

Caring for Nutrition

by AMM Anisul Awwal

Malnutrition results from combined lack of food, caring practices and proper health services. But it's a tragedy that many of the children who are suffering from malnutrition are from well-to-do families.

THE existing resources are sufficient in providing necessary nutrition that can help in creating a healthy, strong, stout and hardy nation. But, in reality, most of the families of our country are suffering from malnutrition because of poverty, inadequate food, lack of basic health care service and wrong feeding and eating practices.

At present, about 93 per cent children below five years of age are suffering from malnutrition. 30-50 per cent babies born with birth weight below normal and 70 per cent mothers and children are suffering from nutritional anemia. 30,000 children become blind every year due to vitamin deficiency. More than two-thirds of the people have iodine deficiency and five crore people are suffering from visible and/or palpable goiter.

Human resource is our prime resource. But it's a matter of re-

elimination of iodine deficiency disorders, elimination of vitamin A deficiency disorders and its consequences, including blindness, reduction of iron deficiency (anemia) among children, pregnant and lactating mothers by one-third.

The strategies of the project are: accelerating the formulation of a national nutrition program, developing national expertise and capacity to control malnutrition, ensuring inter-sectoral action to combat malnutrition especially by providing enough food security to the people and to give access to better health and care, strengthening existing national nutrition activities, particularly vitamin A administration, salt iodination, iron supplementation to pregnant women and promotion of breast feeding, and establishing IEC-based nutrition interventions in a phased manner.

The villagers also get all possible health services in the GMC through satellite clinic and EPI outreach centers. Thus, children are being immunised against six preventable diseases and are also getting vitamin 'A' to prevent blindness.

There are project management committees at every tier of service delivery, starting from the villages to the national levels. This Project has developed and institutionalised its own MIS. Data-based reporting system has been introduced on project performance. MIS is the guiding tool of the project.

Last but not least, malnutrition results from combined lack of food, caring practices and proper health services. But it's a tragedy that many of the children who are suffering from malnutrition are from well-to-do families. They have food at their households, there is health service facilities around them, but still suffering from malnutrition. Why? It's a big challenge ahead of us and hopefully, we will be able to overcome this in a short span of time.

The author, a physician, is a consultant of BINP

feeding program. There is Growth Monitoring and Promotion (GMP) session in every CNC and mothers participate in it with great enthusiasm. This session is a monthly event.

On the basis of recorded result, CNP render counseling to the mother to provide more care for the child so that normal growth trend is never disrupted. In this regard, IEC (Information, Education and Communication) is playing the key role.

On the basis of recorded result, CNP render counseling to the mother to provide more care for the child so that normal growth trend is never disrupted. In this regard, IEC (Information, Education and Communication) is playing the key role.

