Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Saturday, July 8, 1995

Plans for Twenty Towns

Sometimes extremely important news comes out in a very innocuous manner. One such news is the government plan to develop 20 mid-level towns in Bangladesh with the help of the Asian Development Bank. This, funnily, came out in response to a question in the parliament on Thursday. We think this news should have been flashed by the government's publicity machinery, not only for announcing a good initiative that it is, but also for starting a public debate on it, that it very much needs.

This is one of the most sensible plans we have so far heard from this government. Not only do we support it, but would like to term it to be one with perhaps the most far reaching consequence. Given the huge population of our country, we have to build alternative urban centres, not only to provide new hubs of business, commerce and community activities, but also to keep the existing ones within limits. We all know that Dhaka is bursting in the seams. So is the case with Chittagong, and to lesser extents, Khulna, Rajshahi and Sylhet. These urban centres are themselves inadequately developed, and would require a lot of investment to provide the minimum facilities to their existing inhabitants. But without the development of alternative centres, as envisaged by the new plan, our existing cities would become unmanageable repositories of migrant population. So the rationale for the 20 new towns is extremely well founded.

But what we suggest is that the government should not move on this in a very casual manner. We feel that our most renowned town planners should be involved in this exercise. Instead of approaching it in a piecemeal manner, and looking at it as a usual development work, we should take a more comprehensive approach and treat it as a major national urban development project. The growth of these towns should be looked at as a part of a more comprehensive plan, which should have both immediate and long term goals. We think the government should make public the details of the plan that it has already made, and hold public discussion on them. If such plans have not been made, then they should be. Public participation will ensure general acceptability, which is most necessary when dealing with development works that touch public life in as profound a manner as urban centres do. Do not let this good idea get spoilt by handling it in the usual bureaucratic manner.

A Landmark Decision

The government has approved a Tk 14-crore project to help prostitutes willing to abandon their calling. The project is designed to provide medical, maintenance, education and vocational training to them.

This is a landmark decision. The project cannot be expected to do anything substantial to ameliorate the pathetic condition of the girls selling their bodies. And it cannot either be expected to effectively help all the girls that want to come out of their hell. There is then no knowing if this chance for a passage back to society would reach most of them and if all of those willing to respond would at all be allowed to respond. And how much of this Tk 14 crore will reach the girls by way of service and support? Very little. Even after allow ing for all such and many other factors that are bound to make a rather poor show of the projected action, the ECNEC decision made on Wednesday is a most welcome one. By this the govern ment binds itself on point of principle to the question of the welfare of those that have willynilly strayed beyond the pale of social responsibility.

To get the girls on the return trail in a big way the government must make a great success of this first initiative. If even a thousand girls are effectively rehabilitated by this programme, the message of hope would surely catch on and bring out thousands of others.

This is a small but very promising start to induce the girls back The question remains can government, by itself alone, make the girls acceptable to society. Something more than vocational training will be needed for that. Where will it come from? That is where a collaboration with feminist and other women's liberation movement organisations would be of great value.

What about constricting the way down to this hole of ultimate indignity to humanity? That other side of the coin is far more important than this rehabilitation thing. The government of course can go for more effectively deterring punishment for crimes of leading girls to the brothels and keeping them there. More than merely providing for really hurting punishment, it is a question of enforcing the law wherever it applies. And our performance on this account is miserable so far.

What about girls selling their bodies of their own will? They are also victims — all of them —, victims of poverty and homelessness and straight stark hunger. The government, to be indeed a government, owes it to itself and to the people that it stops this victimisation. And, until it succeeds in that it must morally own the responsibility for the welfare of all of them - on the trail back to society or not.

