

## Many Benefits of ID Cards

The country's politics may have sharp divisions on the issue of holding national elections under a caretaker government but there is no controversy about making the electoral process fail-safe. The most important thing is to ensure free and fair elections. Irrespective of authorities responsible for holding elections, what counts is the elimination of any scope for misuse and/or abuse of the voting right of the electorate. The introduction of voters' identity cards looks to be a fitting answer to the various anomalies encountered in national polls here. Identity cards appear to minimise the risk of manipulation with the voters' list. So no parties in favour of a free and fair election should oppose the idea.

Even though there are no two opinions on the merits of identity (ID) cards, any haphazard or faulty preparation of them in the first place can cause incalculable damage to the whole process. Therefore the warning that the basic computerisation cannot be perfunctory should not go unheeded. Let us suggest that the ID cards be then issued by the most competent agency under authentication and close supervision of the Election Commission. The time factor here is very important. Let the ID cards be also issued within the shortest possible time. The level of competence required to complete the process in a fool-proof manner within such a short period of time calls for a high degree of commitment and professional finesse — both.

Experiences in other countries however point to the fact that this job — although demanding — can be done to perfection. An amount of Tk 300 crore, being earmarked for this purpose, will have been well-spent if the bonafide of the voters is fully guaranteed. A computerised network of personal identities of the eligible voters is going to be a storehouse of rudimentary information about our people. This will definitely have a number of uses much like the labouriously done census reports have had. With the operation of a centrally controlled huge bank of information the nation can thus move a few steps forward.

According to a report an offer of help — though not for free — has already come. Let more such proposals come and the choice be made in favour of the best. Since we cannot go for such a massive process of identification time and again, it will be only wise to be both comprehensive and error-free in listing all the voters there are in the country. In updating the existing voters' list the ID Card exercise can prove to be most useful.

## Death in Police Custody

The death of 21-year-old Sanaullah, allegedly in police custody, has created some furore — to a point of localised outcry at Mirpur. By the same token, it has raised some questions in the public mind about handling of suspects at the police stations.

Adar Ali, the aggrieved father of Sanaullah, had sued the OC, three Sub-inspectors and a Constable of Mirpur Thana before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court petitioning that it was an unnatural death amounting to murder in police hands. The police claimed that Sanaullah, who expired at the DMCH after an hour of being moved to that hospital with chest pain, died of a heart attack.

To our understanding, the developments occurring in the case since a week ago, when Sanaullah died, have been quite illuminating. The CMM Court in Dhaka has ordered a fresh autopsy to be done on his exhumed body at the Mitford Hospital morgue. The first autopsy report, emanating from the DMCH, sounded incomplete: the forensic experts while noting that he died of a heart attack withheld their final opinion saying they were waiting for other pathological reports to be sure.

The second part of the CMM Court's ruling states that the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate is to carry out a judicial inquiry into the circumstances leading to Sanaullah's death. Meanwhile, the police authorities have departmentally ordered a one-man probe by the chief of its Detective Branch (DB).

An importance is being rightly accorded to a public grievance touching on the dual question of morality and fundamental rights.

The investigations need to be carried out with an utmost sense of purpose and integrity so that truth is uncovered for the sake of establishing accountability. The enormous power that the metropolitan police have to arrest somebody on suspicion obligates them to be extra careful in handling suspected offenders in their custody. Let this be treated as a test case to find out if any excesses have really been committed.

## Satellite Towns

We are unhappy that Rajuk's satellite town project, being financed by the UNDP, remains a non-starter, for no better reason than an indecision over the selection of sites. Actually the project should have been a hot favourite with the city planners and developers to make an early start with the least of a controversy over something so very preliminary as choice of locations.

The metropolis is smarting under the dead-weight of a rapidly growing population which has already strained its amenities to a breaking point. Housing and transportation costs rob the citizens of their future. The pollution on the surface and in the air is fast approaching the nadir hit by the ten most environmentally unsafe metropolises in the world.

Thus, dispersal of the urban population away from the metropolis and their living in the satellite towns hold the key to not only a better standard of life but also to their economic uplift.

We warn against selection of sites on any subjective judgement or with a tunnel vision cut off from the infrastructural landscape that can be visualised for the near future. The Jamuna bridge calls for a redrawing of the road and railway maps. The Buriganga bridge and the Dhaka-Mawa highway have the ingredients for change in the perspective as well. Some roads which are in maximum use today, for instance, even the Dhaka-Aricha road, may fall in disuse.

