

Reflections on the Development-Planning Approach

by Dr Mujibur Rahman

In lieu of a district level plan which the minister considers as a better alternative to the present central level planning, a thana-based plan (in the context of Bangladesh's socio-political/geographical situation) will perhaps be more appropriate, especially in the light of results achieved while implementing the rural development programmes.

It is encouraging to see that the draft Fifth Five-Year Plan for period 1997-2002 has already been prepared by the Bangladesh Planning Commission. Some hired technocrats working in Bangladesh Planning Commission perhaps guided, to some extent, by the political leaders, have prepared the plan which has also been reviewed by a panel of economists. Like its predecessors, this plan has also made a 'top down' approach in the preparation of the plan. From the impressive document prepared, it appears that another ritual has been completed without having a 'bottom up' approach which is considered necessary.

Few months ago, I read with interest an article written by the Minister of Finance entitled *Experience of District Development Conference in The Daily Star* advocating decentralised planning approach. While I fully agree with the minister's view point of changing the present planning process from centralised system to a grassroots level planning, I, however, differ with his suggested approach of starting district-based planning process in Bangladesh for several reasons.

First, the district-based planning which the minister is advocating to adopt, is not going to be a lot different from the present centralised planning process. It is not expected to yield much better results in the form of project formulation and implementation than the present central level planning. This is primarily for the fact that the same or similar 'top down' approach as opposed to 'bottom up' approach will still be there in many respects due to the absence of full participatory approach as is usually involved in rural development activities in particular.

Secondly, while the central level planning process (top down) may have some merit of using the accumulated knowledge, experience and expertise of various ministries/depts/agencies which are all located in the Capital, the district level officials, however, bright and knowledgeable they may be, cannot claim to have the same expertise as the Capital level experts may have. As such, district level plan is not expected to bring about any significant improvement in the planning process. A district level plan, however well prepared with the participation of

the political leaders, district/division level bureaucrats and NGOs, will still lack in full participation of people in the rural areas. Real down-to-earth approach will still be missing. Many of the districts (some sub-divisions have been upgraded into districts) do not have the required administrative set up or expertise in drawing comprehensive development plan. If the planning process has to be 'bottom up' which is highly desired, why not formulate a thana-based plan rather than a district-based plan?

Thirdly, any integrated rural development plan, which is the need of the hour in Bangladesh, has to emanate from rural areas and for administrative expediency, has to be based on thana, and also has to have the involvement of the rural people concerned in the development process. The division/district level bureaucrats and headquarters technocrat's casual involvement will not necessarily make the planning more pragmatic and effective as the minister claims. Real micro-projects to be implemented in rural areas, will not be forthcoming by mere consultation and few days, of hurried efforts of district level officials without a systematic approach at the grassroots level on a permanent basis.

In lieu of a district level plan which the minister considers as a better alternative to the present central level planning, a thana-based plan (in the context of Bangladesh's socio-political/geographical situation) will perhaps be more appropriate, especially in the light of results achieved while implementing the rural development programmes. For integrated rural development programmes/projects in particular, it would be appropriate to draw up thana development plans, covering areas such as small irrigation, (based on tube-well, pumps, canals, beels and other water bodies), roads/feeder roads, culverts, primary and secondary schools, health service facilities, veterinary supplies and services, public works, supplies and services of agricultural inputs, agricultural extension activities (improved crop husbandry and yield), family planning, rural works programme, poverty alleviation programmes (including credit) for income-generating activities in the rural areas.

This is all rural development activities, which cannot

be effectively planned at a level much higher than that of the rural areas. Thana, in this context, serves as the focal point to initiate and nurture development plan and monitor their implementation. It is heartening to note the successful work carried out by some of the NGOs and Grameen Bank at thana level. Why thana will be a better base for integrated rural development than a district headquarters, is primarily due to its proximity to the rural areas, the acquired knowledge and experience of the thana government officials about the thana concerned. At present, there are about a dozen and half thana level officials holding responsibilities for supplies and services and technical advice in respective disciplines related to rural areas.

