ECRETARY General of the

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Abdul Ma-

nnan Bhuiyan categorically

rejected any possibility of his party chief Khaleda Zia

participating in a live TV

programme where she were to

be pitted against Prime

Minister Sheikh Hasina in a

question answer session. Ac-

cusing the BTV of its partisan

attitude, the BNP has long gone

for a boycott of the state-run

electronic medium. It does not

allow the TV to cover the party

programmes. We understand

that the BNP has genuine

grievances. Some people might

argue that given the track record of the BNP when it was

in power, it has no moral right

to complain against the way of the BTV. This line of reasoning

is faulty. That the BNP failed to

honour the obligation of the

three-party contract is no ex-

cuse for denying the TV the in-

party's property. Nor the gov-

ernment in power seems to re-

tain the status quo. A commis-

sion formed earlier to prepare a

report for the autonomy of the

BTV has sought a time exten-

sion for submitting the same.

Until or unless that report

comes out, it is premature to

question the sincerity or the in-

tention of the government.

Meanwhile, we came to know

about the prime minister s dis-

pleasure she expressed at least

on two occasions over her over-

exposure in the news telecast.

Should we understand that

there are people wielding more

power than the prime minister

to frustrate her wishes? Or does

it have to do something with the

BTV which cannot, even if it

wants to, give up its old ways?

Tom and Jerry

IAN FLEMING'S

The BTV can never be one

dependence it should enjoy.

DHAKA WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 1997 E O C U S

BTV Must Come out of the Mess

by Nilratan Halder

A commission formed earlier to prepare a report for the autonomy of the BTV has sought a time extension for submitting the same. Until or unless that report comes out, it is premature to question the sincerity or the intention of the government.

Old habits of the organisation really die hard!

We do not know. But we are serious about knowing where exactly things go wrong. We say this even after we have come to the conclusion that the TV can no longer be called a monopoly chatter box of Saheb-Bibi-Golam (master-consort-slave) or Bibi-Golam. So far as news is concerned - and where the focus actually was - the format has greatly changed. But people have complaints elsewhere. One Bangla weekly has devoted an issue entirely to the opinions viewers have about the BTV under the present government's rule. One has every right to disagree with the criticisms levelled against the government. But that does not help much. The important thing is to understand if there are reasons for such criticism; whether somethings are overdone or overplayed and other things are downplayed at the risk of being criticised for partisanship.

Just at a time the BTV finds itself embroiled in such a debate, the government has come up with two committees primarily to improve the quality of programmes. Does it show the government's concern about the low-quality programmes dished out mostly in the shape and name of entertainment. The autonomy commission's report is due to be submitted soon - if of course it does not seek another time extension. One wonders how effective the recently formed committees

ILL TEACH YOU

DART GUN!

James Bond

TO SHOOT THAT

can be without knowing the guidelines to be set for the TV when it turns autonomous. The government is not explicit if this is an ad-hoc measure necessitated by the extremely poor quality of programmes. When it becomes autonomous, the BTV can no longer afford to be an idle-brained box. It has to be competitive in a way commodities are. The challenge for it is even greater because it has to compete with cable channels feeding the viewers with highquality programmes.

The committees ability to

deliver has been questioned

and not for nothing. Our only TV channel need to be modern and, at the same time, focus on our special local issues. To do the job appropriately, it has not only to be technologically modern, sophisticated and highly efficient but also the mind behind the programmes have to be innovative, creative and highly professional. Only the professional people know how to handle a delicate and controversial political issue. This is no way to indicate that one has to back out from the truth, rather to get into it. Both sides are given their chance to make the points and people are prepared for the informed opinions to make their own conclusions.

Political issues apart, there are educational, environmental, agricultural, health, sports, travel and above all entertainment programmes. The quality of most such programmes produced by the BTV is at a primary stage. If justice is to be made to these subjects, the organisation must go through a sea-change in terms of approach, subjects and structure. Jobs in such establishments cannot be salaried alone. Creativity and efficiency have to be rewarded. The notion that the television viewers can be lulled into the surfeit of dramas of cheap sentiment throughout the week is very dangerous and a living proof that the producers and others involved cannot think of anything better. Their poverty of imagination is brought into sharp contrast by the cable

channels.

MOULD YOU?

KEEP MISSING.

The BTV is indeed playing a very pathetic role. Its job is not only to entertain but also to educate and create taste for better things in life. Entertainment at its best is also educative and informative. But the BTV seems least bothered if its entertainment shapes into tear-jerking, coarse, half-baked and even prurient exercises. The people deserves better. There is no reason to think that they cannot appreciate quality programmes. While the TV must return to the people — because they are the rightful owner, the organisation must be made to accountable for whatever it produces.