Barricade on Aricha Road

Imagine the horror of traveling in a bus or in your own car, with your wife and young children or worse with your sick mother or your pregnant wife, and you get stuck in one of Bangladesh's road barricades. We all know what kind of road side facilities we have even in designated rest areas. So think of the trauma when you are stuck up for hours on a highway because some aggrieved student group creates road blocs because they want to drive home some point. The latest incident is of the Jahangirnagar University students halting 10 buses and confining their drivers and helpers because of an accident that injured one of their students. The students alleged that buses run too fast, far above their speed limits, which causes frequent accidents.

There are two points that need to be made here, one dealing with the students' behaviour, the other with that of the bus drivers. Setting up barricade on national highways is a serious offense and it should be treated as such. We have written on numerous occasions that either through persuasion or through legal action, message should be sent to all concerned that law of the land will be rigorously enforced if any group obstructs traffic on highways. But we have seen students, labour unions, bus workers, etc. create road barricade whenever they have a conflict either with the public or among themselves. Nothing ever appears to be against them. This encour ages other groups to do the same in the future. On several occasions students wing of the ruling party was allegedly involved. We mention this especially because we expect that JCD students will be more under the control of the government. But they appear to break the law just as others do.

On the other hand, there is merit in the observation that bus drivers run too fast on highways endangering lives, both of the passengers and of those outside. Often they compete with fellow drivers and appear to be racing. Sometimes they would drive in a way which bloc the whole road and prevent other cars or trucks from overtaking, and thereby slow down traffic. Here again we think the authorities need to impress upon the bus drivers that highways are not racing tracks, and that unless they themselves create a code of behaviour among bus drivers and conductors, the condition on highways, and the situation of road safety, will never reach any acceptable level.

Agricultural Growth: The Veritable Varieties

It appears that the advent of MVs in Bangladesh contributes positively to employment generation, reduction of inequality and alleviation of rural poverty. But the journey is only half way through . . .

fusion of technology across regions is adduced to infrastructure variables measured by access to electricity and transport facilities and subsistence pressure at the household and village level. The major determinant of the adoption of MVs is reported to be technical and environmental factors e.g. access to irrigation facilities, topography, soil salinity etc than by socio-economic factors (farm size tenurial status etc). Like the saving necessity is the mother of invention," the adoption rate of MVs is observed to relatively higher in villages with unfavourable land endowments, low non-farm employment opportunities or both. These villages are dominated by small farms and possibly a subsistence pressure keeps them cling to MVs so much so that, contrary to findings on Green Revolution in India, an inverse relationship between the farm size and the adoption rate could be dis-

income is spent on food (nearly 40

per cent on rice alone) and where the

demand for food grains is growing at

around 3 per cent per year, the critical

role of technological progress cannot,

possibly, be denied. Land scarcity

and labour abundance tend to pro-

vide a further fillip to this role in

increasing land productivity. To this

effect, Bangladesh embarked on the

adoption of HYV technology led by

irrigation and with a great potential

for diffusion, half of the paddy area

is reported to be covered by modern

varieties (MVs) of paddy and about

one third of land is being reached

production, uneven though across re-

gions, brought home a kind of revolu-

tion called 'Green Revolution' in an

almost primitive agrarian setting per-

vading Bangladesh. What has been its

impact on well being of people in ru-

ral areas? Well, a plethora of research

works are available posing to answer

this question but Dr Mahbub Hossain

and others put it succinctly in the

book: "Modern Rice Technology and

Income Distribution in Asia" (edited

by Cristina C. David and Kejuri

Otsuka). In fact one needs to go

through the book to grasp as to how

the advent of MVs revolutioned the

To start with, the differential dif-

II of us are familiar with the

▲ ♣per cent of African schoolleav-

ers being able to find jobs in the

formal sector. It is a sobering thought

that it will take a five per cent growth

ment. To some extent unemployment

is mitigated by the informal sector.

