ERSONS above 60

should be declared as

senior citizens of the

nation. The first of October

has been designated as the

International Day for the

energy of the young.

ration. Sometimes it is asso-

physiological and mental

and disabilities prevent the

in the family, and society.

other problems too. The

leading to problems of food,

nutrition, clothing, shelter

and medical care. In a

poverty-stricken country like

Bangladesh, the aged people

of the poor sections are the

most vulnerable group lack-

ing the basic needs of life,

specially proper medical

International Day for the Elderly

Contributions of the Elders to the Society should be Recognised

Elderly by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 45/106 in 1991. Since then most useful for him or herself the Day is being observed all and for the society as a world including whole. In Bangladesh, the Bangladesh with due sole- number of aged population mnity and importance. By above 60 is increasing gradudesignating a special Day for ally as shown by the the Aged the Assembly has Population Projection of given due recognition to the Bangladesh (1975-2025). So contributions of the Senior if the patients died the repu-Citizens of all countries to tation of the doctor would be the development process of on question. LIFE expectancy the civilisation. Attention of of the people in Bangladesh the younger generation has has also increased to about also been drawn to the fact 55 years and the number of that the success of any socipeople over 60 years would ety depends on the combina- be more than 65.5 lacs. But tion of the wisdom and exthere are very few special arperience of the elderly and rangements for their mental and physical care.

Ageing is an inevitable The policy of Primary phenomenon of life. It is the Health Care For All by 2000 progressive degenerative has been set jointly by the process advancing with age WHO and all its memberleading to functional deterio- countries including Bangladesh. But our Public ciated with impairment of Health Care services do not have any specific services for functions, and an increasing the Elderly though under the number of chronic diseases present system some special services can be rendered to person to lead a normal life them. In many cases it was seen that doctors refused to The elderly persons may face treat the Aged. . In some other cases it was found that most common are: loneli- the doctors think that it is ness, shortage of money better to die than to suffer from a prolonged 'old-age disease'. But in fact, there is nothing like 'old-age disease' which is incurable. The patients must get mental satisfaction that he or she is being well looked-after then he or she will also try to be useful to his or her family.

In the developed countries the Social Welfare The greatest achievement Department take special care of science and general health consciousness among the edof their senior citizens proucated people have resulted viding them home-care, to the lengthening of the meals-on-wheels, and giving span of human life. Though medical services in the daythis is a goodnews for the care centres, in geriatric elderly but the society and homes, and long-stay hospithe state must now find out tals. These arrangements are means how to make these for those who are too disadded years of life of a person abled to be looked after at

home. With the increase of their number the expenditure is becoming a burden on the budget, which the younger generation is to bear, most unwillingly.

It is a fact that in Bangladesh our family bondage is stronger than in western countries. The traditional joint-family system is still working in the middleclass. But with the change of value and outlook in high society and due to complexities and individualisation of modern life the joint-family system has already broken down. The migration of the younger generation to western countries for better job opportunities and modern amenities of lives have aggravated the sufferings of the old parents, single or double, being left alone or in some cases they prefer to live in their birth place. In the poor families the elders are neglected due to financial constraints. For all these reasons, elderly people who have none to take care of, our Welfare Government should make special provisions for

During active life everybody should keep some provisions for their old age instead of spending all their earnings for their children who in their old days may or may not be able to look after their parents for this or that reason. They should follow good dietary habits, do regular exercises, give up taking extra salt, sugar, fat, red meat, should not smoke or drink should not do hard labour, of should take increased calcium and vitamins. Their diet should contain fish, chicken, vegetables, pulses, etc. They should do medical check-up at least once or twice a year as adby Prof. Roushan Ara Hoque

Today's youth are tomorrow's old. Ageing is an inevitable phenomenon of life. Respect your elders and take care of your parents.

Year	Percentage of above of 60 yrs	Year	Percentage of above of 60 yrs
1990	4.98	2010	6.87
1995	5.25	2015	7.66
2000	5.67	2020	8.67
2005	6.18	2025	10.00



vised by their doctors. The loneliness and helplessness may be dispelled by devoting their time in reading newspapers, playing and looking after their grand children. teaching them their school lessons and giving religious and moral teachings. The mentally disabled elders are to be taken care of by the Social Welfare Department in cooperation with the Department of Public Health Care, if their family is unable to look after them.

