

Freedom or Licence

Over the past two weeks, events in Pakistan affecting press freedom have created an uproar. Some known editor and journalists have been arrested, some have been harassed. In the process objectivity has become a casualty.

ALL good, functioning democracy needs a strong media. In the face of almost obsessive state control over the electronic media, print takes on a special monitoring role in the third world. It remains almost the only restraint to absolute power, an instrument of accountability in an environment that tends increasingly to be authoritarian in the absence of the checks and balances that any healthy democracy envisages. Over the past two weeks, events in Pakistan affecting press freedom have created an uproar. Some known editor and journalists have been arrested, some have been harassed. In the process objectivity has become a casualty.

in power they are to be held accountable by the print media in third world countries like Pakistan. In the pursuit of truth, feathers will be ruffled. In the ultimate analysis both are on the same side, the side of the people in their search for social and economic emancipation. The two sides should not forget that criticism must be done in good faith, at seeking improvements in the prevailing situation, rather than for denigrating something or maligning somebody. The problem for third world democrats entering into the mode of governance of a country is that they forget that bureaucrats they inherit remain the same as for their opponents, despite some shuffling in the upper reaches of hi-

or may not accept Najam's viewpoint on a great many issues, one has to defend his right to express them or report them. Najam's problems arise from the fact that the venue was atrocious given the sensitivity that one feels about one's neighbours. While one must respect that he has every right to express his views, the venue of stating those views becomes questionable when they were expressed in what constitutes "enemy" territory. One can rant and rave in one's house but to go and complain to a neighbour is a way out situation and that also with whom one has a bitter and bloody ongoing quarrel is certainly not palatable and gives a ready excuse for the closet "patriots" to yell "subver-

to behave whenever they find a "soft" target. One could have easily asked Najam to give his point of view about the "offending speech" in New Delhi and based on his answer proceeded against him. There was no reason to resort to such behaviour but in the environment we live in that is to be expected. A few days earlier Hussain Haqqani and his brother, a senior Colonel in the Army, were taken into custody when they were walking on the street at night, for some time it seemed like a kidnapping before the brother was released a few hours later and confirmed that the venue was in the hands of some "agency" or the other, for some reason or the other. The suspicion is that "evidence" may be created to "discipline" his printed views. All this gives the government a bad name and those in power would do well to come down like a ton of bricks on such behaviour, it is not in keeping with their image or what one knows of them. Mian Nawaz Sharif should remember that these are the same people who tried the same things with his father and family when he was out of power. I personally spoke to Mian Sahib on telephone in PIMS, Islamabad that night when his father was critically ill because of the excesses and I remember how charged up and emotional he was, as he had every right to be. In third world countries we cherish our freedom but we must pay a price for it and that is to be circumspect within the parameters of that freedom. Democracy has still to take roots and the elected representatives must be careful not to be led away by the advice of those who do not care for it but oppose such freedoms as dangerous licence. Objectivity on the part of journalists demands compliance to self-imposed ground rules about sensitive issues and where and when to air them. On the other hand, governments have to differentiate between freedom and licence, those in power refraining from becoming over-sensitive to issues. In short it is only the gnomes within bureaucracy who can effortlessly continue the miracle of making a mountain out of a molehill, converting the entire concept of freedom into a licence to be ruthlessly stamped out.

AS I SEE IT

Ikrum Sehgal writes from Karachi

erarchy theirs is a consistent policy of suppressing the freedom of the press. The leopard may try to hide its spots, it cannot change them. Bureaucracy has an inborn hatred for the media which is not within its control.

As such whoever comes into governance soon succumbs to their well rehearsed arguments about press freedom actually being used as a licence that knows no bounds, an enemy without frontiers. If they had heard about John Milton they would have been quoted from his "Tenure of Kings and Magistrates" as "none can love freedom heartily but good men, the rest have not freedom but licence" unquote.