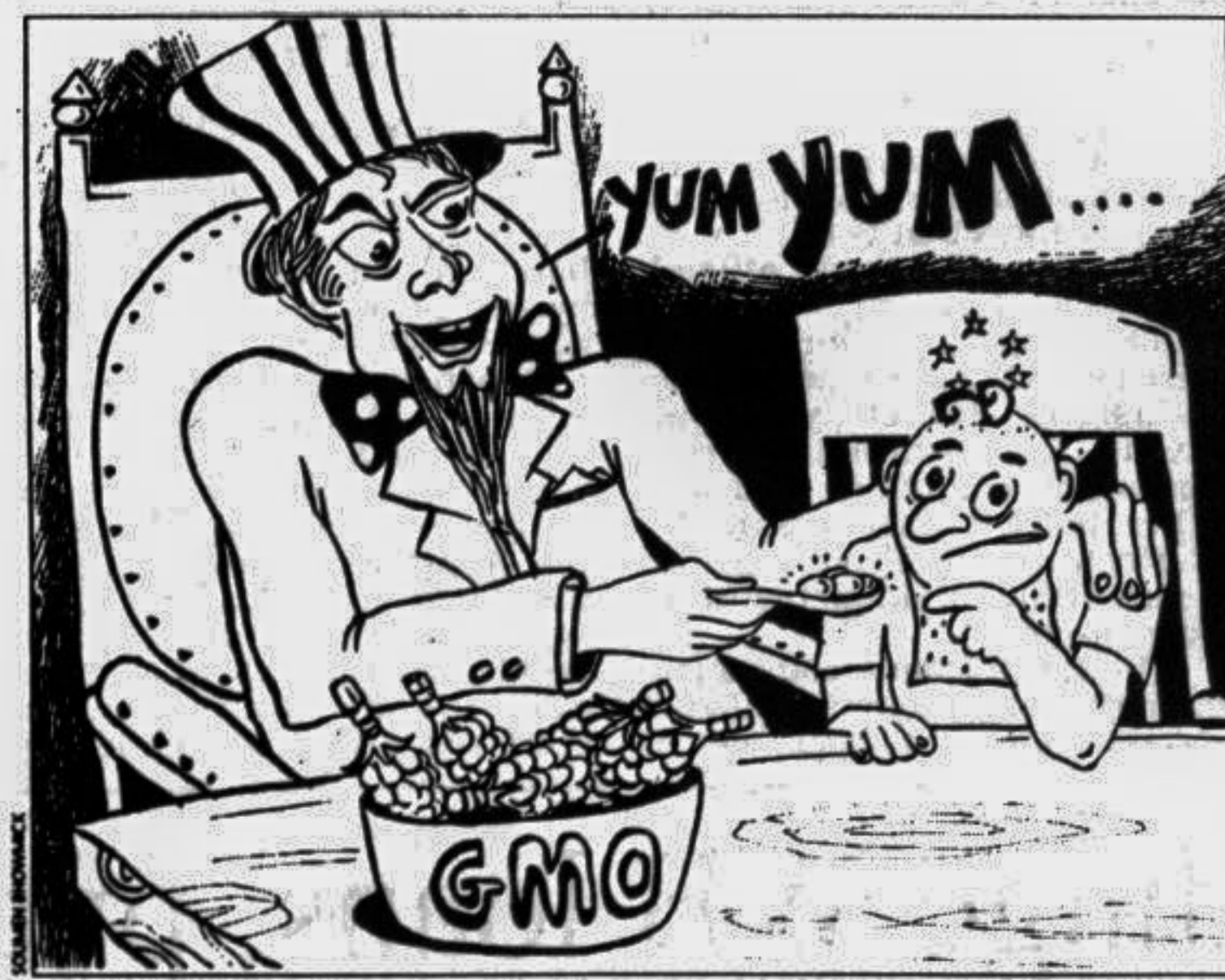
The villagers also get all possible health services in the GMC through satellite clinic and EPI outreach centers. Thus, children are being immunised against six preventable diseases and are also getting vitamin 'A' to prevent blindness.

The author, a physician, is a consultant of BINP

No Appetite for Strange Genes

by Anju Sharma

In the US also, genetically-modified organisms have met with resistance in the domestic market. Recently, the international biotech company Monsanto was involved in a debate on the safety of grocery-store milk.



Never before was choosing what to eat such a difficult decision. So you choose to eat a tomato. Would that be normal or genetically modified? International biotech companies are learning the hard way that people prefer normal, thank you, and that genetically-modified foodstuffs are a marketing nightmare. Most people hate the idea of eating foodstuffs with tinkered genes.

This does not seem to go down very well with Americans, the world's largest producers of genetically-modified food. They are protesting against Europe's reluctance to allow imports of products such as genetically-modified corn. Europe has stringent standards for vetting genetically-modified foodstuffs, which arise from their concern over the safety of food, after their recent tryst with the mad cow diseases.

So in a role reversal of the shrimp and turtle and the dolphin and tuna cases, the Americans are fighting local values to promote their product internationally. After forcing their environmental values on the world and placing trade sanctions on countries who do not comply, the US has challenged the Europeans for not wanting to eat genetically-modified food. The growing influence of farm-state representatives in the US Congress is said to have led to the intensified pressure on these nations to open up their markets.

According to a recent article in The Financial Times, emerging international rules on farm trade are ambiguous as the US would prefer they remain that

way. A confused situation will help the US justify the lack of science in their own decisions to ban imports while simultaneously pushing for exports that do not meet the standards of other countries.

Meanwhile, feelings against genetically-modified food are running high in many parts of Europe, particularly in Germany and Austria where their imports are completely banned. Austria and Germany have even gone a step further than the rest of Europe, where it is sufficient to label food that is genetically modified as a warning to those who may not want to eat it. These two nations would like to label their foodstuff as non-genetically engineered, but are re-

luctant to do so without clear rules on permissible levels of DNA contamination.

Given the rising number of GMOs, even the most careful producers cannot guarantee that their product will be free of contamination, they say. Austria has set the level of permissible contamination of protein encoded by foreign genes at 0.1 per cent of product weight, and is close to legislating how GMO-free products should be defined and labelled. A Bavarian Bill has proposed stringent standards for food with GMO 'free' labels. For example, to get the label, any animal whose meat is to be used, must not have been fed genetically-modified soybean or fodder.