These are: Thana Krishi Officer, Thana Education Officer, Thana Project Officer (for Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry), Thana Engineer, Thana Fishery Officer, Thana Livestock Officer, Thana Women Affairs Officer, Thana Telephone Sub-Assst. Engineer, Roads and Highways Sub-Assst. Engineer for works and Thana Statistical Officer.

To coordinate the activities of these officials, there is already a Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) who virtually works as a team leader in a thana. The TNO with appropriate training and guidelines may provide leadership in drawing up a more realistic plan relating to a thana concerned in consultation with the local leaders and enlightened citizens/farmers. The local MPs and council officials can also assist and guide him in drawing up a thana development plan. Or in other words, there is already a Secretary in each thana. For formulation of an integrated rural development plan, the services of these officials can be usefully deployed to build up an inventory of what facilities exist in each thana, what more is required in terms of construction of physical facilities in the rural areas, schools and social services, supplies and services of inputs, technical advice to in-

crease the productive capacity of the rural people. People's felt needs can be better assessed and reflected in the thana-based plan.

Village groups/leaders' suggested plans/programmes, can be put into a thana plan which, in turn, can be integrated into a district plan and eventually dovetailed into a central plan. Thana-wise fund allocation for each district can be made in annual development programme in consultation with the relevant ministries/depts. Alternatively, a separate allocation can be made for each thana based on a thana plan even without consulting the ministry/dept concerned. The district authorities may verify and coordinate this kind of decentralised planning process and combine both public and private sector activities geared for each thana (done through private supplies and services - fertiliser and seeds, tube-wells and the NGOs' intensive work in the villages). With appropriate guidelines, the programme/projects can be effectively implemented.

My experience in working in rural development activities, both inside and outside Bangladesh, and exposure to a decentralised planning process (bottom-up approach) outside Bangladesh has convinced me that this type of micro approach in planning, will yield much better results in accelerating rural development than the present system.

Indonesia provides a model of 'bottom up' planning approach where rural development plan emanates from the rural areas and a thana-based plan is coordinated at the provincial headquarters. In Indonesia, there is a Central Planning Agency (Bappenas) which has a counterpart planning agency at the provincial level (called Bappedas). Bappedas, which is headed by the Governor, has some seconded planning staff at each thana level (Kabupaten). An elected head called 'Bupati' elected each Kabupaten (almost like a thana). Bupati has under

his administrative control, an elaborate thana level planning staff of the Bappedas.

While the Bappenas prepares the national objectives, priorities and the projects of national importance in consultation with the ministers/depts/agencies concerned, all rural development projects are, however, drawn up by these staff at thana level and their implementation is monitored there. Indonesia has this model perhaps due to the far-flung location of various provinces with district characteristics. While Bangladesh does not have such an administrative set-up, the decentralised planning process and results achieved seem quite interesting to study and emulate, if found feasible.

Even in a less developed country like Albania in Eastern Europe, it is the Rural Devel-

opment Board which funds all rural development projects which are drawn up by the local commune - an elected body - and a 'bottom up' approach is made in drawing up all rural projects with the help of rural level staff. The expert staff of the Rural Development Board evaluates each project/programme and funds are allocated and disbursed expeditiously. The World Bank, IFAD and IDB are financing some of these micro-projects which are well formulated and better executed. What is striking and perhaps relevant for Bangladesh is the realistic formulation, monitoring of the plans/programmes and their effective implementation.

The experience gained and the results achieved in 'Char-shadda' in Pakistan, provides another model as to how an in-

tegrated thana programme can be effectively formulated and implemented with the help of village leaders and people's participation. A micro approach in rural development is designed on the model developed by Dr Akhtar Hamed Khan in Comilla several decades ago. My experience in conducting an impact evaluation of a micro-credit programme of RD-9 project for income-generating activities, among the rural poor in Rangpur, has also convinced me that a thana-based plan will be a better alternative to the present Central Planning Process for accelerating rural development. The sooner the process is adopted, the faster will be the rate of progress in implementing rural development programmes/projects in Bangladesh.