How to differentiate freedom from licence? Let us take the recent sorry example of Najam Sethi, alleged to have fulminated against the basic ideology of the country while giving a lecture in New Delhi at a platform provided by former Indian PM Gujral's think-tank. For his part Najam states that he had earlier given the same lecture in the National Defence College (NDC), Islamabad and that he was given the highest rating by students, fairly senior Armed Forces officers aspiring for two-star ranks and more. One may

sion". However Najam states that his speech has been read out of context and should be read as whole before assigning such labels. One begs to disagree with him about many of his views in his speech, one has to agree with him that the full text of his speech gives a different thought to the content as a whole. Unfortunately one has to be careful as our "patriots" are past masters in focussing on what they can fabricate as "evidence" to condemn a person without batting an eyelash. Those in power have to be careful on their part not to let these "patriots" loose in attempting to control the freedoms in our society as we know it. As to the mode of Najam Sethi's arrest, one has to take exception to that. In a civilised society what was the reason for the crude, brutish behaviour of the "raiding party" that went to arrest him?

First they beat up and injured an innocent private security guard who did not resist. Next, they misbehaved with Mr. Jinnah Mohsin, Najam's wife, and one has no reason to doubt Jinnah's version, viz because 1) she has undeniable credibility and 2) we all know how brutish our police and intelligence agencies tend to

ing contracts of the public sector in the developing countries. At present, government expenditure is outside the scope of the WTO, unless a member country voluntarily joins the plurilateral agreement on government procurement. The aim of the rich countries is to bring government spending policies, decisions and procedures of all member countries under the umbrella of the WTO, where the principle of "national treatment" will apply. Under this principle, governments in their procurement and contracts for projects (and probably also for privatisation deals) would no longer be able to give preferences or advantages to citizens or local firms. The bids for supplies, contracts and projects would have to be opened up to foreigners, who should be given the same (or better) chances as locals. It is proposed that foreign firms that are unhappy with the government's decisions can bring the matter to court in the WTO. Since government expenditure in some countries is bigger in value than imports, such an agreement to bring procurement under the WTO rules would tremendously enlarge the scope of the WTO. As most developing countries would object to having their public-sector spending policies changed so drastically, the rich countries have a two-stage plan for this issue: firstly, have an agreement only to bring in greater "transparency" in government procurement; secondly, to have a broader agreement that would cover the national treatment principle. All the three issues have very serious implications for national economic interests, and our policy makers must therefore pay great attention to the plans and strategies of the rich countries that are trying to introduce them in the WTO. It is certainly not inevitable that these and other new issues will be brought into the WTO, since there is not yet any decision or consensus that there will be a new Round. But the negotiations towards the November Ministerial Conference have already started, and countries like Malaysia should make their views known and heard as early as possible. In any case, the policy makers and the public in each WTO member country should discuss and debate these issues so that the developing countries can take a clear and strong position. Otherwise we are in danger of once again being run over by the mighty trade negotiating machine of the rich nations. The author is director of The Third World Network, an international organisation based in Penang, Malaysia, that deals with economic, environmental and development issues from a Third World perspective.

Importance of Community Health and Family Practice

by Dr. Rashid E Mahbub and Dr. Abul Hasnat Milton

COMMUNITY health and family practice is a newer concept in Bangladesh. Though it has a potentials for development, it is yet to flourish here in this country. Family health may be defined as a state of well-being in the physical, mental, emotional and social spheres as it applies to the family as a group or the individual members thereof. Therefore, the goal of Community health and family practice is to provide a sound physical, mental, emotional and social life. Its objectives are:

- 1. Management of health problem at community and family level.
2. To treat the sick people in the community and family.
3. To refer the patient when needed to appropriate places.
4. To help community and family members be better informed as regards where to seek better health care management.
5. To make the patient understand the disease and its consequences.

At present, there are around 25000 medical graduates in this country. Amongst these 25000 doctors, 9000 are working in the Government health services. These doctors are employed in Specialised hospitals, District hospitals, Thana Health Centres and Sub-centres. At thana level, besides their clinical duty, Medical officers are also responsible for providing imparting necessary health care to the community including preventive measures. But in reality there is an ambiguity in this area.

Again, no system has yet developed to provide health care at community and family level. Currently if anyone in the family gets sick, s/he goes to a General Medical Practitioner or Specialist or to a traditional medical practitioner. Specialists are few in number and are not accessible to the majority of the people. There are also few medical practitioners in the true sense. Doctors involved in private practice are mostly within bureaucracy who can effortlessly continue the miracle of making a mountain out of a molehill, converting the entire concept of freedom into a licence to be ruthlessly stamped out.

some extent, fit into the concept of family Physician, though they have very little and inadequate knowledge of medicine and health. At present, the infrastructure to develop a general practice system in Bangladesh is very poor. In some institutions like Dhaka University and Titas Gas company, they have physicians who also provide care at the family level.