In the US also, genetically-modified organisms have met with resistance in the domestic market. Recently, the international biotech company Monsanto was involved in a debate on the safety of grocery-store milk. Monsanto developed a hormone, RBGH (Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone), which when injected every two weeks into a cow can raise milk production by 10-20 per cent. The hormone is produced in vats by bacteria into which a cow gene has been transplanted.

Doubts were raised about the safety of milk produced in this manner. A Florida TV station made a hard-hitting series on the safety aspect. Monsanto threatened them with a libel suit, and the station withdrew the broadcast. When reporters Steve Wilson and Jane Akre refused to rewrite the series, they were sacked. Wilson and Akre documented facts about corporate heavy-handedness, suppressed data and even attempted bribery of regulatory officials in Canada.

In India, the authorities are as lackadaisical as ever over the issue. When the US complained about India's skeletal regulatory mechanism, saying that genetically-modified soybean exports from the US lie at ports for long periods of time, the Indian government reacted in their usual lazy, couldn't-care-less manner. They simply wanted to remove whatever limited regulatory mechanism existed and give to go-ahead to imports from the US unchecked. So much for present governance worrying about the future.

CSE/Down To Earth Features



Improved rural household: Towards balanced diet. Courtesy: Facts for Life

gret that most of these resources are suffering from malnutrition. People's physical and mental growth and development are being hampered. Their learning ability is diminishing. Talent, intelligence and productivity of the people is being reduced. And very common health problems and diseases are turning fatal.

With a view to prevent and control the problems of malnutrition of our country, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched Bangladesh Integrated Nutrition Project (BINP) from July, 1995. The Project is being implemented in association with the World Bank and

project is, to develop a comprehensive national nutrition program to reduce malnutrition in Bangladesh, particularly in women and children through ensuring household food security, behavioural change related to food intake, infant feeding, growth monitoring, caring practices etc., aiming at the attainment of goals stated at the international Conference on Nutrition.

Specific objectives of project are: reduction of severe protein energy malnutrition among under-2 children by half and moderate protein-energy malnutrition by one-third, reduction of low birth weight by half,

The ultimate goals of the project are: to reduce infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rate by 50 per cent to that of the baseline data, to achieve other health and family planning goals related to maternal and child health and to improve the overall socio-economic conditions through increased productivity and improved learning.

Highest priority has been given in creating awareness among the people of the project area to achieve the objectives of the project.

A community Nutrition Center (CNC) has been established in a convenient place of every village under the project to provide services covering 1000 to 1500 villagers.

A Community Nutrition Promoter (CNP), selected by Village Nutrition Management Committee, usually travels every corner of the village and identifies mothers and children, the target group. Beneficiaries are identified by the CNPs and their names are registered for services and follow up.

A Community Nutrition Organiser (CNO) is assigned to oversee the work of about 10 CNPs. Trained CNPs and CNOs are the core field-based personnel of the project. They preserve and analyse all the documents of the project and discharge functions and plan on the basis of mutual understanding and discussion.

Moreover, the project personnel are motivating people to practice Poultry Farming, Animal Husbandry and Pisciculture so that they may produce nutritious food and consume a portion of it.

Project personnel maintain record of pregnant women. As part of their assignment, they check these pregnant women up regularly and measure weight monthly, provides supplementary food to those who need it with a view to increase total pregnancy weight gain to at least 7 kilograms. To address the issue of anemia among pregnant women, project personnel provide iron tablets from the 4th month of pregnancy till 40 days after delivery.

Project personnel also equip women to become a responsible mother. In this connection, CNPs encourage mothers to breast-feed the babies within 30 minutes of delivery. The workers also encourage mothers to continue breast-feeding till the child is 5 months old.

There is a women's group for every CNC. The group prepares supplementary food comprising roasted and powdered rice, roasted and powdered dal/pulse, molasses/gur and soybean oil. Field workers supervise the preparation of food. The group is responsible for food preparation, packaging and supplying packets to the CNPs.

The under-two children who are either suffering from severe malnutrition or showing growth faltering are under supplementary feeding. The pregnant women who's BMI is less than 18.5 are also under the

It's Like Living Near a Volcano

by Bakhtiar Rana

The now-achieved nuclear parity between India and Pakistan may in the long run prove a disaster to the region's quest for peace, affluence and better environment.

BEING neighbours of nuclear power houses is as unsafe as living near a volcano. Neighbours of India and Pakistan are having a chilling sense of that insecurity.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has called nuclear tests by India and Pakistan a threat to stability in South Asia. A State Department official in Washington said the blasts have pushed the region to a dangerous direction and a new security environment, where both countries are now less, rather than more, secure.