No party or government must try to control it for narrow purposes because that impedes its growth. To turn it into a modern, responsive and efficient organisation, there must be vision. Government control can do harm to this important medium. Let it be free and serve the people instead of the party cause. That is what it should do.

The BNP's complaint

against partisan attitude of the BTV sounds hollow, because you never know if they will be a better lot in respect of the medium's independence. But common and neutral people have a point and they want to see that our only TV channel rise in stature and image to rival the best in the world. If the government makes way for this, the people will not forget this and are expected to return the compliment.

Stunted Kids Lurk Behind Asia's Economic Miracle

TUNTED, wasted and underweight children → 156 million in South Asia alone — emerge as the starkest indicator of disparities that splinter Asia's "economic miracle" into a region of pauper countries and nouveau riche nations.

South Asia accounts for 43 per cent of stunted and 56 per cent of wasted children in the developing world, asserts the just-released Sixth World Food Survey.

This bleak human tragedy

DRAWN BY JOHN McLUSKY

By Hanna-Barbera

by Juan L Mercado

festers within an Asia and Pacific community that, for six straight years now, won the Asian Development Bank accolade: "the world's fastest-growing region." ADB notes report regional growth this year stood at 7.1 per cent, In 1997, this may inch up up to 7.3 per cent.

In contrast to a dynamic East Asia, the South has lagged. This vast sub-region encompasses the population-crammed and sprawling nations of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, mountain countries like Nepal and Bhutan to the minuscule atolls of Male.

"South Asia's combination of the highest incidence of under-nutrition and population make it the home of an overwhelming majority of undernourished children," adds the and Agriculture Organization study.

Numbers of ill-fed kids are Laos. larger in the East and Southeast Asian regions: 180 million. But this is because China which accounts for over a fourth of the world's people falls into this bracket. Sheer demographic size results in China having 23 per cent of all children under five.

But these immobile numbers alone can mislead. Fact is, proportions of wasted, stunted and underweight kids are much smaller in East and South-east "China has only 11 per cent

of the underweight, 17 per cent of the stunted and 80 per cent of the wasted children," adds the

This pattern of lower child malnourishment also prevails in Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. (The FAO report says this pattern also holds true for countries of the Near East and North

The "economic tigers" -

Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore - are reigning in this region. These countries are flush with cash. And their nutritional supplies are more adequate and rising.

Perhaps, one of the Survey's more significant aspects is its presentation of "changes over time." These publish findings from World Health Organization analysis of surveys, over almost two decades.

"The overall picture is one of a varied pattern of change in the proportion of underweight children," the Survey notes. Some of the conclusions:

** Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka show the prevalence of ill-fed kids declining.

** South-east Asian countries reveal similar inroads against this problem, namely: Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam. But the problem has been exacerbated in Myanmar and

What the Survey sketches is a rapidly shifting picture, FAO Regional Representative AZM Obaidullah Khan says. The evidence is the proportion of undernourished kids declined over the last 20 years. But the problems remain