I am, however, aware that the job of drawing up plan for 460 thanas in Bangladesh, will be a Herculean task. Drawing up of a plan for 64 districts, on the other hand, will perhaps be much easier but district level planning even if attempted, will still require thana-based data/information. In my view, even if it is a gigantic task, it is

considered essential that a thana plan needs to be initiated for realistic formulation and implementation of integrated rural development programme in Bangladesh.

While I am advocating a decentralised planning approach, I do not however, discount the role of a perspective plan, which provides the framework, or the national perspective in which a micro plan has to fit in. They are not, however, mutually exclusive. I would support the view point to initiate a decentralised planning approach, especially for integrated rural development making thana as the focal point. How to do it is a matter to be worked out by the Planning Commission. Indonesian model may perhaps be studied and if need be, copied with required changes wherever needed and make the plan more realistic and implementable.

The author, a retired senior professional staff of the Islamic Development Bank, worked as a Division Chief in Bangladesh Planning Commission. Currently, he is the Executive Director of Development Associates and Consultants (DAC) Ltd.

A New Vision in Turkish Education

by Anindita Sarkar

"In every country you have fanatics and fanaticism. It's a negative force, but you can't stop positive development in a country because of them."

As the newly-elected rector of Dokuz Eylul University, the second largest university in the Aegean region, Professor Fethi Idiman unfolds the projects that he will undertake in his four-year tenure in office. A medical doctor and professor of neurology, he is of the opinion that the university should be a leader and example for the community. In keeping with this vision, he will oversee the construction of a techno-park, establish a more democratic process in the university, strengthen ties with the region's private sector and improve the libraries and the education system.

The foundations of the techno-park in Kaynaklar, a small town a few kilometers from the university campus in Buca has already been laid in May this year. This is the third enterprise in Turkey but it has a different structure and a different level of cooperation with the private sector.

Four partners are involved in this project - Dokuz Eylul University, the Governorate of Izmir, the private sector under Yasar Holding and an Israeli company. The techno-park has three different stages - the first is an 'incubator site', where new projects can begin. When these ventures grow into viable business projects they move on to the second stage, the 'mid-production site', and the final stage sees them as independent enterprises which are in a position to move away from the park.

"Projects," says Idiman, "will concentrate on attractive high-technology that can easily be applied to day-to-day life."

Initially, however, university projects related to electronics, computers and physics will move to the site.

As the park starts functioning, the university will move away from conducting research purely on an academic and theoretical level. "It will be a marriage of the practical and the academic. The university will open its research and development capabilities to the private sector and both will transfer their knowledge and information in a two-way street," says Idiman. This will help researchers, who will not be members of the university, to move away from their scheduled daily lectures and concentrate fully on their projects through the provision of funds with optimal credit terms and as a joint-venture with the techno-park.

Once the techno-park starts operating, all partners are expected to see financial gains. However, they are realistic in their approach and have kept a gestation period of ten years till it gains market acceptability. Idiman believes that Turkish universities have three main duties: "education, research, and service." Keen to make the educational centres active rather than passive, he feels that "universities have to present their research findings and information to the society of which they are a part." The new academic session starting next year will see centres such as the European centre offer special lecture programmes to related parties in Izmir and its surrounding areas.

In the past, these centres based their programmes on popular request and according

to Idiman were not "disciplined." The centres themselves are not new. What is new is the centralising body which will coordinate all activities of these centres and promote lectures and special programmes to business and technical circles in the area. "The budget allocation of the university's libraries has been increased more than threefold from TL 18 billion to TL 56 billion. The serious business of stocking the library has been entrusted on 10 library and documentation experts who have already submitted proposals. Four of these are high quality projects with modern ideas. In the next stage a working group with four university staff and an outside documentation expert will be established.

