

D-8: Newest Entrant in the Multilateral Cooperation Field

ON June 16 last with the signing in Istanbul of the Istanbul Declaration, a new organisation D-8, or Development Eight, was born.

The D-8 will be a global effort to forge closer ties for creating bigger economic markets for the common benefit of its peoples and will emphasise on 10 thrust areas of cooperation.

of State for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Choudhury. He identified 10 areas of cooperation. The innovation in the present grouping has been that specific areas had been assigned to countries in order to hold meetings and prepare papers for study.

ing attention to her audience to the phenomenon of regional groupings she pointed out. The emergence of nearly 60 regional economic arrangements since the mid-80s demonstrated the growing interest of the countries in economic integration.

the group, which can be adhered to by any nation of the world. Indeed at the formative stage the authors in Turkey had toyed with the idea of naming the group as M-8 meaning Muslim-8 but preferred the more secular name Developing-8.

from Asian members of the OIC and the lone Arab was Egypt, who chose to be represented at the Prime Minister's level rather than the Head of State.

contrast could not have been more vivid than the highly charged atmosphere in Ankara contrasting with the serene atmosphere in the cool hills surrounding Bosphorus.

The earlier scepticism of the Turkish bureaucracy towards a project of Islamist Premier Necmettin Erbakan — namely D-8 — has all but vanished.

Since the birth of OIC in 1969, Turkey, mainly due to her Cyprus problem and diplomatic ties with Israel, has preferred to remain aloof from the political activities of the organisation.

On the other hand, she has played a pioneering role within the OIC in all her economic activities. In 1984, Turkey was assigned the permanent chairmanship of the Economic Group of OIC. I, as Assistant Secretary General, organised the first meeting in Istanbul and this was participated by all the member-states at ministerial level.

We are With You

The lone cavalier has struck again. President Shahabuddin has hit again the same nail and with a force unprecedented in a nation barren of those that speak out.

The President has been very clear in his denunciation of students being used for dirty party-political interests. And he has blamed the campus anarchy also on the involvement of teachers directly connected with party politics.

President Shahabuddin has this time come up with some wise and constructive suggestions that would surely help heal up the campus malaise. Senate elections must not have students as voters; for, otherwise teachers would need to court student support compromising on many nonnegotiable things.

Mr President, we are with you.

Collection is Key

A no-tax budget, one which is shorn of new levies to be precise, enjoys a high popularity rating in any country, be it affluent or poor. But since an economy is not a sleeping Rip Van Winkle its waking hours need to be catered to.

So, when finance minister Shah A M S Kibria had proposed the new duties and taxes across the board and subsequently dropped some and retained others including especially the 2.5 per cent import surcharge, our attention involuntarily swung towards the revenue collection track-record rather than the path-breaking move by Kibria to expand the tax base.

Our straightforward emphasis is, therefore, on the collection side as distinguished from the changing profile of taxation and the commonplace rhetoric over this. Much of the money-related desperation of the government and its pitch-forking from year to year will be a matter of the past if we have an efficient and incorruptible revenue collection machinery dynamised with the motivation to fill the public exchequer not their personal pockets or the evaders' kitty.

Gordon Says It

Fellow citizen Gordon Greenidge has done his first civic duty in Bangladesh. He has brought into public focus his personal ordeal, one time too many, with inordinately delayed delivery of letters and a parcel in Dhaka addressed to him from the English county Hampshire and his homeland the Caribbeans two and three months ago respectively.

Perhaps this time the postal department would be sensitised reviving in them sooner than later that basic level of ethics on which critically hinges prompt collection and delivery of letters which are hardly ever tailed by any human eye.

Contain Terrorism from Taking New Heights

by Md Asadullah Khan

Shocked by crime and carnage, many cities in the Western world are even searching for new solutions. Economic growth and quality of life that run parallel can hardly be achieved in a situation when the whole community virtually becomes hostage to criminals.

IN the backdrop of Prime Minister's assurance in a public meeting at Lakshimpur on 20th June to free the country from the grip of terrorists, musclemen, and hoodlums, the poignant drama of politics and intra-party inter-party feud in the meantime, has cost some more lives.