In Bangladesh the late Dr A K M Wahed has established an association for the Aged and an Institute of Geriatric Medicine in 1960. He has also established an afternoon Free Clinic and a Department of Pathology to help treatment of the elderly people above 55. In 1985 the Probeen Bhaban has been built at Agargaon by great dedication of late Dr Muhammad Ibrahim. In 1994, the number of its members rose to 1364. Recently, one geriatric home of 100 aged persons are being built there. The association of the aged has opened 11 branches in 11 cities of the country. In all of them the aged poor people are treated free of cost and in other cases nominal fees are charged. Members are treated at concession rate.

In its headquarter at Agargaon, Dhaka, workshops and special trainings are arranged for the social workers and for the participating students of the Social Welfare Department students of different universities. Milad and picnic

are held every year. One journal with rich contributions of experienced members are being published every year. The dedicated

members of its executive committee are rendering commendable services with humanitarian zeal. Since 1991 the Momotamoi Award has been introduced to be given every year to one dedicated lady who takes best care of the disabled members of her family for a considerable period of time.

Committee on Ageing was formed under the supervision of Ministry of Social Welfare. It was entrusted with the formulation of plans for the general welfare of the aged people. It is also a member of the International Federation on Ageing. To define the, nature of the problems of the aged in Bangladesh a largescale survey needs to be undertaken. Many geriatric homes are to be set up in all districts and thana headquarters with monetary assistance from international organisations and NGOs. For the general welfare of the elder members of Bangladesh some permanent measures may be taken as early as possible. These are:

Elderly persons above 60 should be declared as Senior Citizens of the nation. In the policy of Public Health Care special provisions should be kept in all department of government hospitals for them so that they get all facilities at free of cost.

In the Department of Social Welfare, special facilities should be provided for these citizens to be looked after the the social welfare workers at home and given medical attention to them. The government should give some social welfare allowances to the helpless and shelterless ones.

In all thana head quarters the government should build

geriatric homes for the helpless ones taking donations from the generous people and from international donor agencies. The prime minister may show her good will to the aged by opening a 'Fund for the Senior Citizens' as she already has some other funds to help in time of need in those fields.

Young family responsible to look after their elders if they are able to do the same. Public awareness should be created to this aspect of the family rise. Mutual love, affection and understanding should be created between In 1982 the National the youngers and the aged. The youngers should remember that their parents have done great sacrifices for them as they are doing for their children. So if they take care of their parents, they would also be taken care of by their children's 'Charity begins at home' and 'Love and respect are two-way trafficbonds of the family'.

Contributions of the elders to the society should be focussed through the media and any important and commendable service should be recognised by giving special awards by the government and the society.

The government should give special bonus and income tax relief to the family who have elderly persons to look after, as is done in western countries.

Lastly, if the government enhances the prestige of the Senior Citizens and gives priority to their needs, their positions in the family and the society will also be inhered. In this way their lives may be made worth living. We must remember, 'a nation that does not recognise the contributions of its elders, cannot expect to produce worthy citizens in the future'. The young should also remember that an ungrateful child can never shine in life'. So the primary responsibility of the aged is on the family. then on the society and lastly

Old Age, Gerontology and Care for the Elderly

defined as the study he: of the aging process in its biological, psychological ing past; and social aspects. It is a continuous process with economic, psychological and other losses causing an increased degree of individual dependence on the shoulder of family members. Some contributors to gerontological theory have emphasised the diversity of adaptive - regulatory mechanism. Nevertheless, in various biological systems, there is a progressive decrease in viability. especially after the active reproductive period. Unfavourable conditions of life and to a greater degree, an unhealthy life-style accelerate such processes, shape the associate with age of

Growing old is a strange process - so strange that we find it difficult to believe that it can overtake us. In old age in some cases, autumn advances too soon into winter. Ghalib, the famous poet of

pathological manifestation.