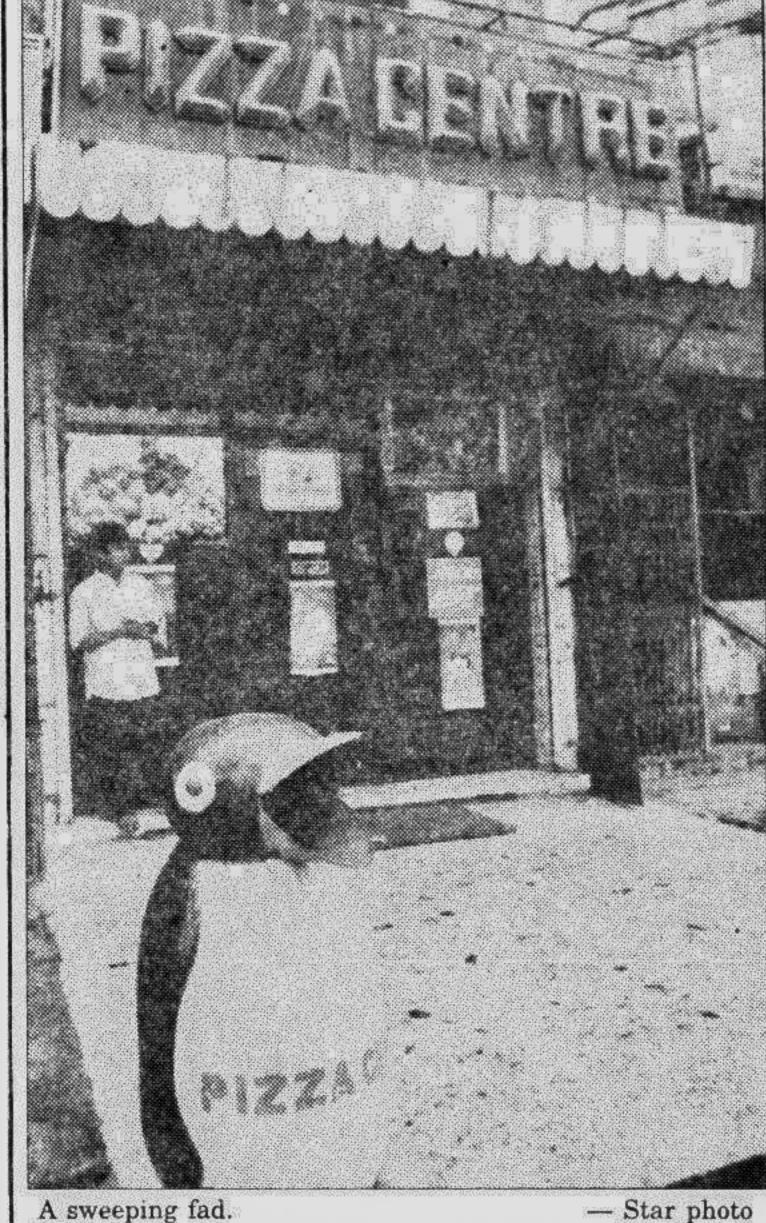
daunting. Today, 16 out of every 100 Asians - children and adults - still lack adequate food. Given Asia's large population base, the ill-fed still add up to about 512 million.

The rundown to the 21st century will require a new matrix of policies to raise more food on constricted slivers of land and reduced water supplies, the FAO official said. More important is more food must reach the vulnerable groups.

No nation can advance on the backs of stunted, wasted and underweight children, Mr Khan said. "Both poor and nouveau riche Asian countries have to work together - or stagnate

DEPTHnews

Dhaka Day by Day A Costly Craze by Samia Islam



A sweeping fad.

Dhaka is a snack-food connoisseurs' paradise. At the rate these shops are creeping up all over the place, it's hard for the public to keep up with them. The teenagers and twenty something crowds are ecstatic of course, and who can blame them? The only place they can hang out at is the food joint. This doesn't say much about the culinary practices of our youth, hence, the future of the country.

Given that there is no getting out of it and since one does need to go out once in a while, let's look at what exactly entails an evening out for people who are on a budget, which most of us tend to be. Well, one word to the wise is that: if you don't have the dough, get back into your cubby hole and stay there.

- Here's the big picture though: you regally enter the pad and survey four corners as if you were king of all that eye beholds. Then you choose a booth that's placed just right, already gyrating to the beats emanating from the CD, with a silly grin pasted on your mug. There lies the deceptively innocent-looking laminated menu on the badly mutilated table. Once you pick it up, all your euphoria leaves you. For the rest of the evening while your friends who are being treated have a ball, you are left doing agonizing mental calculations for all you are worth. What if you are just ten bucks short of the total? What if it's more than that? Will they accept your watch for collateral? So many what ifs!

The hip decor, the air conditioned interiors and the music fail to impress you any more when burgers cost you Tk. 70 each! How can you have fun when a snack for two people can cost Tk. 250 in one afternoon? I mean let's be realistic and not calculate the dollar-worth of these burgers and be complacent because a double whopper would cost you the same at Burger King's. That kind of reasoning never made sense to me because it's like comparing apples and oranges or guns and butter even when I stretch my imagination to the extreme!

All things considered, the turnout at these joints are far from dwindling as economic factors might have predicted but the snack food shop owners need not be too smug. Rather they should thank their stars that they are doing thriving business in a city that has no recreational venues.

City Cell opens sales centre in city

The first mobile cellular chain sales centre of Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited was inaugurated at Kakrail in the city by Samson H Chowdhury, President, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, yesterday afternoon.

The sales centre will offer all kinds of customers' services to City Cell clients. Three more centres will be

opened in the city in the next two months. By the end of the year 12 such centres are expected to be opened in Dhaka to cater the growing demand.

Meanwhile, the company has reduced its line rent and call charge for mobile telephone with effect from May 1.