Defense strategists in Dhaka say India's five nuclear tests on May 11 and 13, followed by Pakistan's tit-for-tat response with six tests of its own on May 28 and 30, threats to regional peace.

For Pakistan's part, it said its blast for blast was triggered by tremendous domestic pressure from media, politicians and public to settle its score with India now or never. Indian Home Minister LK Advani's warning to Pakistan that interference in Kashmir would cost it dearly in view of the new realities in South Asia added fuel to the flames. The retaliation led to dangerous escalation of tensions in the region.

New Delhi, in a secret letter to President Clinton on May 11, cited a potential threat from China as a key motivation for its detonations. If Beijing considers the Indian blasts as a reason to expand its arsenal, the arms race may escalate further. And if India flexes its muscles and points its nuclear muzzle towards China, a fiercer Chinese retaliation could cause radiation damages in any country of the region.

Many western security experts feel that China has the potentials to supplant the former Soviet Union and it may acquire the military muscle to threaten the US and western strategic interests in East Asia. The two great nuclear powers are now trying to develop close relations because of strategic and economic interests.

"China is the potential threat No. 1," said Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes to justify his country's nuclear explosions on the plea of security threat although he had charged Indira Gandhi with conducting the nuclear test in 1974 to break the railway strike led by him as a socialist party leader. Gandhi claimed that it was a peaceful nuclear explosion for harnessing nuclear energy for constructive purposes.

For peaceful application of atomic energy, say scientists, one has to take extreme care to

control radiation. In case of nuclear explosion, the case is completely different. The very intention of the explosion is to produce, on the basis of the results obtained from a test explosion, a nuclear weapon.

The only intention of this is to develop weapons of mass destruction. So, whatever the claim may be, a nuclear explosion can never be a 'peaceful'.

All past experience shows that the defaulting party cannot be honest about the immediate and long term effects of an explosion. In a reactor, stringent measures are incorporated to contain the radiation even in the case of an accident although the total quantity of fissile material and the amount of radiation are much lower than the uncontrolled fissioning of a bomb. Multiple physical barriers, like massive shielding as well as passive systems, are provided in a reactor.

But one hardly invests in such barriers in case of a nuclear explosion. Thus most of the radiation produced in the process goes to the atmosphere and drifts along the direction of the prevailing wind direction. People could be subject to radiation-induced hazards in the long, medium and short-term perspectives.

Besides heat and blast, according to scientists, the exploding nuclear bomb release penetrating nuclear radiation. When absorbed by the body it can cause serious injury.

In Japan, where the US dropped two atomic bombs, nicknamed "Little Boy" and "Fat Man," on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the World War II, many individuals who were protected from blast and burns succumbed later to radiation injury.

News reports said, a Hiroshima survivor campaigned against atomic weapons at a village of a dairy farming community of 1,500 just 10 kilometres from Indian underground nuclear test site of Pokhran 550 km southwest of New Delhi, on June 18. Yasuhiro Taketa spoke of seeing a fiery cloud engulf his hometown in 1945 and days later watching a younger sister die of radiation poisoning.

People in Khetolai village have never had comfortable living so close to the test site first used in 1974. They are worried about what will happen because

of the radioactivity as they attribute 20 cancer deaths since 1974 and recent symptoms such as vomiting blood, stomach pains and incessant coughs to the nuclear tests.

A large-scale nuclear exchange between nations could have a catastrophic global effect on climate, blocking off sunlight for several months. This possibility, suggested by an international group of scientists in December 1983, is known as the "Nuclear Winter" theory.

Investigations suggest that even if some humans survive an all-out nuclear war and potential nuclear winter, they will probably be sterile.

Experts say, it is difficult to ascertain whether the radiation cloud caused by last month's Indian nuclear tests did really reach the boundaries of Bangladesh. It would depend on the speed and direction of wind and other meteorological conditions prevailing at the time of the blast.

But one thing is almost certain that some radiation would go into the underground water table and would cause substantial health hazards to the people of the surrounding areas. The effect would depend on the nature of the ground water table, its flow and the pattern of its use.

If the water is used for irrigation, there is potential danger of contamination of cereals and other agricultural products. Experts say, it is prudent to put a moratorium on import of all dairy products and other edibles from India at least for some time.

Since such items are imported mostly through non-traditional routes, it would be difficult to test these products as is done for similar items imported through the Chittagong Port. This calls for a public awareness programme to warn the people to take proper care. The civil society could get themselves involved in this process if the government finds it difficult to take this responsibility due to unavoidable reasons.