ERONTOLOGY may be with a galloping horse. Says

The life's speed is gallop-I know not where and

when will it halt: It is only by observing the effects produced by time on men or women of one age that we see, what has taken place on our faces and in our own heart. Old people may be said to be living on borrowed time. How and when 'Life's fitful journey' will end is beyond the comprehension of the three dimensional human

We know that there are there stars that are needful to us now and perhaps for sometime to come. Love. Beauty and Truth. These have been guiding stars to human souls, when crossing the dark, uncharted sea of life.

The truth is in spite of hard old age, that which prevails in the eyes of the seeker. We who are now old and getting older all the time should concentrate on truth and knowledge. We should Delhi, I am told compares life ponder on thinking about

by Dr Maliha Khatun

others more than ourselves. giving more than receiving. It is known to us that the fate of some may differ from those who keep themselves engaged in some work. To remain active, capable, self-reliant and useful will be consistent with individual values of the elderly.

The young nowadays are usually not interested in the problems of the old because of the change of the social system by creating new value and conception towards civilised and human development. Young man's attention may be drawn by the elderly by telling historical story in way of interesting achievements narrating eventful stories, jokes, hu-

Intellectually capable elderly people may be requested to deliver lecture on these subjects. They may be paid an honorarium. Thus they will be engaged in doing certain types of mental work.

The feeling of "uselessness" in retired persons and other capable old persons likely to have a depressing effect may be replaced by a feeling of worthwhileness. College students and young men and women who attend seminars may be paid allowances to attract them.

Those who are rich and have become aged with accumulated money may live comfortably. But man is not a physical being alone, he is more emotional and spiritual being than anything else and he craves for the warmth and affection of other human beings especially the dear ones, in some foreign countries. Also, for older men, spouses are the most common care provider, followed by children and other relatives. For older women, it is their off spring (often daughters or other relatives. Clare Wenger (Wales) found that as the older relative's frailty and dependency increased, family-members became the

most important care provider. It should not be overlooked that many older people are widowed and childless.

In Bangladesh, it is considered shameful to place an older person in institutional care if relatives are available even in foreign countries. Once in 1975 I visited a hospital for the aged in Denmark. The old people there were rather ashamed of staying at the hospital. But they had to come there because of changing family structure and roles under the dual pressures of modernization and urbanization. In our country such action will become necessary, because traditional activities will be

Vulnerable groups of people are now decreasing. It may be suggested that those who take care of elderly persons in family should take some kind of training to look after the dependent elderly person.

Some allowances may be paid to the care-giver who

will be enrolled with seminar and training to encourage them to attend seminars and qualify themselves with training.

Doctors, general practioners, nurses may be paid by the government or NGOs who will help the aged person of such families with the teach ing and practice of preven tive geriatrics. They may also be financed through public or private party sources. Telephones may be supplied to senior citizens. It

will help as an aid to call doctors when needed. They will get pleasure by talking over phones with relatives and At a time like this when

unprecedented changes are shaking the social roots and challenging old values and standards, the tellings of stories of their lives by the old and reinterpreting the events and experiences of their lifetime should help us to achieve the urgently needed social and cultural stability.

Micro Credit and its Impact The Story of Hamida

by Amit S Mansur was enthralled when Ge-

on the state.

ttysburg College accepted my proposal to carry out a community service programme in the rural areas of Bangladesh and awarded me a summer fellowship. My community sponsor from Bangladesh was BRAC. Four other students from my college received this fellowship for their individual works in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Jamaica and the USA. I was eagerly looking forward to my six weeks experience in Trishal thana of Mymensingh district under Rural Enterprise Project (REP)

My work in Trishal was to examine and analyse the feasibility of setting up a smallscale moulding enterprise keeping profitability and employment generation in mind. every season. Another notable During my stay there, I also took an interest in the micro-credit programme. It is an integral part of RDP (Rural

enabled her to repay the loan in installments. The amount of loan she took every year increased and she embarked on more rigorous, and demanding economic activities.