Idiman, however, warns that results will not be visible immediately. "By early next year we should start to see the fruits of these studies. It's not just a matter of finances, knowledge is an important guide for us and we will build from a solid foundation. Hopefully next year, even if sources are not available in the libraries, they can be found through the Internet."

At a time when the existing education system is being widely debated throughout the country, he has already taken measures to have active and modern education in this university. And the medical school will be the first beneficiary where teaching will be more "interactive" and less "passive". A three-day-long symposium to this effect - "What Kind of Education System? Daily Practise and Proposals for the Future" has already been held in Izmir in April this year.

Aware of the criticisms that the accompanied his policies, Idiman says that changes is the most resisted force in humanity. "Opposition is natural in every area and is part of democracy." The present higher education regulations he feels, allows leaders to become less democratic and more autocratic. He is eager to show that with democratic auto-control methods in the university the management can be more democratic. And the most glowing example of this process was the recent student election. The last one had been held in the early 1980s.

Talking about the rising Islamic radicalism in the country he says, "In every country you have fanatics and fanaticism. It's a negative force, but you can't stop positive development in a country because of them." Explaining the choice of an Israeli partner for the techno-park he says, "this particular company has a lot of experience from which we can benefit. Choosing his words carefully he adds, "It's not possible to combine radical Islamic approach with the university mentality. The university mentality is science and objectivity, and religion is subjective." He believes that this scenario is bound to change with improvement in education and economic standard of the people.

As a leading educator and manager, Idiman sees his leadership as directing the transfer of information from the university to society and the production of science and technology as it is reflected in society. "To my mind society and education should work hand in hand."

BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

Verbatim Text of Cross Examination of 41st Prosecution Witness

(Continued from yesterday)

Following are the excerpts from cross-examination of PW-41 Brig Shajahan by Advocate Khan Saifur Rahman, defence counsel for Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooqur Rahman:

Q: You are a man of maintaining silence on others' affairs.

A: Yes, I only do whatever I am asked to do.

Q: Did all the COs and OC attend the conference at 46 Brigade HQ on August 17, 1975.

A: Yes, except 2 Field Artillery.

Q: Did any audit take place of the August 14, 1975 night training?

A: Yes, audit of my unit took place, but I can't say whether audits took place in Lancer and 2 Field Artillery.

Q: Your 14 August programme concluded at 12 noon.

A: There was a tea break at 11 am and the programme concluded at 12 noon.

Q: When did you take preparation for your programme?

A: From August 13 afternoon.

Q: How many soldiers of your unit take part in the preparation process?

A: Two hundred soldiers. Rest 700 soldiers were in the unit.

Q: With how many soldiers you went to Rajbari at 3 pm on August 14?

A: About 25 to 30 soldiers.

Q: When did you return home on August 14 night?

A: I left for home at about 10 pm giving the responsibility of the troops in the field to company commander Lt Anwar.

Q: Was there any mutiny within the army on August 14/15, 1975?

A: In a simple word 'no'.

Q: Did Lt Anwar and few other officers were killed by soldiers following a mutiny in November, 1975?

A: Anwar and some officers were killed by some unruly soldiers between November 3 and 7, 1975.

Q: Do you think that was a mutiny?

A: No, that was not a mutiny. At best that can be said unruly.

Q: Did those unruly soldiers face any trial?

A: Yes.

Q: When did Lt Col Chowdhury Khalequzzaman go on leave?

A: In the first quarter of August, 1975.

Q: Who was given the charge in his absence?

A: Col Amin Ahmed Chowdhury.

Q: The August 15 incident was discussed in the August 17 conference at 46 Brigade HQ.

A: Yes.

Q: Col Shafat Jamil narrated the incident in the conference.

A: Yes. He informed everyone of the incident and said 2 Field Artillery Regiment and 1st Bengal Lancer were involved in the incident.

Q: Did he (Jamil) place a report on it or said it verbally.

A: Verbally.

Q: Did Lt Anwar and few other officers were killed by soldiers following a mutiny in November, 1975?

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Q: Did he (Jamil) place a report on it or said it verbally.