Weather

next 12 hours till 6 pm Wednesday, reports UNB.

may remain nearly unchanged

Patuakhali yesterday.

Thundershowers likely

Rain or thundershowers with temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Dhaka and Sylhet, and at one

or two places in Barisal and Chittagong divisions and the re-

gions of Jessore, Kushtia, Rajshahi, Pabna and Bogra in the

where over the country during the period while day temperature

recorded at Ishwardi and the lowest 21 degrees at Comilla and

Met Office said weather is likely to remain mainly dry else-

The country's highest temperature, 38 degree Celsius, was

The sun sets today at 6:31 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:19 am.

According to the reduced rate, users will be required to pay Taka 500 per month as line rent against previous charge of Taka The rate for incoming call

has been fixed at Taka 4.00 per minute during peak hours between 8 am and 8 pm while Taka 3.00 per minute for offpeak hours between 8 pm and 8 Similarly, Taka 3.00 and

Taka 2.00 will be charged for peak and off-peak hours respectively when the calls are received from T&T lines.

There will be no charge for incoming calls made by another cellular client, according to a press release yesterday.

Yusuf tells 50th World Health Assembly

Mortality due to preventable diseases declining in country

Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf has said that the epidemiological transition in Bangladesh has gained momentum, reports

SNIPER FOLLOWS

He said mortality due to preventable and communicable diseases has been declining rapidly as a result of intensified collaborative efforts between the government of Bangladesh

Call to implement * NEMAP

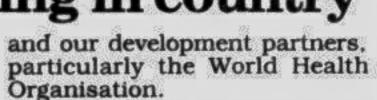
Participants at a workshop in the city Monday called for immediate implementation of the national environment management action plan (NEMAP) to promote sustainable development and quality of human life, reports BSS.

The Ministry of Environment and Forest organised the workshop held at the National Planning and Development Academy while the representatives of the donor countries and agencies, Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), Coalition of Environment NGOs (CEN), Forum of Environment Journalists, Bangladesh (FEJB) and Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) took part.

Initiating the discussion, joint secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest KM Ehsanul Haq outlined the action plan for national environment management and emphasised the need for its implementation to conserve and improve the environment and help reduce its degradation.

The team leader of the NEMAP formulation mission Dr. Mahfuzul Haque highlighted the implementation phase of the action plan by different agencies and development partners including the UNDP, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in Collaboration with different ministries and departments.

He said that the government is expected to launch the action plan from May 27. Under the programme, the UNDP will implement eight grassroots level projects.



The Minister said this while delivering his speech at the 50th World Health Assembly, held in Geneva on Monday, according to a message received in the city yesterday.

The Minister said the entire population has been benefited from our government's efforts to improve health facilities and to provide better health care. The Minister said the life

styles and health behaviour of our citizen have been gradually changing. He said our government has already taken up a number of intervention programmes to deal with these looming health problems.

The Minister said with meagre resources to deal with such problems, "We believe that the WHO will extend substantial assistance to Bangladesh."

The Minister urged the World Health Organisation to strengthen the Bangladesh Institute of Research on Diabetes and Endocrine and Metabolic Disorders as an international centre of excellence.

He requested that the National Institute of Cardiovascular Disease be endorsed as a fu ture WHO collaborative centre

Theatre performs in Calcutta

Theatre, one of the leading drama groups of the country staged three of their productions - Spordha, Kokilara and Meraj Fakirer Ma on May 2, 3, and 4 respectively at Madhusudan Mancha, Calcutta in a programme titled 'Natya Sanghatir Jonye Theatre (Bangladesh)' says a press release.

On the inaugural day, leading directors of Theatre, Bangladesh, Ashoke Mukhopadhaya and Usha Ganguli and Ramendu Majumdar, spoke briefly before the performance underlining the need for exchange of good plays between the two countries. Prof Pabitra Sarkar, Vice-Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University, presented a bouquet to Abdullah Al-Mamun, play wright-director of Theatre, on behalf of Natya Samhati, the organiser of the event.



Chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral Mohammad Nurul Islam handed over the Commissioning Forman of a newly inducted logistic vessel to its Commanding Officer at a ceremony held at Digraj in Khulna yesterday. - ISPR photo

New Navy ship commissioned in Khulna

missioning ceremony of a logistic support ship of the Bangladesh Navy, BNS Imam Gazzali was held at Digraj here today, says a press release of ISPR. Chief of the Naval Staff Rear

KHULNA, May 6: The com-

Admiral Mohammad Nurul Islam attended the function as the chief guest. He read out the Commissioning Forman and later handed it over to the Commanding Officer of the ship. It was followed by hoisting of commissioning pennant and boarding of the ship by

Speaking on the occasion the Navy Chief expressed his firm optimism that the newly commissioned ship would play a significant role in anti-piracy and anti-smuggling patrol in addition to its assigned job of providing logistic support to the ships while in mission at sea.