Satellite towns should be located with an eye to linking them up conveniently with Dhaka by shuttle trains within the overall purview of a remapped transportation strategy. Water and electricity supply lines can girdle.

One practical obstacle to satellite town-building would be obviously land acquisition which is never easy. However, if we can encourage the private sector parties to be involved as land developers, the government's task could be that much easier.

# APEC: Is it Just a Nebulous Vision or a New Trade Bloc?

APEC has today members from four continents who share no bonds of history, culture, language or geography. Of course they all share the Pacific basin but it is so vast that one wonders if it is really anything other than a slogan.

East Asian countries to form the nucleus of the group. As an important trading country, Australia must have felt left out of the trading blocs in Europe and North America and wanted to create one in the Asia-Pacific region. As the Executive Secretary of ESCAP at the time I felt that the scheme would split Asia down the middle. Why should the South Asian nations, I argued, be excluded from a group which claims to be Asian? During a visit to Australia in November 1989 I met Gareth Evans, the Australian Foreign Minister and raised this question. His response was that APEC was basically a trade group in which the South Asians could not possibly have a role. In terms of foreign trade, he pointed out, South Asian countries were insignificant. This did not satisfy me and I continued to argue in favour of a broader grouping in which all the Asian countries should belong.

South Asians did not get into APEC but the United States did and in a big way. Indeed the Americans, upon joining the group, not only assumed the leadership but rapidly changed its thrust and scope.

Canada came in and so also did Mexico and Chile. Thus it has today members from four continents who share no bonds of history, culture, language or geography. Of course they all share the Pacific basin but it is so vast that one wonders if it is really anything other than a slogan. Some countries such as the USA, Canada and Japan have per capita incomes in excess

of \$20,000 while others such as China, Indonesia, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea are still struggling with incomes less than \$1000. In terms of scientific and technological development some are at the top while others are just at a very early stage of industrialisation. The Asian members have not accepted this change easily. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed has proposed the formation of

caution and hesitation was reflected in the final Declaration which aims at:

• Achieve free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region by 2020, with the industrialised economies reaching the goal by 2010.

• Strengthen open, multilateral trading system.

• Intensify development cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

## ON THE RECORD

by Shah AMS Kibria

an East Asian Economic Caucus from which not only the United States and the other countries from the western hemisphere but even Australia and New Zealand are to be kept out. Japan is torn between its Asian loyalties on the one hand and its vital trading interests with the US on the other.

Mahathir Mohammed has not yet given up. He feels that the East Asian Economic Caucus can and should coexist with APEC. There are Asian interests which, he believes, can be protected, if the non-Asians are kept out.

When the summit leaders assembled in Bogor they were all conscious about these fundamental differences of interests and perceptions. While the United States would like to move rapidly towards free trade within a short time, the ASEAN countries would like to make haste very slowly. Their

Carry out commitments under the Uruguay Round of the GATT fully and without delay.

• Expand and accelerate trade and investment programmes.

Critics have greeted the Declaration with a shrug. The goal of free trade within the bloc a quarter century later is nothing to get excited about. The Washington Post in an editorial entitled "Big Smoke, Little Fire" on November 17 said, "Unfortunately, the APEC pledge fails to include a single substantive measure." "The APEC countries" it continued, "call for free trade, but do not say if that includes services as well as manufactured goods.

The participants call on APEC's industrialised members to achieve free trade 10 years earlier than the 2020 target for everyone, but do not say

which countries would be included in the fast lane. Does that leave South Korea or China, for example, in or out? Despite the success of the Uruguay Round trade negotiations, the champions of free trade are worried that the world is getting divided into three trading blocs — the European Union, the NAPTA countries and the Asia-Pacific countries under the auspices of APEC. Is the growth of these blocs consistent with the goal of free trade? President Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico, a new member of APEC who attended the Bogor summit, argued that a Pacific Rim trade bloc could be good for outsiders as well. He admitted that their impact would be negative if these blocs are closed. "However, if regional trade zones are properly managed," he argued, "and are expansive in nature, then they can be the building blocks of a more open and free world trade system." The trends, he believes, are promising.