A: Verbally.

Q: Did you give any information to the Army HQ on August 14 to alert them?

A: No. But, I informed 46 Brigade Commander Col Shafat Jamil.

Q: Was there any mutiny within the army on August 14/15, 1975?

A: In a simple word 'no'.

Q: Did Lt Anwar and few other officers were killed by soldiers following a mutiny in November, 1975?

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Tom and Jerry



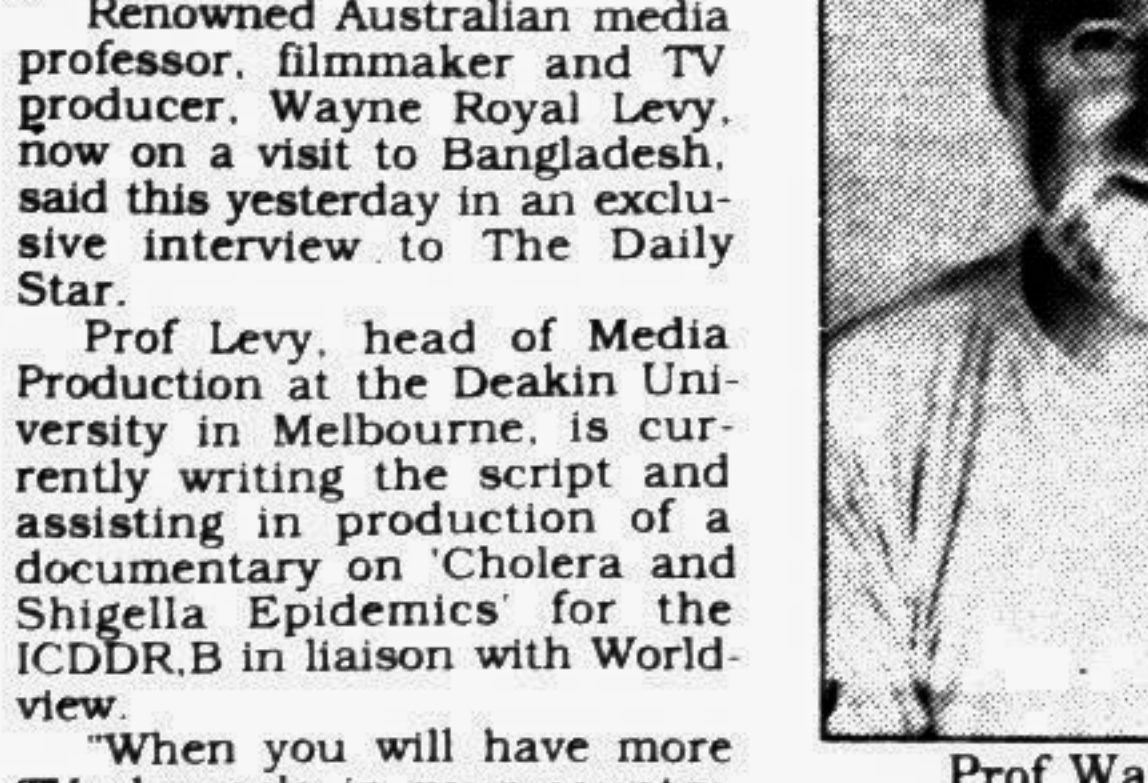
IAN FLEMING'S James Bond



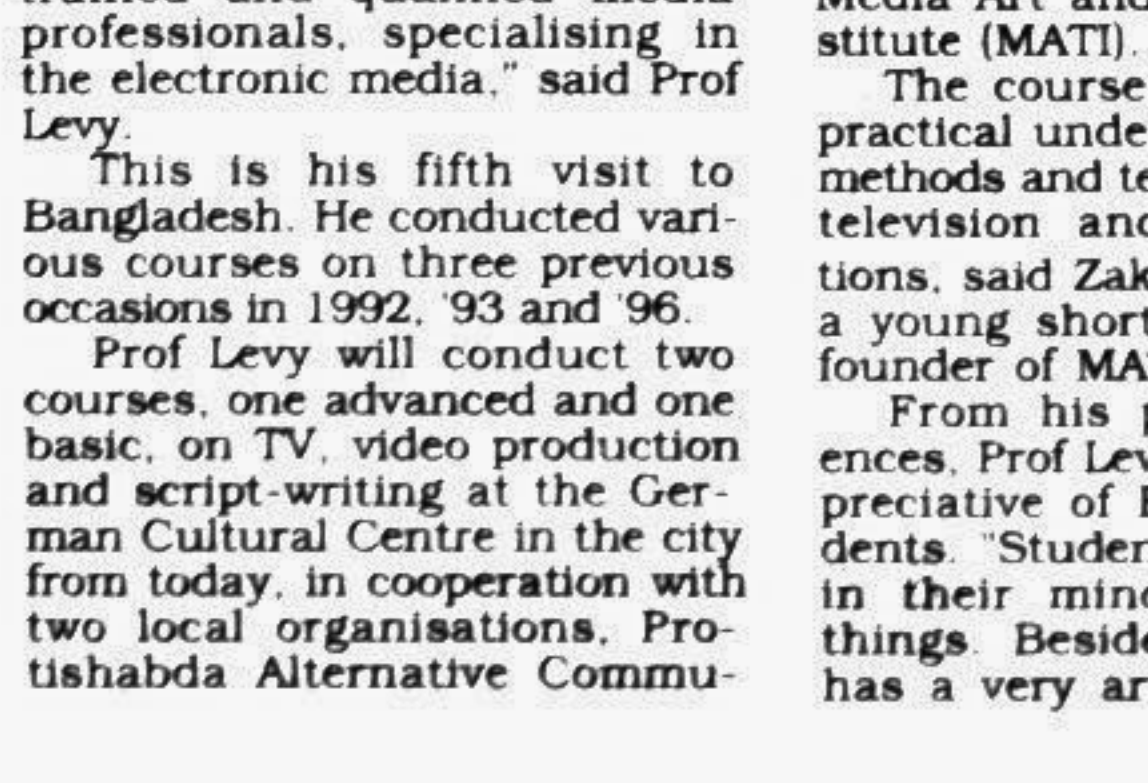
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Metropolitan

Australian expert says

Private TV channels will necessitate more trained media professionals

By Reaz Ahmad

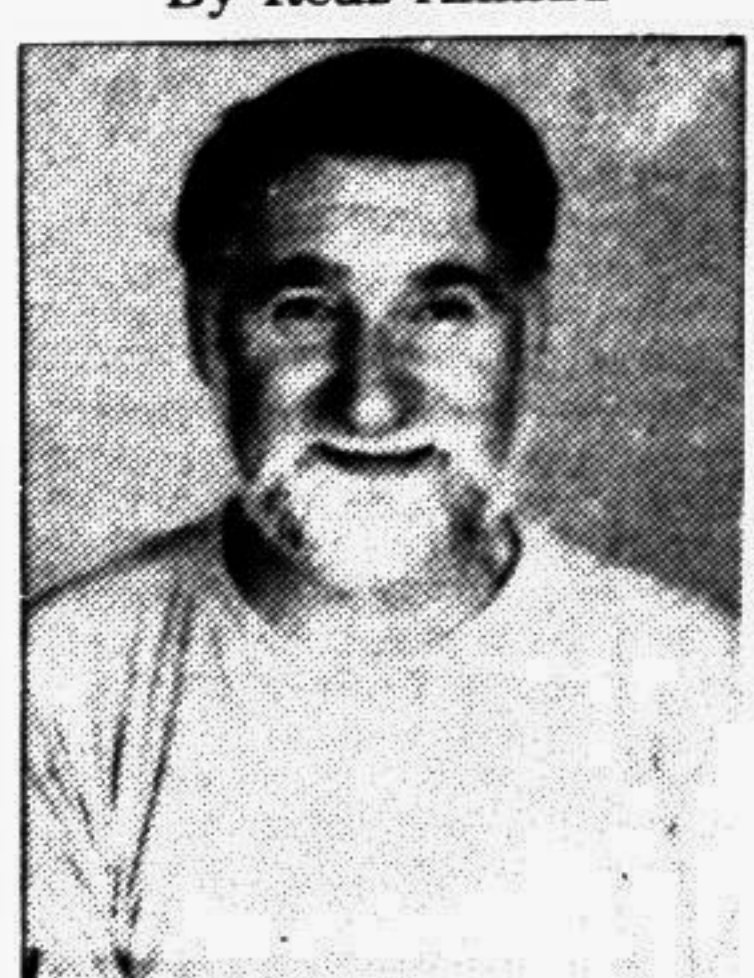
Bangladesh will require more trained media professionals in near future when private television channels appear on the scene.