At present, Hamida owns

2 acres of land. She runs a poultry farm where she raises around three hundred chickens. She buys each of them for Tk 8.50 from BRAC and sells them after two months for Tk 35 each. BRAC provides free vaccination for the chickens. The poultry farm generates a profit of approximately Tk 10,000 every year. Hamida has also built tinroofed houses over a period of time which are on rent now. She receives Tk 4.000 every month from them. Farming brings in a profit of another Tk 10,000 for her accomplishment of this young lady is that her daughter and three sons go to

ALIEN NATION — THE NO LONGER PROMISED LAND The Rise of Anti-immigrant Sentiment in the US welfare payments) paid for by and a more neutral system given that most of the comalready present Americans; Eastern and Southern and (2) the threat of fragthe taxes of native born plaints are voiced by and on European immigrants, who mentation of American socibehalf of middle class Americans are over-burdened came over in the early part of

THE honeymoon is over. Now its the morning after for immigrants to the United States. They are no longer welcomed with open arms. As America moves to the right politically. the issue of immigrants has become an explosive one. For a country whose cultural ethos and icons have long celebrated diversity, melting pots and mosaics, there is now a wariness, a sense of suspicion of the new, the different, the unfamiliar, by the old. Immigrants have become the new scapegoats for a multitude of ills: the poor economy, the deteriorating crime and order situation, the fragmentation of American society.

United States has had a checkered history, and there has always been a strong nativist sentiment against it. During the great waves of mi- A recent census report, regration in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, various demagogues railed against socially and mentally unfit immigrants (mostly eastern and southern Europeans) who were contaminating the American body politi: At some point thereafter there was a mass hysteria about the yellow peril leading to strict regulations about Asia.1 immigration. Until the mid 1960s there was in effect a quota system which favoured Europeans disproportionately. In the mid 1960's quotas in favor of European origin were essentially scrapped

was put in place. An essential part of this new system of immigration regulations was that family re-unification was recognized as a primary criteria in awarding immigrant status. The significance of family reunification was that if one member of a family were to get immigrant status. other family members would be allowed to immigrate automatically on the basis of relationship to the original family member, and would not have to qualify individually. Because of the presence of large families and strong kinship ties, the immigrants who availed of this new provision were largely Asian and Latin American. Thus since Immigration to the the mid 1960's the vast majority of immigrants coming to the United States have been from Asia and Latin America (primarily Mexico) ported in the New York Times, two weeks ago shows that the last decade has been a period of exceedingly high level of immigration matched only by the experience in the early years of this century. The big distinction is howthat this immigration been largely non-European (Asian, Latin American) while the earlier one was exclusively

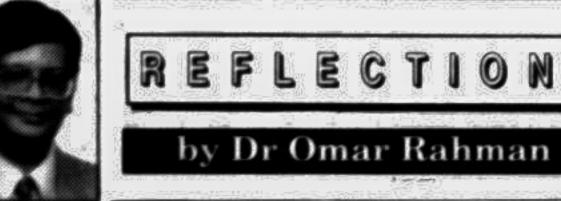
> European. The two arguments against maintaining the present level of immigration into the United States are : (1) the possibility of adverse

economic consequences for

ety by the intrusion of those with a different set of cultural values (i.e. Asians, Latin Americans, Africans) than the majority of Americans who are of European origin.

The economic consequences of immigration is a contentious and politically volatile topic. Here, it is particularly important to make a distinction between illegal immigrants (the vast majority of whom are from Mexico by catering to the needs of immigrants.

With regard to the argument about use of public services, it is important to realize that the majority of immigrants (both legal and illegal) because they are much less likely to be unemployed than the native born population, actually contribute to the economy more than they take away. The dirty little secret of the American economy



and are engaged in various forms of manual labor) and legal immigrants, who come from a much more diverse set of countries, and are largely white collar professionals and their dependents. The net costs and benefits of immigrants is empirically a very difficult issue to resolve. particularly given that data on illegal immigrants is hard to come by. Thus much of the rhetoric against immigration has jumbled up both legal and illegal immigration and has resorted to anecdotal evidence to bolster pre-formed isolationist and nativist convictions. For example, those against immigration talk about how various public ser-

vices (health care, education,

(particularly for California and Texas, where anti immigrant hysteria has reached its zenith) is that both legal and illegal immigrants do a host of jobs which native born American refuse to do. Thus the agricultural sector of California's economy (one of its biggest income earners) would be grievously injured if all the illegal immigrants were thrown out. The bountiful cheap produce that American consumers enjoy is directly a result of exploiting cheap immigrant labour. The arguments about displacement of native born Americans from their jobs by immigrants (and that too largely illegal immigrants) is particularly hard to believe,

Caucasian American males who are unlikely to say the least, to lose their white collar jobs in middle management, to unskilled illegal immigrants, working in manual labour.