But they don't have any specific preventive role to play. This is another issue whether a family physician would be responsible for preventive health care measures; if yes, then to what extent? Before the present era of specialists, the General Practitioners played a vital role in family practices, mainly during the period of 1942 to 1971. But in the post independence era, due to mass employment of doctors by the then Government and again as these jobs are transferable, this system of General Practice couldn't sustain anymore.

Now, with the increasing importance of family medicine all over the world, Bangladesh is still lacking behind, with flaws mainly in medical education. Though doctors are taught Community Medicine in the graduate teaching, they are not exposed to any proper community-based training. Their education is tertiary level hospital based, where they only learn management of complicated cases but no hands-on experience to manage health prob-

lems at community and family levels. To bridge these gaps, three institutions are currently working but in a limited scale, through organising Continuing Medical Education for doctors by Bangladesh Medical Association, Bangladesh Private Medical Practitioners Association and post graduate courses like MCPS in Family Medicine by Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS), Bangladesh College of General Practitioners is yet to be recognised by appropriate authority. But these courses are not well-structured, so good quality family physicians are not being produced. In the global context, Community Health and Family Medicine is a speciality. In England, they have established Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP). They are the highest body to be accountable for promoting family health care.

They have also developed an infrastructure both at urban and rural level for General Practitioners. Bangladesh lack too much in this area. Here, no infrastructure for Family Practice exists. Patient-Doctor relation is very poor and deteriorating day by day. Doctors are failing to create confidence in patients. Patients are being unnecessarily abused and harassed. As a result, patients suffer more which in turn leads to extras medical expenditure. An appropriate referral system is yet to develop in medical

practices. The socio-economic status of doctors are also being affected for this reason. In this situation, Family Physician can play a vital role. To produce skilled and efficient family physicians some steps should be taken immediately.

- 1. Skill development of General Practitioners
2. An appropriate Institution for academic orientation
3. General Practitioner's economic viability should be ensured.

Regarding economic viability, lots of money is being misused in health sector. That money could be utilised in a planned way to ensure economic viability. For instance, now almost 750000 government employees are getting taka 150 per month as medical allowance, which amounts to more than 100 million taka per month. This money could be diverted to develop family medicine. Finally their range of responsibilities should be resolved in both preventive and curative health care.

This is the appropriate time for us to recognise the importance of community health and family practices and utilise its potential. This will be a substantial contribution to our health care delivery system.

Dr. Rashid is Professor of Surgery and President, Bangladesh Medical Association and Dr. Hasnat is Epidemiologist and Co-ordinator, Research Division, Dhaka Community Hospital (DCH)

Need to Beware of New Issues in WTO

Among the new issues that the rich countries are planning to have in a New Round of trade talks under the World Trade Organisation are investment rules, competition policy and government procurement. Bringing these topics under WTO rules could well have serious adverse consequences for national development as this will threaten the interests and survival of the local sector. Developing countries should therefore study the issues and make their position known soon at the WTO.

by Martin Khor

A new Round of multilateral trade talks under the World Trade Organisation (WTO), now being advocated by the rich countries, would put developing countries like Malaysia very much on the defensive as they will have much to lose. The European Union (EU), Japan and the United States have already signalled that they want to put many topics on the agenda of such a new Round, which, according to a Kyoto News report, is to be launched in November at the WTO's Ministerial Conference.

On each of these topics, developing countries will be pushed to give up more and more of existing policies that protect their domestic economies, and allow foreign firms the right to take over their national markets. The Japanese government has already marked out nine areas for the proposed new Round, according to a Kyoto News report. They are agriculture, services, tariffs on industrial products, investment rules, anti-dumping, competition policy, electronic commerce, intellectual property and government procurement. Japan found common ground with the EU on the new trade talks when its Trade Minister Kaoru Yosano met with the European Commission Vice President Leon Brittan in March. The Japanese government is now planning to win over developing countries to the idea of the

new Round by sending officials to dialogue with the developing countries.