Renowned Australian media professor, filmmaker and TV producer, Wayne Royal Levy, now on a visit to Bangladesh, said yesterday in an exclusive interview to The Daily Star.

Prof Levy, head of Media Production at the Deakin University in Melbourne, is currently writing the script and assisting in production of a documentary on 'Cholera and Shigella Epidemics' for the ICDDR,B in liaison with World-view.

"When you will have more TV channels in your country, you will need more and more trained and qualified media professionals, specialising in the electronic media," said Prof Levy.

This is his fifth visit to Bangladesh. He conducted various courses on three previous occasions in 1992, '93 and '96. Prof Levy will conduct two courses, one advanced and one basic, on TV, video production and script-writing at the German Cultural Centre in the city from today, in cooperation with two local organisations, Proshadha Alternative Commu-



Prof Wayne R Levy

nication Centre (PACC) and Media Art and Technology Institute (MATI).

The courses would provide practical understanding on the methods and techniques used in television and video production, said Zakir Hossain Raju, a young short filmmaker and founder of MATI.

From his previous experiences, Prof Levy was highly appreciative of Bangladeshi students. "Students here are open in their mind to learn new things. Besides, this country has a very artistic visual cul-

ture," he said.

Comparing the situation here with that of his own country, Levy said, "Unlike Australia, students and professionals here who have interest in media production are in dire need of production equipment."

"Screening of a 1896 film on the traditional Melbourne Cup horse race will add colour to these courses. Students will get an idea on how filmmaking techniques have changed over the passage of time," said Prof Levy, who has authored over 20 books on film, television and video and worked as a consultant for the Indonesia National Television.

Tk 2 postage stamp to be issued tomorrow

Bangladesh Post Office will issue a commemorative postage stamp valued Taka 2.00 denomination on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of Armed Forces to be observed on 21 November, reports UNB.

A first-day cover valued Taka 6.00 will also be issued and a special cancellor will be used, said a PID handout.

Research book on universal primary edn launched

"Getting started: Universalising quality primary education in Bangladesh," a research book on universal primary education in the country, was ceremonially launched in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

The University Press Limited published the book which was jointly edited by Prof A K Jalaluddin, an eminent personality in the field of basic education, and Dr A Mushtaque R Chowdhury, Director, research of Brac.

The book is the ultimate outcome of the 5-day conference on universal primary education in Bangladesh, held here in August 96. It includes policy analysis and statements by government leaders, commissioned research papers, and summary of the discussions followed by a series of recommendations relating to the current debate on education reforms in Bangladesh.

Her body will arrive in the city today by Bangladesh Bi-man, and taken to her 42, Green Corner residence.

Her janaza will be held after Asr prayers today and she will be buried at Banani Graveyard.

Obituary

Sakina Rais, widow of Dr MA Rais, died in New York, USA on November 17, says a press release.

Her body will arrive in the city today by Bangladesh Bi-man, and taken to her 42, Green Corner residence.

Her janaza will be held after Asr prayers today and she will be buried at Banani Graveyard.

—UNB

Further text of cross-examination shall be published as and when received