While the economic arguments are important, psychologically the anti-immigrant sentiment has been fueled by a cultural argument — i.e. that the new immigrants are a threat to the cohesion of American society. Earlier models of immigrant assimilation, the so called mosaic or melting pot theories seem to some commentators on the right, to be predicated on the immigrants being of European origin and sharing similar cultural values to the majority of native born Americans. The ludicrousness of this line of thinking can be seen in its logical extension, whereby, an uneducated Hungarian peasant speaking only Hungarian in the 1890s was less of a threat to American cohesion than a college educated Asian/Latin American fluent in English in the 1990's, because the former shared a common set of cultural values with the majority of Americans, while the latter has supposedly

assimilation. Ironically some of the fiercest opposition to the new Asian and Latin American immigrants has come from the children of

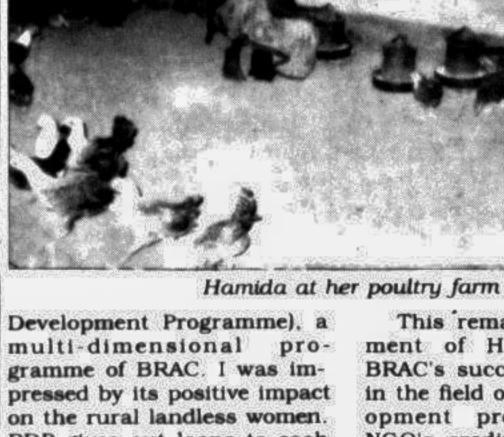
"alien" values which hinder

this century. On a recent radio talk show, an elderly polish women living in Miami (the child of polish peasants who had immigrated in 1920 to the United States), complained about the ubiquity of Spanish in that city. She said she felt like a stranger in her own land, as there were parts of the city where you hardly heard English being spoken and the street signs were in both Spanish and English. This mind you in a city where the majority of inhabitants are of Hispanic ori gin and whose economic success is to no small mea sure dependent on its close links to Latin America

Similar sentiments are often heard of in the media from inhabitants of other cities with large numbers of immigrants, such as Los Angeles, New York etc.

In summary, the often inflammatory rhetoric against immigration is not so much a response to a real problem. but a calculatedly expedient attempt by some politicians to create a united front against a common enemy (the immigrants) and put their political opponents on the defensive. While in the long run this hard line attitude towards immigrants will abate as it has in the past, in the short run we will undoubtedly see further restrictions on immigration

into the United States.



RDP gives out loans to each family ranging from Tk 1,000 to Tk 10,000 which is repaid in installments. No collateral is required and the majority of the loans go to women. In 1994, rural women received 88% of annual disbursement, and it amounted to Tk 1.880.83 million. These loans provide the landless women some opportunities to engage in various economic activities, and they reduce the dependency on the rural elite.

A significant number of women in Dorirampur Bhati Para village in Trishal had no source of income when they took their first loan from RDP. They used the loan money effectively and gradually made remarkable economic progress. The achievements of Hamida, a resident of the village stands out the most.

Hamida was unemployed and totally dependent on her husband when she received a loan of Tk 1,000 from RDP nine years ago. She then bought a piece of land for farming purposes. It generated a regular income and

This remarkable achievement of Hamida reflects BRAC's success, particularly in the field of its rural development programme. The NGO's credit facilities have helped thousands of poor landless women of our country to stand on their feet and not be a burden on the society. Micro credit thus plays a vital vole in their struggle to achieve self-reliance. Both Government Organisations and the NGOs

should understand and

recognise the benefits micro-

credit brings about and

thereby use it as an impor-

tant tool in our economic de-

velopment process. In our country's endeavour to attain economic prosperity, we should make sure that we don't get affected by the various social, cultural and religious taboos which forbid women to be an integral part of our work force. These taboos not only have detrimental effects on our fragile economy, but they also lead to a great deal of wastage of human resources. An immense opportunity cost is in-

volved in complying to the

socio-cultural and religious

demands and expectations.

The writer is a sophomore in Gettysburg College, USA.