but incomes there are, on the whole

low. "Marginalised youth" (some-

times misleadingly called "the lost

generation") is a dangerous and

potentially destabilising element in

our society. The common image of

these youths as an alienated, feral and

predatory segment of society is also

misleading. Some undoubtedly fit

this descr-iption, but survey evidence

suggests a different picture, typified

by youngsters anxious to receive

training and get ahead, concerned at

the violence of their environments,

and, in many cases, involved in the

church. Many youths were trauma

tized by township violence in the

1980s, and some undoubtedly were

brutalised. Survey data, sketchy

though they are, confirm Gill Straker's

conclusion that "relatively few

became chronically anti-social". The

hopeful message is that many can be

salvaged from the hopelessness of

endemic unemploy-ment, taught

valuable skills and integrated into

the highest. In many areas it threatens

the very fabric of society. Sadly, we

have disproved the adage that "crime

does not pay". It does, all too well,

and, in the absence of legitimate

alternative ways of earning a living

crime is a highly attractive and

lucrative career option, with relati-

vely few risks, thanks to the brea-

kdown of effective community

ventional view that alienation, unem-

ployment, homelessness and poverty

create highly conducive conditions

for crime. The problem is that once

the criminal way of life gets a grip on

people it is very difficult to break it.

There is clearly truth in the con-

As a problem crime ranks among

rate to begin to erode unemploy

figure that shows fewer than 10

rural farm economy in Bangladesh.

Technological progress in rice

through irrigation.

lated country like Bangladesh

where two thirds of per capita

The diffusion of MVs modestly affects the rural land and labour mar-

kets also. A five to six per cent of the households participate in land transactions in a given year - making the land market thin - and the market appears more active in high-adopter villages than in low adopter villages.

arrangements shift away from share cropping in favour of fixed rent. "Thus, through the operation of the tenancy market, a part of the incremental income from land is trans-

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes

Average farm size is 20 per cent lower in high-adopter villages than in the low adopter villages and thus supports the earlier notion that a status of subsistence provides an insistence as far as modern technology is con-

Adoption of MVs tends to gear up the incidence of tenancy with large land owners renting in lands to small land owners. However, the tenancy

ferred from land owners to relatively

haps, that the demand for incremen-

tal labour is partly met by migrant

is less pronounced than that suggested by change in income shares of different factors. The use of MVs also makes land market competitive and more often low-income tenant farmers in the than not, raises the price of land in high-adopter villages." On the other adopter villages. 'This suggests that, hand, the labour market becomes because of the inequality of land inthicker with the growth of MVs. The come across different production demand for hired labour increases at environments, considerable inequala higher rate than the use of family ity remains in the distribution of the labour. The wage rate for causal incremented income from modern valabour tends to be slightly higher in riety adoption across socio-ecohigh adopter village implying, per-

> nomic group and region." A perennial source of discontent

The income gains from the culti-

vation of MVs are shared by all factor

of production but they are dis-

tributed relatively more in favour of

capital and land at the expense of

labour". The increase in income for

labour, however, is distributed in

tayour of the landless and marginal

landowners, who supply agricultural

labour in the market. "Therefore the

inequality in the distribution of gains

from modern variety adopter be-

tween the land-rich and the land-poor

with the use of modern technology in agriculture is that, due to skewed land distribution prevailing in Bangladesh, adoption of MVs tend to benefit the large land owning groups more than the others. Empirical evidence cited by Dr Mahbub Hossain and others, however, speaks otherwise. They appear to argue that the growth of nonrice and nonagricultural activities that follow the adoption of MVs mostly benefit small, marginal and the landless households and thus tends to defuse the differentiation. "The Gini ratios estimated for the high-adopter, low-adopter, mediumadopter villages are almost same suggesting that the diffusion of technol ogy has a neutral effect on the distribution of household income."

Finally, the use of MVs is reported to have positive impact on poverty alleviation. For example, according to the source quoted earlier, the proportion of poor households is substantially smaller in villages with higher rate of modern variety. Again, the poor in the villages with lower land endowments manage to earn higher income than their counterparts in villages with higher land endow-

It thus appears that the advent of MVs in Bangladesh contributes positively to employment generation, reduction of inequality and alleviation of rural poverty. The journey is only half way and more research needs to be done on this score.