Above all, strategists say, one cannot give a guarantee that India will never be ruled by fundamentalists or by a party that has little love for any of its neighbours. In that event, any nation in the region can fall victim to such a ruling party. As far as the BJP is concerned, its

broad consensus on eradicating poverty they tend to find reasons to defend the enormous cost of pride and prejudice.

However, many Indian leaders still believe in the spirit of a 1974 statement of recently turned bomb enthusiast Fernandes that a government that talks of a bomb without first taking steps to provide all citizens of the country with food, clothes, shelter, pure drinking water, education and a chance to live a life befitting human beings can be called "nothing but criminal."

In all candour, the apprehension of a dangerous race of doomsday weapons destabilising South Asia is brewing fast. It merits serious consideration at this very moment even if one forgets the ethical and moral obligation of India or Pakistan being the poor countries unable to meet the basic needs of their teeming millions.

The writer is a news editor of UNB and general secretary of Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB)

— News Network

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Public Works Wood Workshop Division
Mirpur, Dhaka

Tender Invitation Notice

Memo No : WWD/26/4721 Date : 23-6-98/09-03-1405BS

- Tender Invitation Notice No : 147/97-98.
- Sealed tenders in Bangladesh Form No 2908 are hereby invited from the class I, class II E/M contractors with the licences from Directorate of Public Works and who have the registration certificate from the Department of Value Added Tax on the item rate basis for the undermentioned work. Tenders will be received at the tender box kept at office of the undersigned as well as Public Works E/M Division-1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8/E/M Workshop Division and Public Works Eden Building Division as per date and time mentioned below and will be opened the same day at 12-15 PM in presence of participants in tender (if any).
- Name of work : Supply of MS Angle.
- Estimated cost : At the rate of 2% of quoted price by contractor.
- Earnest money : 15 days.
- Time for completion of work : 14-7-98 (during office hours).
- Last date of selling tender : 15-7-98 at 12-00 Noon.
- Rate at the basis of item of schedule will have to be written in figures and words legibly. It is mentionable that more than two figures after decimal will not be allowed.
- Earnest money in the forms of BD/PO/CD/SDR/Defence Savings Certificate from any schedules bank in favour of Executive Engineer, Public Works Wood Workshop Division must be submitted along with tender. Tenders will be deemed as cancelled without these.
- Schedule of work, rules and regulations of contract etc can be seen at and purchased from the office of undersigned as well as Executive Engineer, Public Works E/M Division-1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8/E/M Workshop Division and Public Works Eden Building Division, Dhaka during office hours till the last date of selling of tenders on payment of Taka 410/- in cash (non-refundable). Tender form can be purchased by contractor himself or by a person empowered by him by producing all necessary papers including registration book.
- The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reason.

TIM Nurun Nabi
Executive Engineer
Public Works Wood Workshop
Division, Mirpur, Dhaka
Phone No : 9003446

DFP-14361/25-6
G-1527

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Azimpur PWD Division

Tender Notice

- Tender Notice No : 178/97-98.
- Name of work : Construction of Child Day Care Centre at Azimpur Govt Colony, Dhaka (Sub-head: Construction of main building).
- Estimated cost : Tk 32,46,200/-
- Earnest money : Tk 65,000/-
- Time allowed for completion of work : 180 (One hundred eighty) days.
- Cost of tender documents : Tk 750/- (Taka seven hundred fifty) only (non-refundable) per set.
- Place of selling : Office of the undersigned as well as Executive Engineer, Dhaka PWD Division No. 1,2,3,4, Eden Building, City/Savar/Mirpur/Motijheel/Maintenance/Resources/Medical College/Sher-e-Bangla Nagar PWD Division No. 1,2,3/Mohakhali/Narsingdi/Narayanganj/Munshiganj/Arboriculture PWD Division, Dhaka, Divisional Commissioner, Dhaka, and Sub-Division No. V under PWD Division No. IV, Dhaka.
- Place of receiving tender : -Do- Executive Engineer, PWD Dhaka Zone, Dhaka except Sub-Division No. V under PWD Division No. IV, Dhaka.
- Last date of selling the tender : Till 15.7.98 during office hours.
- Date of receiving and opening the tender : Up to 12:00 Noon of 16.7.98 and will be opened on the same day at 12:30 PM.
- Eligibility of contractor/firm : Enlisted valid contractor of Public Works Department as per their eligibility and financial limit.

In case more than one tenders stood lowest quoting same rate, selection will be made by lottery to be held on 22.7.98 at 11:00 AM in the office of the undersigned.

Those contractor/firm who have no TIN and VAT registration are not eligible to participate in the tender.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Executive Engineer
Azimpur PWD Division
Segunbagicha, Dhaka
Phone: 9331089

DFP-14405-28/6
G-1530