President Bill Clinton of the United States meanwhile also called for a new round of trade talks that would "expand export of services, manufactured goods and most of all farm products" for the US. Officials from Japan, the EU and the US have agreed that they should conclude the next round of talks within three years, compared to the eight years for the Uruguay Round, according to Kyodo News. The above reports show that the major trade powers are confident they can push through a decision to start a new Round, although many developing countries (who form the majority of the WTO's 130 members) are against it. There are good grounds for such confidence. Although they form only a small minority, the rich countries (and in particular, the US, EU, Japan, and Canada, known as "the big four") have usually succeeded in calling the shots in the WTO, often riding roughshod over the objections of many developing countries. It may well happen again at the WTO Conference this year.

The three issues that should especially worry developing countries are investment, competition policy and government procurement. If there is a new Round, it could lead to new WTO Agreements on these topics. The following is a summary of how these issues will affect the de-

veloping nations:
* On the INVESTMENT ISSUE, the rich countries are pushing to introduce new rules that make it mandatory for all WTO countries to give foreign investors the right to enter and establish themselves, with 100 percent ownership.

Foreigners and foreign firms should also be treated as well (or better) than locals, and restrictions on the free flow of capital into and out of the country (and on the foreign firms' operations) would be prohibited. In discussions so far at the WTO working group on investment, the rich countries have sought to give a wide scope to the definition of foreign investment. It would include not only foreign direct investment but also portfolio investment and purchase of property.

Needless to say, if such an agreement were to be passed within the WTO, developing countries would no longer be able to give preferences or protection to local investors, firms or farmers. They would face the threat of having their products wiped out by competition from the bigger foreign firms, or of being taken over by them. Also, the kind of restrictions that Malaysia and other countries place on inflow and outflow of portfolio or loan capital from abroad, and on foreign ownership of land and houses, may come under question or be banned.

* On COMPETITION POLICY, the EU and US are advocating a new agreement that would look unfavourably on domestic laws or practices in developing countries that favour local firms. For example, if there are policies that give importing or distribution rights to local firms (including government agencies or enterprises), or if there are practices among local firms that give them superior marketing channels, these are likely to be called into question. The rich countries would argue that such policies or practices create a barrier to foreign products or firms, which should be allowed to compete on equal terms as locals.

Developing countries may argue that only if local agencies or firms are given certain advantages, or if they have built up distribution systems over the years, then they should be allowed to keep these advantages. Providing the giant international firms equal rights would overwhelm the local enterprises which are small and medium sized in global terms.

However, such arguments will not be accepted by the rich countries, which will insist that their giant firms be provided a "level playing field" to compete "equally" with the smaller local firms.

* On GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT, the rich countries are actually casting their eyes on the lucrative business of providing supplies to and win-

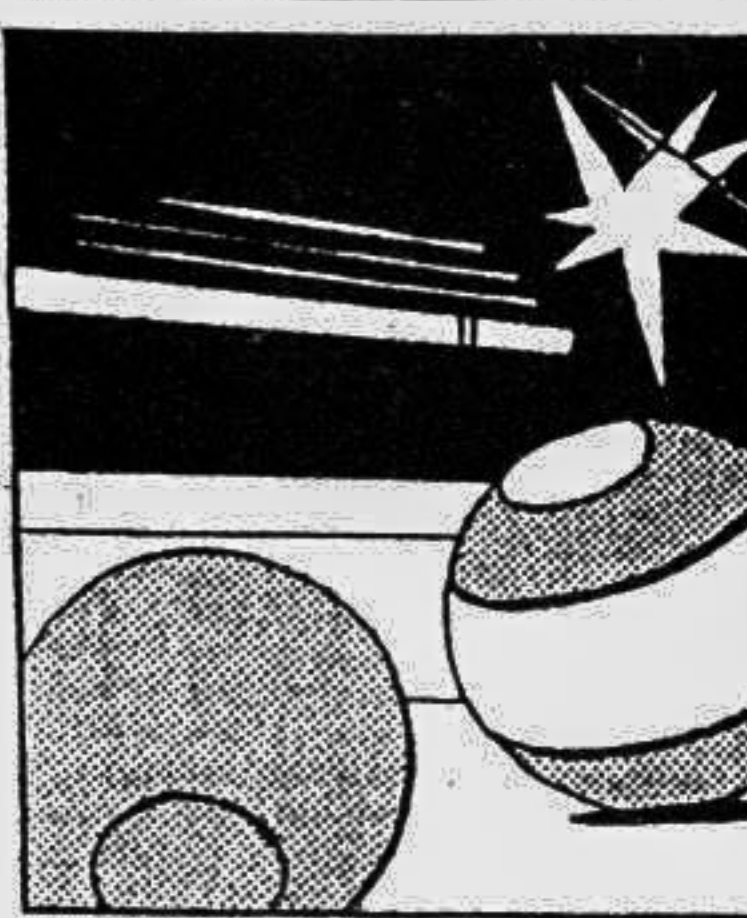
ning contracts of the public sector in the developing countries.