SOUTH AFRICA: ONE YEAR LATER-II

No Quick Fix Solutions in Sight for Intractable Problems

by Prof David Welsh

There is clearly truth in the conventional view that alienation, unemployment, homelessness and poverty create highly conducive conditions for crime. The problem is that once the criminal way of life gets a grip on people it is very difficult to break it.



Nelson Mandela

Periodic spells in hopelessly overcrowded jails are viewed merely as incidental costs and, besides, the wealth of criminal talent inside the jail ensures that far from rehabilitating prisoners a sentence commonly sharpens up criminal techniques.

One had hoped that the new order would bring legitimacy to the police, but so far this has not happened. A demoralised, over-stressed and underpaid police force, such as we have, is unlikely to be an effective instrument for crime prevention. There are no quick fixes for dealing with crime, and the removal or amelioration of all of those criminogenic conditions is a longer-term task. "Community poli-cing", currently being implemented by the SAPS, is probably the most hopeful approach. Its aim must be to isolate and marginalise criminals, and brand them as "enemies of the community". I hope that Colonel Leonard Knipe of the Western Cape Violent Crime Unit is correct when he quotes gang leaders saying that "one of the things

hurting them most is the community turning against them" (Arqus, 24 April

For many blacks the structural inequality of society and the history of thwarted aspirations are added spurs to crime: it became legitimate kind of restitution for the wrongs of

These thoughts point to a major policy issue: how to make this society a more equal one without endangering its productive capacity or without aggravating the already numerous invidious distinctions between races. Of the many strategies I address only one, affirmative action which is also bound to be the most

controversial. On the face of it. affirmative action meets the criteron of justice: it is indisputably true that black people have been seriously disadvantaged in their life-chances over a long period of time. Surely, then, a temporary weighting of the scales in their favour is not only just but prudent in a society in which entrenched, historically impacted inequalities are always liable to be a flashpoint of racial tension?

It would be difficult to refute that argument, but there is a cruel conundrum to contend with : affirmative action measures — or, more generally, "preferential policies", do not achieve the results their protagonists claim, and they run the danger of generating more dangerous racial polarisation than they are supposed to reduce. A recent survey of affirmative action in the USA by The Economist concludes that in:

American political discourse blacks are liable to be lumped together, by themselves and by others, as though they were defined more readily by their membership of one group, "blacks", than by the qualities and opinions that make them as diverse in their individuality as whites or anyone else. Affirmative action, whatever good it may have done, is much to blame for that. (The Economist, 15 April 1995, p 21)

A problem with affirmative action is that its temporariness becomes permanent — because its beneficiaries develop too strong a sake in its continuation to let go of it. Moreover, from the case-studies mercilessly dissected by Thomas Sowell (a crusty, conservative African-American economist) it is clear that the major beneficiaries have been those members of targeted groups already more fortunate while the poorer members either stagnate or even retrogress.

It would be neither desirable nor politically possible for South Africa to dispense with policies aimed at making every institution from sports teams to universities to businesses more broadly representative of the population profile, but I hope that these processes will be carried out with a full awareness of the dangers they carry. I have long been haunted by the paradox described by de Tocqueville in his remarkable study of the fledgling American democracy written in 1940. De Tocqueville was struck by the tension between freedom and equality as animating

principles in American society: (The Americans) had sought to be free in order to make themselves equal; but in proportion as equality was more established by the aid of freedom, freedom itself was thereby rendered of more difficult attai-

A related problem, of which President Mandela has warned, is the

ued possession of a disputed prop-

erty most unprofitable. In the clause,

provision may be made that for every

year of illegal possession of property.