He also lauded the role of engineers and technicians of the Khulna Shipyard who made relentless efforts in converting the vessel into a full fledged logistic ship. Earlier, the Commodore

cials, officers, sailors and

workers of the Shipyard.

Commanding Khulna Comnal law enforcing agencies modore M K Alam received the Chief of Naval Staff on his arrival at the venue. The impressive ceremony was attended among others by senior civil and military offi-

Call to include women trafficking issue in SAARC summit agenda

Three NGOs yesterday urged the government to include women and child trafficking issues in the agenda of the summit of the SAARC, to be held in the Maldives capital Male in the second week of this month, reports BSS.

Addressing a joint press conference at the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday, office bearers of the National Women Lawyers' Association and the Law and Arbiter Centre said that the summit was the appropriate forum to deal with such a menacing trade in the region.

They said that more than 4500 women and children were being illegally sent to Pakistan every year. These women are used in sex trade and the children as slaves in the Gulf states. They said, the government

should take immediate steps so that they could return home. "India is the transit point for women and child trafficking from Bangladesh," they alleged and suggested that the border security forces as well as inter-

should be strengthened to halt this cruel trade. Farida Akhter, Salma Ali, Shirin Nahar, Salma Sobhan, Rawshan Jahan Parvin, Seema Das and Natasha Ahmad addressed the press conference.

Bangabhaban refutes claim made in poster

The claim made in a poster, circulated in Dhaka and Sirajgani, that President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed was to inaugurate an organisation titled "Kudrati Bhandar Sharif" on May 1 at Nimgachi of Birajganj district is totally false and baseless, reports BSS. There is no connection of the

President with any such organisation and its inauguration by him does not arise at all. Nobody contacted the President for inaugurating the organisation, a Bangabhaban spokesman said in the city yesterday. On enquiry, it was found

that one Saidur Rahman in the name of Gausul Azam Hazrat Safayetullah, so-called director general of the Kudrati Bhandari Sharif, intentionally and with ulterior motive printed the poster by falsely and deliberately using the good name and office of the President. The enquiry further revealed that about 900 such posters were seized by the police in Sirajganj and Dhaka. It is apprehended that subscription were raised from people by showing these posters.

Saidur Rahman alias Gausul Azam Hazrat Safayetullah was arrested by Raiganj police on May 5 under 419 and 420 Sections of Bangladesh Penal Code.

The general people have been advised not to be allured and misguided by the attractive and colourful posters circulated by the aforesaid imposter.

Makbul's 16th

anniversary of death today

Makbul Hasan Trust will observe the 16th death anniversary of Makbul Hasan Moni FCA (England & Wales) in a befitting way today, says a press release.

Quran khwani and milad mahfil will be held at his residence in Bakshi Bazar. Arrangements have been

made by the Trust to donate Tk. 3,000 to Sir Salimullah Muslim Orphanage on the occasion. The Trust has introduced scholarships in the Commerce Faculty, Dhaka University and will do the same in respect of some other organisations.

Makbul Hasan Moni was a Dhaka University Blue in Football and Cricket. He was a noted sports organiser of the country. He died on 07-5-81 at the early age of 39. He was a bachelor and Controller of Accounts, Biman at the time.

HERE and THERE

Canada Bangladesh

Friendship Society A meeting of the Canada Bangladesh Friendship Society was held at its central office yesterday. Shah Alam, president of the society presided. The activities of the organisation

was discussed, says a press re-

Sheikh Burhanuddin College

State Minister for Jute and Textiles A K Faezul Haq yesterday urged the students to achieve proper knowledge to

challenges of the twenty-first century, reports BSS. The minister stressed the need for learning English along

prepare themselves for the

horizon of knowledge and ensure better access to modern science. He was addressing a two-day "exhibition on psychology" at

with Bangla to broaden the

Sheikh Burhanuddin Post Graduate College in the city. Presided over by president of

the governing committee of the college Akber Hossain, the discussion was also addressed by principal of the college Kazi Farugue Ahmed and chairperson of Psychology department Ms Firoza Khondoker.



rium in the city recently.