APEC's goals are ambitious. If it can achieve its goals it will be the world's largest free-trading area, one that spans four continents and encompasses countries that now account for more than half the world's economy and more than 40% of its trade. Fred Bergsten, the American economist who chaired an advisory committee that helped draft the plan was euphoric when he said, "This is the biggest single trade initiative in history." Such euphoria may not be justified by the harsh

## Juvenile Delinquency: Roles of Home, School and Society

by Prof Roushan Ara Hoque

Deprivation of love and security at home creates distress in the minds of adolescents and makes them rebel against the moral values of the society.

'Crimes, aesthetically or intellectually relished, tempt crimes to be committed.'

'If the society sows the seeds of wind, it will have to reap the whirlwind.'

is followed by a feeling of distress which leads to much or the delinquency and rebellious attitude shown towards the elders and the social values that the elders uphold. The responsibility of meeting these needs however lie on parents. But if the father is unemployed and the mother is unable to give her children proper food, there is lack of congenial atmosphere at home; if there is parental conflict if both, the parents are busy outside, or the child is given an idea that he/she is unwanted or neglected, or if the parents are too dominant or over-indulgent or if any of them has bad past records or a present immoral habit then that home cannot give proper satisfaction, love, security and training to the child. And being thus maladjusted at home, he/she is most likely to be delinquent in future.

### Influence of School

The school may yet be another contributory factor in leading such maladjusted children to delinquency. In school, the adolescents want success, appreciation and new experiences. But often over-dominant teachers, unsuitable school curricula, lack of moral teachings and co-curricular activities and good teacher-pupil relation and such other factors may imbalance the emotional growth and hinder moral development of a child. And disappointment and failure in academic life may lead to moral disorders and perverstions.

### Influence of Society

The oft-quoted maxim, "society creates the crime and the criminal commits it", expresses very well the part played by the society in creating juvenile crimes. These are concomitant to increase in

adult crimes, which again may be due to poverty, unemployment and instigation of party politics and also indulgence or apathy of law enforcing authority.

In a society where material possessions are more valued than moral dignity, the sense of simple living and high thinking is being frowned at as foolishness and self-deprivation; and where social dignity is determined by the obsessive manifestation of social gadgets and where corruption, bribery and other vices have eaten into its vitals, we cannot expect our younger generation having higher moral values and inculcating higher virtues.

### Immediate Inducements

Besides these deep-rooted vices of our society there are some immediate inducements which tempt the teenagers to commit various types of crimes. Porno magazines, crime-films, vulgar exposure of feminine body and racy postures of young men in pictures, posters, ads, films etc induce the young and immature minds to create similar stunts. All these alluring thrills may not break through the moral shield of a well-adjusted boy. But to a maladjusted teenager like prince and other killers of the case in question whose homes could not give them their basic needs and proper moral training, these incentives act very quickly.

### Political Instigations

Political workers sometimes use these frustrated youngsters to achieve their own ends. They are hired for processions and encouraged to do vandalism, create panic in the streets, burn or break vehicles etc. Some parties have even been alleged to train them to work as their activists and to cut veins, limbs or even

throats of their opponents. Almost every political party maintain their own *mastans* and musclemen to collect *chandas* (toll money) by force for the party. These instigations act as aggravating factors in breeding more and more crimes each day. Then agers being brought-up and breathing in such an atmosphere, hearing and relishing these stories day after day are bound to inculcate same criminal de-sires in their minds as well.

### Suggested Remedies

**ROLE OF PARENTS:** In preventing juvenile crimes parents surely have a vital role to play. No parents should like to have any child before they themselves are financially and emotionally mature enough to bring up the child properly. It is wise to keep any parental conflict out of the knowledge of the child. The present and past emotional life of the parents should be ideal for imitation by the children. Because it is only at home that the child learns his/her first moral precepts and gets his/her first moral training, and where parents are the only friends, philosophers and guides.

**ROLE OF SCHOOL:** As soon as the child begins his school life the responsibility is shared both by the parents and the teachers. The school should not only be a place for intellectual attainment but also a place for moral development. The school curricula should adequately prepare the pupils for the future life by also developing in them professional skills. Vocational training should be given to all school-leavers so that, if necessary, one can find a job. Otherwise, there will be production of large number of unskilled youths, resulting in even greater unemployment problem and frustration among the youth which ultimately

leads to delinquent behaviour among them.

