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Down to Earth Children's Exposure to Violence and Smoking on TV

By A S M Nurunnabi

On BTV screen, several popular adventure films (with Bangla dubbing) are shown. Such films as Sinbad, Hercules and Robinhood are immensely liked not only by children and teenagers but even by adults.

In most of such televised films, there is always the element of violence. This is true not only in respect of such films televised on BTV, but also, thanks to widespread cable network operating in city areas in respect of a large number of foreign films which are generally telecast through satellite channels.

The cause for concern arises from the fact that children, in particular, are exposed overwhelmingly to scenes of violence in these films in the forms of bloody battles with swords, knives, guns, clubs and what not. The element of violence is also displayed in scenes of free hand fighters, boxing and various forms of physical contortions. Children go head over heels when they watch such dare-devil physical antics.

Besides such kinds of films dashed out by our national channel, there is a spate of serial foreign films served on satellite channels, glorifying violence in the garb of patriotism and social justice. Experts say there is a growing correlation between the aggressive content shown on the screen and its imitation among nubile minds.

That is why everybody, parents and guardians in particular needs to be vigilant because children tend to act out in real life what they see on the TV screens. These innocent viewers do not know that the impossible acts or feats, such as jumps from mountain heights, or walking on slender rope or chain, or fighting dexterously single-handed with a dozen ad-

versaries are all a matter of camera work, and absurd and risky in real life.

According to a UNESCO report, children are increasingly being surrounded by an environment where both media and real experiences support the view that violence is "natural". According to that report, in the last six years, the quantum of violent content has gone up many times due to the channel boom but there is a lack of self-censorship.

With the absence of adequate child specific regional literature, children have turned to programmes meant for adults and as most of these serials are aired on prime time when the whole family sit together to watch the various programmes. As noted above, the children are lured into the act of violent drama which they try to copy in their actual life.

What can be the possible means of tackling the adverse impact the violence-prone TV programmes produced on the minds of children? It is true that once in a while, juvenile programmes creating excitement may serve as entertainment for a child. But it is widely felt that running a regular fixed days programme with contents of violence in a more or lesser degree cannot but be highly damaging to juvenile morals. Because it helps mould child habits and psychology along lines of violence. It has been noted by keen observers that violence is used as an opiate by the producers to hook the advertising and lure children.

Taking into account the totality of violence-prone serials aired through different satellite channels, which children in some ways or other cannot avoid watching, there is a general feeling that all producers are not friendly to the idea of censoring of some kind at a

time when they are minting money by showing details of sensational crimes.

It is believed that an effective means of tackling the problem can be showing children specific programmes with the support of child friendly advertisers which may go a long way in checking the cult of violence.

Experts also view that parental guidance along with sensitising the media may help in tackling the after-effects of violence. One reason for entertainment TV programmes to the children to be most carefully crafted and screened is that nothing equals the visual impact of these programmes on the child or young mind.

Similarly injurious is the smoking advertisements on TV. It is of concern that satellite TV manages to circumvent local bans on smoking advertisements. Though Bangladesh Television does not allow cigarette advertisements, there are some foreign TV channels which continue to carry them. It is felt imperative that some way be found to protect the young from the onslaught of advertising of cigarettes. The correlation between smoking and advertising is quite obvious as the correlation between smoking and lung cancer.

There are often sights of people smoking in rooms in which children are present regardless of the harm it has for them. If the young have to be protected, it is felt that stronger legislation is called for, even if this results in some loss of revenue. The effects of passive smoking on children and non-smokers are just as bad as smoking. With smoking addiction growing and smoking-related diseases rising, some way must be found to stop this flood of advertisements via satellite.

JCD to protest PM's arrival at DU tomorrow

By DU Correspondent

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of opposition BNP, will stage a demonstration on the Dhaka University campus tomorrow to protest Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's arrival at the university.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will visit the university Sunday morning to inaugurate a sculpture at Fuller Road.

The programme was announced by JCD at a press conference at the Madhu's Canteen yesterday afternoon. JCD leaders Monjur Elahi, Munshi Basitul Basit Anjum, A B M Mosharraf Hossain and Monir Hossain were present.

JCD leaders said they will bring out a procession on the campus with black flag soon after the arrival of Sheikh Hasina.

They said Hasina has lost her credibility to come to the campus as her party's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League captured all the residential halls of DU by ousting JCD workers.

Discrimination

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Development (ICPD) to declare their goals - to achieve universal access to reproductive health information and services by 2015. Yet the right is denied in Bangladesh, the UNFPA report said.

The current international understanding of sexual and reproductive rights includes the right to equality and equity for women and men to enable individuals to make free and informed choices in all spheres of life, free from gender discrimination.

