

Thinking Allowed...

A healthier nation

By Hasina Sajun

When quarters were built in Korangi and New Karachi areas, workers found that though one man had done a great job of rehabilitating them from the jhuggis to concrete houses, the next man who should have planned their transport from these far-flung areas to their place of work in the city had not been successful in providing adequate facilities.

That first year any number of chauffeurs lost their jobs as they could not reach their place of employment on time. Those who managed to reach on time to get their employers' children to school in good time found that they had to leave their homes more than two hours before time.

This was also the complaint of the women who had part time jobs in the city. Beside this was the rash and negligent driving by the bus drivers so that none of these people ever knew whether they will get to work in one piece or get home at all.

Today, years after the original Korangi quarters, there have been new housing projects in similarly far off places where the bus shortage and community problems are heart-rendering.

In all these years the only noticeable effort in this direction was the circular railway

which was a great help but nowhere near being enough. A friend thinks our transport problem specially in the smaller towns and cities can greatly be improved with the use of bicycles.

He thinks that if the Government issues an order for the steel mills to work three shifts to manufacture bicycles giving them an assurance that it will buy as many bicycles as they can manufacture in a full three-shift basis. With the mills running at full capacity, the cost of the bicycle will be lower than it is at present.

The Government then offers the common man, labourer, worker, this bicycle at a premium of say 5% down payment and the remaining payable in instalments of Rs. 5 per month when he becomes the owner.

This would take a load off the crowded transport facilities existing at the moment. There should of course be provision for the mass of cyclists on the roads by introducing "cyclists' lanes". This, he thinks, will go a long way in relieving the transport problems... help people get to work on time and help them towards a healthier life.

One fears for the health of the Haves for one reason, and for the Have Nots for another reason!

The poor Have Nots lack the knowledge of the inexpensive

correction—there is no food item today which is inexpensive—their ignorance of the lesser expensive food items which provide better nutrition adds to the problem.

But this is a common short-coming among both the groups—even the Haves do not utilise their knowledge or are also ignorant... result being that they are consuming calories galore of the less nutritious foods adding to their problem of health ailments or overweight.

First of all we must make available to the general public as much information as possible on nutrition and food, health and eating habits.

Then eradicate useless customs. For example as much food or snacks to guests as possible. This is like a status symbol, the more affluent you were the more you were able to serve to your guests.

But this system must go. When we women receive an invitation our first thought is what shall I wear. So also when a friend or relative informs us of their visit or when someone drops in our first thought is what refreshment shall I prepare for them? In the times of old people had to travel great distances to visit someone. Then of course the first thing the host must do is to prepare refresh-

ments to the hungry, weary traveller, but surely this coffee time or tea time visiting does

not compare with the first.

Very few of us take the time or the effort to serve a worker or labourer who may come to our house for some work but if one of us is visiting why then there must be a banquet!

Most of us have three well balanced or over balanced meals at home, not to mention tea time. Then when you visit someone and are plied with foods and drink you will consume too many calories, even a sweet glass of sherbet may be, the surplus calories that will be with you for ever. Considering that we have inherited culturally a minus exercise, minus sports, minus walking tendencies.....

So the least one can do for one's guests is ask them if they would like something to drink or eat and accept gracefully if the answer is in the negative. We would have to deny ourselves the pleasure of serving one's favourite dish or snack. But that is the least we can do for someone who has taken out the time from the rat race to visit us. It would be more gratifying to the visitors if you gave more of your time and presence instead of preparing your snacks while the visitors are entertained by others.

Let us set the new trend in hospitality.