the party would be penalised at the

rate of 10% of the price of the prop-

erty at the time of disposal of the

twenty years the party illegally pos-

sessing the property will have to pay

the government perhaps double the

price of the property at the time of

disposal of the case. If this is done, I

am sure and can assure you that the

courts will soon become very light

and the people will be very much de-

Import duty on billet

and cement

we would like to draw the kind

attention of the Hon'ble Minister for

Finance to the Budget for 1995-96 in

which though tariffs in a large number

of cases have been reduced but in

respect of two basic items of housing

Sir, Through your esteemed daily

25/1 Santinagar, Dhaka

A Sabah

So, if a case is dragged on to

development of a "culture of entitle ment" — a generalised set of claims which entitles victims of discrimina tion to restitution or compensation. Clearly, discrimination has had victims, millions of them whose life chances were warped and stunted by statutory and other barriers. It would be difficult to mount a compelling argument against the proposal that, say, victims of the Group Areas Act or forced removals are not entitled to restitution or compensation in some or other form. The danger, however, is that the entrenchment of a culture of entitlement generates attitudes that are entirely inimical to those qualities best captured by the Afrikaans words selfstandigheid and eiewaardigheid, implying that independence which goes with the mental make-up of a self steering individual. Similarly, it is understandable for people to blame problems and ills on apartheid, but there has to come a time when they stop exploiting their victim status. It is to Archbishop Tutu's credit that he took the oppor-

Cape Town. My ruminations have ranged over number of intractable problems for which no quick fix solutions are in sight. When I addressed business groups in the days of apartheid I used to arge them that "business was all about politics", implying that the very future of a reasonably prosperous private sector depended on South Africa's reaching a durable political settlement. Nowadays when the task is to make the political setdement durable, I wonder whether my maxim should not be that "politics is all about business", meaning here that our politics could go horribly sour if it

will be difficult to attain the obje-

ctive if sympathetic measures are not

taken to keep the price of the

construction materials within the

reach of the people. In the absence

of financial capability of an

individual, existing import duties on

MS Billet and Cement will push the

price of these items further up

thereby increasing cost of construc-

tion, and owning a house will be more

Hon'ble Finance Minister to kindly

reconsider the import duties on con-

struction materials, particularly MS

Billet and Cement, and fix the same

at a level to provide incentive to

housing construction activities which

in turn would ensure more revenue

income by Government and open up

employment facilities.

public exchequer.

Brig. (Retd) AHM Abdul

Momen President, REHAB

16 Mymensingh Road, Dhaka

But after the end of a year or so

or at least every five years we do

never make any scrutiny or assess-

ment as to how many million saplings

have been planted, how many crore

We would, therefore, request the

difficult.

tunity to say exactly this at the

Freedom Day Commemoration in

is not underpined by a vibrant economy. The requisite degree of vibrancy, it goes without saying, can be created only by a vigorous and thriving private sector.

Probably we are in for a quite lengthy period of ANC rule. I doubt the view that the "broad church" (as President Mandela describes his party) will split in the near to medium future, by which I mean 10 to 15 years. Democratic purists would prefer a much more genuinely competitive party system, but there are grounds for maintaining that South Africa does not have a sufficiently resilient political culture to contain this. A serious split in the ANC might just generate so much political fission that the political system's stability could be jeopardised.

We face, in other words, singleparty domination with all its attendant propensities and its similarities to sequences elsewhere in Africa like Zimbabwe; but with the critical difference that South Africa is a much more developed, diversified, vigorous and volatile society. It is hard to conceive of circumstances in which it could be subjected to the deadening hand of authoritarian rule.

