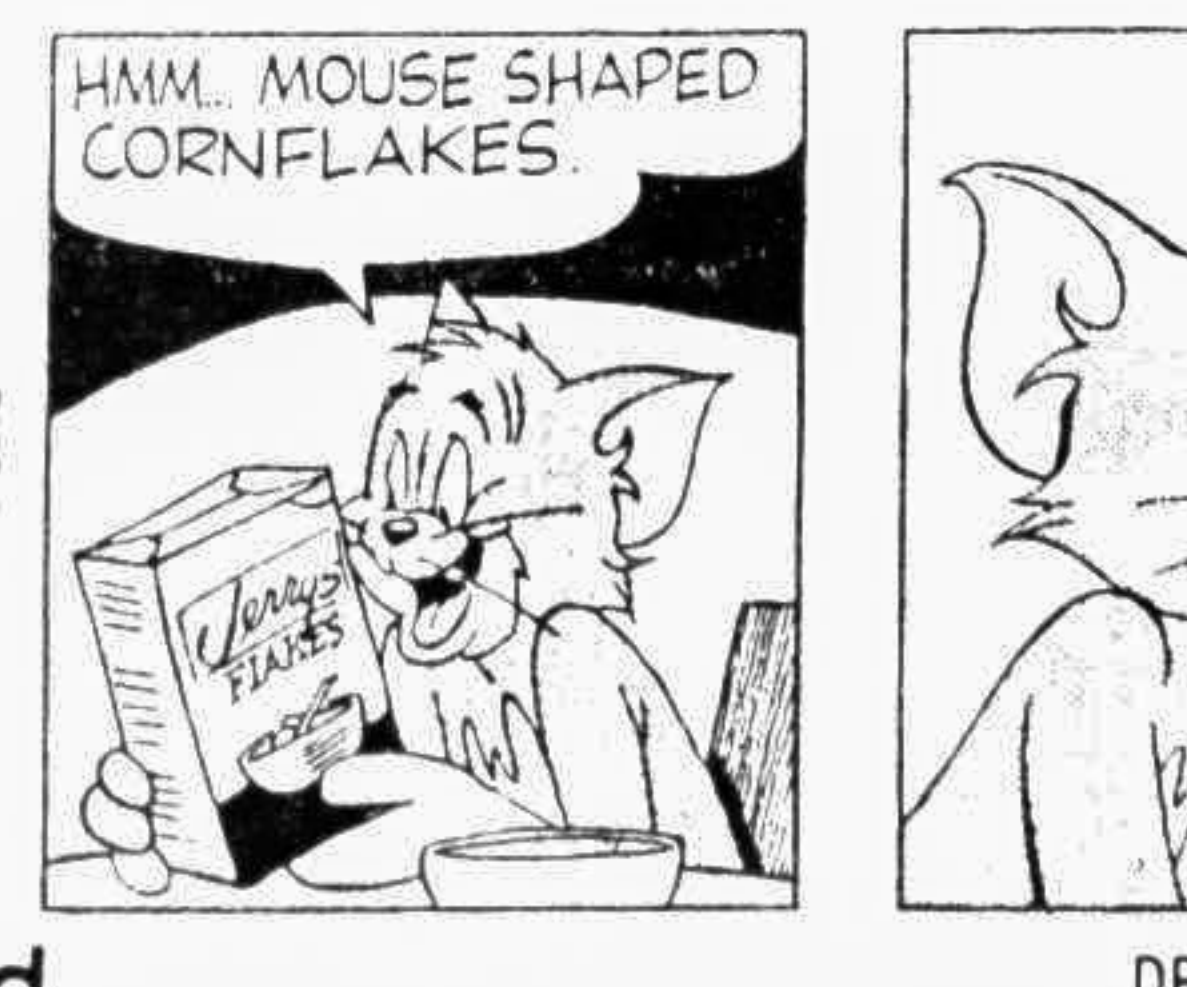
8:30am Yaadon Ki Baarat 9:00 The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 I Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune (Game Show) 11:00 Ghaav (Serial) 11:30 Faasle (Serial) 12:30pm Kismet (Serial) 1:00 Zamin Asman (Serial) 1:30 Mere Message Meri Geet 2:30 Cine Malinee-Hindi Feature Film 5:00 O'Hare (Serial) 5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00 Mere Message Meri Geet 6:30 Dennis The Menace 7:00 Premier 7:30 I Dream Of Jeannie 8:30 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune (Game Show) 8:30 Premier 9:30 Hospital (Serial) 10:00 Cover Story: Hostel (Thriller Serial) 10:30 Janee Kaha Mera Jigar Gaya Ji (Serial) 11:00 The Young And

The Restless 11:30 Yeh Sadi Nahi Ho Sakti (Serial) 12:00 Pehli Mulakat 12:30 Sunday Ki Sunday 1:00 Niroop Rasol Show 1:30 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune (Game Show) 2:00 Premier 2:30 Closed

DD 7

10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Classic Music 11:00 Dance 12:00 ETV Programme 12:30 Monorama Cabin 1:00 Janani (Serial) 2:30 Darpan (Serial) 3:00 Eto Tuku Basha (Serial) 3:30 Shreethi (Serial) 4:30 Thursday Bengali Film 5:30 News 7:00 Pallisamaj (Serial) 7:30 Bangla Sambad (Serial) 8:00 Bhangra Aaina 8:30 Devi Chudhuri (Serial) 9:00 Janani (Serial) 9:30 Monorama Cabin (Serial) 10:00 Bengali Movie Club Film Show 1:00 Closed

Tom and Jerry



IAN FLEMING'S James Bond



Hum Punch on Zee TV today at 2.00 PM