**ROLE OF SOCIETY:** The society has got a vital role to play to prevent and cure this malignancy before it eats into its very vitals. It is an uphill task and it needs a total social reformation. Without a high social morale no worthwhile social change can evolve. It is a vicious circle which can only be broken by changing the outlook of the society. Honesty and integrity of character should be more valued and appreciated than any other thing. 'Simple living and high thinking' should be practised by all from early life. Academic achievements should be rewarded an anti-social activities like mugging, teasing, drug-addiction and vandalism should be severely dealt with. Import, production and setting of obscene and crime magazines, films, posters and story books should be altogether banned. Offenders should be given exemplary punishment or outlawed by the society. The politicians and the senior members of the society should set examples of high moral values to be followed by the youngsters.

The society and the state should provide for food, education and employment for all. It must evolve such mechanism say, first, employment. If should sublimate the extra energy of the youths in various types of constructive activities. There should be youth clubs and libraries in all areas. Literary competitions, sports, debates, cultural functions and social works should be organised by these clubs. Good rewards should be given to the eligible performers and appreciation should be shown for participation. All young boys and girls of the area should be enlisted in their respective

clubs and all their activities should be monitored. No youngsters should be allowed to join any political party. As in India and other western countries, students should not be allowed to participate in active politics within the educational institutions. For such indulgence, when unguarded, often leads them to turn into *mastans*.

**ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND ILLITERACY:** These are the basic reasons of many crimes within a society. An illiterate, unemployed and hungry youth, finding no other alternative, may be compelled to meet his immediate needs by taking resort to crimes. Such poor vagrant youths hired and allured to commit crimes and are duly given protection by their motivators. But an educated and employed youth with self-respect and moral shield will be little motivated to indulge in a crime. Therefore, eradication of poverty and illiteracy from the society is the urgent need of the day and the responsibility of this almost squarely lies with the government. The task may appear to be a Herculean one, but by diverting a major portion of our national resources and with the help of UNICEF and other donors we can materialise the project of Food and Education for All, if not by 2000, at the latest by 2005. If the government is sincere in its efforts, it will get the co-operation of all social workers and the public as well.

The recent unusual increase in the number of juvenile crimes has shocked the whole nation and all concerned are simply wishing for an immediate way out. However, as the problem is a deep-rooted one, involving home, school, society, politicians and the state, it can also be eradicated by their joint and sincere efforts. The most important step perhaps is setting examples of leading ideal lives by the politicians, industrialists, government servants, social leaders, teachers and parents. Only then juvenile crimes can be eradicated from our society within a short time.

## To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

### The failure of dialogue'

Sir, The country is passing through a very unwanted political crisis. Sir Ninian's effort to solve the crisis has been finally foiled. It is a matter of great regret that such a man of international repute failed to settle the matter. At the last moment, Sir Ninian proposed a well-thought-out idea to resolve the crisis but the proposal was not acceptable to the opposition. What an impasse!

We possibly feel it nothing much costly to change our rules according to our wish by creating political crisis of sorts and are least bothered for the country's interest and sufferings of people.

M M Ahmad  
Dhaka

### The Ninian way

Sir, S A M S Kibria's commentary on the Ninian controversy (Star, Nov 27), is an exercise in futility, as even with

some unofficial prodding, the two groups failed to see the light of wisdom.

We, the politically-harassed citizens, want a solution, not hair-splitting debates taking the nation backward.

We need statesmanship, not brinkmanship. The 'leaders' should not make our lives miserable. There is a time to be fed up to the local type of politics. Let us start a 'greater movement' against them. But they will not learn the lessons even at the receiving end. What a diabolical stability!

Motus Samad Chowdhury  
Phultola Tea Estate, Sylhet

### Fatal joke

Sir, The news item which was published in many newspapers on November 27, about a fatal joke, is very sad and horrifying. The joke took its toll of four lives and turned one into a raving mad. If the father had not spoken inadvertently in front of his two small daughters, they would not have harmed their baby brother and

the father would not have to murder his two daughters in rage and grief. In addition, unable to bear this unspeakable sorrow the mother became insane.

I think, we should take a lesson from this incident. Adults should never speak rashly in front of immature children who may take it seriously.

And sometimes we hear about happenings in which sons or daughters had been shot dead by parents when they try to scare their parents by jumping up from a hiding place wearing masks or something. By these actions not only their lives are lost prematurely, henceforth those parents live in perpetual hell.

So, everyone should be careful lest their jokes result in dire consequences.

Nur Jahan  
East Nafrabad, Chittagong

### ATN service

Sir, Mr K R Zakhmi has just indicated in his letter pub-