Some of the terrible effects of denial of these rights in Bangladesh include, annual death of some 20,000 women from birth related complications and about 800,000 menstrual regulations - a large percentage of it suffering from permanent injury due to unsafe abortion.

More than half of the mothers have been found to be acutely malnourished, thousands of them dying from reproductive tract diseases including sexually transmitted diseases (STD).

Reaching family planning services at doorsteps is a remarkable achievement for population control but women, traditionally confined to their homes, need to reach the fixed outlets for more essential services, the report said.

The most effective and practical way to improve the country's prospects is to give the power of reproductive choice to the people. To do this, necessary social investment needs to be prioritised. The policy should be to redress the injustice on women, enabling them to make choice on an equal basis with men," said an executive of a women's rights organisation.

Liaison body

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He declined to elaborate but said the Committee will sit soon to finalise programmes.

Later talking to The Daily Star IOJ leader ARM Abdul Matin said: We are ultimately proceeding towards a one-point oust-government movement. We had preliminary discussions on the strategy of the movement."

Replying to a question on the proposed government-opposition dialogue to resolve the current political crisis, he said the opposition parties are unanimous that such a dialogue can only take place after cancellation of the municipal polls results. "There is no compromise with the demand for cancellation of the polls results," he added.

"Besides, I had plans to expand the sculpture," he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will unveil the *Shudhina Sangram* tomorrow at the Fuller Road intersection on the Dhaka University campus.

The DU authorities have spent around Tk Seven lakh for the renovation and shifting of the sculpture.

The renovated 60-foot tall sculpture displays the glorious history of the struggle of the Bengali nation. It records the history of the Language Movement of 1952, the movement for autonomy in 1966, the mass uprising in 1969 and the events of Liberation War in 1971, the historic speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 7, the dark night of March 25, proclamation of independence on March 26 and the final victory on December 16. The sculpture also narrates the night of August 15 when the Bangabandhu along with almost all of his family members including Sheikh Russel, a child of only nine, was brutally killed.

The meeting in a resolution expressed "grave concern" over the current "crisis" and high prices of fertiliser, which is "seriously hampering agricultural production".

It alleged that the government had miserably failed to ensure supply of fertiliser to farmers, specially in the country's northern regions. Prices of fertiliser were enhanced five times in the last three years, it claimed.

It demanded adequate supply of fertiliser and reduction of its price.

The Liaison Committee in another resolution said that the government, instead of arresting the killers of JCD leader Sajal Chowdhury, has arrested the victim's sister-in-law, Neaz Ahmed.

Sajal was gunned down in the city during an opposition-called hartal on February 9. Neaz is the No 1 witness in the murder case.

It said the arrest of Neaz and filing of "false cases" against him clearly proved that ruling party men were directly involved in the killing of Sajal.

It demanded immediate withdrawal of the cases against Neaz, his release and arrest of the killers.

The liaison meeting in its another resolution strongly condemned the attack on JP Chairman's motorcade during his visit to Rangpur.

Shop owners

From Page 1

the opposition parties to agitate in a destructive way, creating frustration among the people, it added.

Rigid attitude of the ruling and the opposition parties on political issues is leading the country towards destruction, the statement said.

All initiatives taken so far by the country's apex business body Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) went in vain due to lack of response from both the ruling party and the Opposition, BDMS said.

Frequent hartal calls by the Opposition are hindering normal business activities in the country, it pointed out.

The samity has called upon people from all walks of life to participate in the hunger strike.

PM unveils

From Page 1

Vice Chancellor's official residence yesterday, Sikder said that the first inauguration of the sculpture was held in a non-formal, homely atmosphere and that it was not complete then. "Even the VC did not attend the programme because of such informality," she added.

"Besides, I had plans to expand the sculpture," she said.

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Pakistan worries about India's chemical weapons stockpile

ISLAMABAD, Mar 5: Having fought three wars against its neighbour India, Pakistan says it's worried about New Delhi's stockpile of chemical weapons, according to a foreign ministry statement issued today, reports AP.

Pakistan's concerns were conveyed to Jose Mauricio Bustani, the director general of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons while on a visit to the federal capital.

According to the foreign ministry statement, Bustani was told of "Pakistan's disappointment [with] the Indian declaration of large chemical weapons stockpiles despite the fact that both countries... had agreed not to acquire or develop chemical weapons."

Pakistan already has signed the Chemical Weapons Convention.

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There are often sights of people smoking in rooms in which children are present regardless of the harm it has for them. If the young have to be protected, it is felt that stronger legislation is called for, even if this results in some loss of revenue.

The effects of passive smoking on children and non-smokers are just as bad as smoking. With smoking addiction growing and smoking-related diseases rising, some way must be found to stop this flood of advertisements via satellite.

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