If the quality of democracy is likely to be defective, it is imperative that second-best alternatives be pursued. Every effort must be made to ensure that as far as possible an open society is preserved, that is a society in which free debate about alternatives is maintained, government remains firmly under the Rule of Law, civil liberties are guaranteed and the autonomy of civil society is respected. The dangers are that in the circumstance of single-party hegemony, the critical distinction between state and party becomes blurred, the corrosive force of corruption deepens, and politics and administration, in the form of bloated bureaucracies, become gigantic mechanisms for personal enrichment. This is a synonym for disas-

(Concluded)

'Save Dhaka'

Sir, The Daily Star is doing well with its agenda '95 including the 'Save Dhaka' campaign. The campaign, began on April 23, is still going on. There have been innumerable suggestions to save Dhaka. I would like to bring a few humble suggestions. The problem areas are recognised as overcrowding, housing, water misuse, traffic and transport, mugging, and pollution.

1. Overcrowding: To avert further crowding of the city, there is no alternative to decentralisation of most Govt offices, business enterprises, NGO offices and many of the industrial units including the garments factories. Instead of the overambitious 'Gram Sarker', the upazila system would well be extended systematically to the union level. If there are some industrial units (including the garments factory), road and electricity facilities at the union towns (union bazaars to be upgraded) or at least in the upazila headquarters then

rush to capital is bound to decline. 2. Housing: Multistoried buildings for all purposes including Govt. offices, banks, other business enterprises and even residents is the answer to acute housing problem of the remaining city people after decentralisation. If the loose soil of the recently filled ditch of Motijheel can support a 30 storied building, then why not in other areas? The existing rules for housing should be amended accordingly.

3. Water Misuse: The roadside hydrants should have regulatory caps (Taps) to control misuse of water which is evidently in short supply.

4. Traffic and Transport: To solve the transport problem, more big buses including the double-deckers are to be imported or to be locally made. The private cars and rickshaws should be discouraged. Rickshawpullers will have their job in their own district, upazila and union towns. Buses should ply on time and stop at stands only for the time (not more than one minute) required for the passengers to get down and to get in.

To fight traffic problem, the narrower roads, especially those of old Dhaka should be widened and most of them should have road-dividers. Thanks to Ershad Govt for its decentralising the city bus terminals and to

the DCC for its recent drive in driving away buses from self-styled roadside terminals! Now the DCC is to make room for the stranded buses in the existing terminals or build new ones. Should the Gulistan 'Road terminal' exist? The Gulistan Children's Park may well be the site for a large depot (a part of which was indeed so several years ago!).

5. Mugging: To reduce mugging problem, the present drive of the DCC through a special police squad is welcome. Now the 'great silent majority' should assist them by being bold enough to catch the muggers redhanded. If a lady like Azra Jabin can take hold of several muggers singlehandedly, then how the mighty gents around the mugging site 'see no evil' so cowardly!

6. Pollution: To combat air pollution, the black smoke emitter traffic should be treated seriously. For better deal with wastes the city dustbins should have more capacity so that no garbage is kept outside the bin. A special police squad may take care of the negligent citizens who deposit garbage on the road. Large biogas plants are to be constructed on largescale fueled by the garbage deposition on the city outskirts. The liquid pollutant emitting industries must have water treatment devices (primary, secondary and tertiary) of their

7. Barrenness: Lack of adequate green cover cause the city to look barren. The increased volume of CO₂ expired by crowded humans, and emitted by motor vehicles and industries contribute largely to the increased city temperature. This CO₂ would be utilised by green plants if they were in plenty. Therefore planting and rearing trees wherever a site is available is a must. Every housing unit (including offices), should have green surroundings which require only about two feet wide space around. A newly prepared rood divider is 1.5-2.0 feet wide at base. Would the base have only one foot more space the resultant road island could support a line of straight trees, e.g. Debdaru and Mahagoni. The bus terminals, railway

stations and playgrounds may also

have a green surrounding.