At present, government expenditure is outside the scope of the WTO, unless a member country voluntarily joins the plurilateral agreement on government procurement. The aim of the rich countries is to bring government spending policies, decisions and procedures of all member countries under the umbrella of the WTO, where the principle of "national treatment" will apply. Under this principle, governments in their procurement and contracts for projects (and probably also for privatisation deals) would no longer be able to give preferences or advantages to citizens or local firms.

The bids for supplies, contracts and projects would have to be opened up to foreigners, who should be given the same (or better) chances as locals. It is proposed that foreign firms that are unhappy with the government's decisions can bring the matter to court in the WTO.

Since government expenditure in some countries is bigger in value than imports, such an agreement to bring procurement under the WTO rules would tremendously enlarge the scope of the WTO. As most developing countries would object to having their public-sector spending policies changed so drastically, the rich countries have a two-stage plan for this issue: firstly, have an agreement only to bring in greater "transparency" in government procurement; secondly, to have a broader agreement that would cover the national treatment principle. All the three issues have very serious implications for national economic interests, and our policy makers must therefore pay great attention to the plans and strategies of the rich countries that are trying to introduce them in the WTO. It is certainly not inevitable that these and other new issues will be brought into the WTO, since there is not yet any decision or consensus that there will be a new Round. But the negotiations towards the November Ministerial Conference have already started, and countries like Malaysia should make their views known and heard as early as possible. In any case, the policy makers and the public in each WTO member country should discuss and debate these issues so that the developing countries can take a clear and strong position. Otherwise we are in danger of once again being run over by the mighty trade negotiating machine of the rich nations. The author is director of The Third World Network, an international organisation based in Penang, Malaysia, that deals with economic, environmental and development issues from a Third World perspective.

TOM & JERRY



James Bond BY IAN FLEMING DRAWING BY HORAK I'M WARNIN' YOU, BOND - DON'T COME ANY CLOSER! ONE BLAST ON THIS WHISTLE AND Y'KNOW WHAT HAPPEN?

By Hanna-Barbera



MY FAITHFUL KRAUT CREW COMES RUNNING AND YOU GET THE OLD HEAVE-HO!... MAN OVERBOARD - ONLY NOT 'TILL WE'RE OUT TO SEA! THEN WHILE WE'RE MAKIN' SEASIDE BACK INTO YOU WITH THE SHIP'S SCREWDRIVER JUST ACCIDENTALLY! OK, TREASURE BEDDY-BYE!

Advertisement for SONY RANGS VEGA Digital Dream Kids. Features images of the TV set, a remote control, and a list of prices for various models. Text includes 'Get into the Game '99', 'সনি টিভিতে বিশ্বকাপ বিশ্বকাপে বাংলাদেশ বিশ্বকাপ ক্রিকেট উপলক্ষে বিশেষ মূল্য ছাড়। সংগ্রহ করুন বিশ্বকাপ ক্রিকেট মগ সেট', and 'সবিস্তারিত প্রকৃষ্টি এক অসম্ভব কে সম্ভব করেছে, তৈরী হয়েছে সম্পূর্ণ ক্ল্যাট স্ক্রিনের এক অসাধারণ টেলিভিশন FD Trinitron VEGA। এতে আশেপাশের কোনো আনো স্ক্রিনে প্রতিফলিত হয়ে দর্শকের চোখে নাশে না, তাই রঙিন ছবি হয়ে উঠে কীব্রু ও উজ্জ্বল। এর SRS Sound Technology বৃহৎ করে তুলবে আপনার মার্চের টান টান উত্তরনায়। সনি VEGA পিরিয়ে আপনি পাবেন ২১', ২৫', ২৯' আর ৩৪'। প্রতিটি টিভির জন্য রয়েছে পিকচার টিউব ও যন্ত্রাংশসহ ৫ বছরের ওয়ারেন্টি।