M A S Molla Member, BAAS, Dhaka

Antiquated laws

Sir. I would like to bring to the kind notice of the Law Minister and also the hon'ble Prime Minister the unimaginable sufferings of the people of this country for the flaws in the existing civil law enacted during the British period. The laws seem as if these have been enacted to favour

the moneyed and powerful people. For instance, for violation of court's injunction order the opposite party is required to file Injunction Violation Case in the court and is required to prove it by producing witnesses. And if the case can be proven by taking all these troubles the violator may get civil jail for 15 days or 30 days and the cost of his stay in the jail is to be borne by the opposite party. The law, it seems, encourages violation of the court's injunction order. But, if the violation could be made a criminal offence it would surely discourage violation of injunc-

tion order. On the other hand, according to the existing law, in a civil suit if a party wants to delay the hearing of the suit and so to delay the disposa of case he can do so for years. The party in illegal and forcible posses sion of a property will naturally try to delay the hearing and thereby delay the decision of suit on various pretexts. The longer he can keep the property in his possession the higher his gain. And this is the prime reason of huge accumulation of cases in the

It is said that the number of pending cases now would exceed six lac. Can you imagine the sufferings of the party who is the legal owner of the property or land if he is to continue the case for twenty or twenty-five years in the court with his own money? Whereas the party in illegal money out of the income to enjoy.

troubles and sufferings can be reduced to the minimum. Our Law Minister may do it if he

wishes to, by introducing a simple

clause in the law, to make the contin-

possession of the property can not only meet the court expense with the income of the property in illegal possession but also will have surplus The present democratic government is a people's government. Its aim should be to see how people's

Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB), through the Federation of the Chambers of Commerce & Industry, put up prayers before the authorities to reconsider imposition of tariffs on these two items but to no avail. In Bangladesh where purchasing power of the majority of the population is very negligible, owning

of a house has now become a dream.

Though the Government has formu

lated a National Housing Policy for

providing shelter to all by 2000 AD, it

sector, i.e. MS Billet and Cement, tariffs have not been considered thus affecting one of the basic needs of human living. In this context we would like to mention that in the Budget of the fiscal year 1994-95 import duty on MS Billets was raised from 15% to 30% in spite of the recommendations of the Tariff Commission to reduce the duty to 7.5%. Similarly, the import duty on Cement was raised with little justification. Both the Re-Rolling Mills Association and the Real Estate and

Taka have been spent by the government during the period and what number of saplings are surviving upto It is an open secret that the forest area of our country has fallen down

from 18% in 1947 to only 3% in 1994. Due to alleged corruption and irregularities in Forest Department, thousands of trees are being cut and sold illegally. Moreover millions of trees are being felled by the people here and there to provide for fuel to their hearths and tons of wood are also being used in brick fields and road con-

struction works. Unfortunately, our authorities concerned, especially the Ministry of Forest and Environment, have not taken any positive and concrete step as yet to stop the widespread destruction of our trees which normally take fifteen to twenty years time for

a full growth. What is the use in beating drums for tree plantation programme when we do fail to save our millions of saplings planted every year and we also continue to fell hundreds of grown up trees indiscriminately?

Let us from now on observe 'Save Saplings' programmes every alternate year to save the trees and save our environment.

O H Kabir Dhaka-1203

Magic card!

Sir, Government is introducing voters' identity card. Well, therein Planting a sapling one's number of children can also be written. And we think this identity Sir, Every year we observe tree card can be used for effective family plantation programme with great planning. The govt should enact law eclat, publicity and enthusiasm and that nobody must be found with many government and public sector children beyond the number mencorporations plant millions of trees tioned in the ID card, and that is involving crores of Taka from the preferably 'two'.

> This card may yield best result in planning the family, if the government desires so. But it is also true that whatever the suggestions are given, and plans and programmes are taken to curb the growth rate of population, these are nothing but crying in the wilderness. Because the mass of our country is illiterate and devoid of the futuristic sense. If they are not compelled, they will not do their job.

> promptly to compel them to abide by the principle of family planning. The ID card then may act as 'magic

So this is the proper time to act

S M Ibrahim Khalil 385/7, Free School Street, Dhaka-1205