Rajshahi. Though the pattern is erratic, but the rate of violence is only going up in many smaller urban areas nationwide. In the five-month period ending May, about 35 thousand cases of terrorist attacks, repression on children and women, acid throwing and rape have been registered by the law enforcing agencies. There is absolute anarchy bordering on total breakdown of law and order in the country.

People in the country felt amused to read a report in the

media that some time in the recent past Nasir and his group fought a gunbattle with the Chittagong police and managed to escape by overpowering the police. In another incident Shanta, a young married girl was brutally beaten up by some known terrorists in her village Gazipur on her refusal to go with those hoodlums.

and so is the level of apathy. In an incident in Lalmitia, reported by the media, as the hoodlums pulled a woman down at street she screamed and begged for help, but none turned up; no one even bothered to call the police.

In all these crimes, the level of cruelty is definitely rising

derstandable 'market forces'. Police in these smaller towns are less experienced and often outgunned by the automatic assault weapons that these terrorist groups possess and thus could hardly take any effort to meet the challenge.

Media report from Chittagong reveals that hijackers snatched a gold necklace from a house wife seriously injuring her while she was passing by Munshipukurpur in Chawkbazar area of the port city. In another incident, the hijackers robbed a university teacher in Chittagong of all his belongings while he was passing by Nandan Kanan area. Presumably, as these hoodlums encounter higher risks of doing business in Dhaka City, some of them have slipped into newer venues.

Reports carried by the media indicate that terrorists ransacked some shops and looted goods at mid bus stand area in Natore town as the owners declined to pay 50,000 taka as toll on June 6. Natore police sources said a group of masked terrorists numbering about 10/12 went to certain hardware shop at 2-45 pm on the day and demanded the money at gunpoint.

Shocked by crime and carnage, many cities in the Western world are searching for new solutions. Economic growth and quality of life that run parallel can hardly be achieved in a situation when the whole community becomes hostage to

criminals. The violence — mostly gun-play in the streets, markets and housing areas — shattered what some see as complacency about a crime problem that has incubated for years.

Without a shadow of doubt, both Prime Minister and Home Minister are very keen to stem the violent surge. With the present state of affairs virtually crippling every development effort in the country, deployment of plainclothes military personnel in troubled spots, if police alone is not capable enough. This initiative must be construed as some desperate efforts to build the image of the country so much tarnished during the recent times.

Since coming to power in the later part of 90s, the new government has perhaps made two serious blunders. As it started carrying out economic reform, old institutions such as the judiciary, police administration, banks, the educational system also demanded transformation.

The objectives of stability and

governability cannot be pursued any longer through the old system. People in the country are fed up with unaccountable public officials and with the lack of proper mechanism to settle disputes. Without a clear direction, a set of objectives that every body can subscribe to, it is hard to expect people seeing advantages and benefits in a process of gradual and peaceful transition.

All the assassinations of political leaders and heads of the government in earlier times perhaps hastened a societal drift towards anarchy and could perhaps prompt a new 'commitment' to needed changes. The grim message is that contrary to optimistic faith, there is no such thing as instant democracy. Free elections and noble constitution do help, but first and foremost a democracy needs 'democrats'. And these are in short supply in the country.

Few protest marches end without some pillaging. Even in a country somewhat accustomed to violence and brutality, the recent wave of crimes, and pillaging, seems increasingly vicious and brazen.

Now we would like to request Humayun Ahmed to help in popularising Marami Kabl Lalan Shah's spiritual songs by rendering those through his popular dramas. I think this will also help to make his dramas more popular to the public.

To the Editor

The midnight visit

Sir, A news item in The Daily Star of June 4, briefly covers the midnight visit of the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University to the residential halls to observe the checking of student ID cards.

I am sure that everyone appreciates the Vice-Chancellor's concern for the law and order situation on the DU campus and wishes him all success in his endeavours. However, the stated purpose behind the checking of student IDs is disturbing, if not alarming. According to The Daily Star news item, the Vice-Chancellor stated that "the checking of ID cards would continue until the leaders and activists of student organisations could freely move at [sic] their respective dormitories."

I think The Daily Star has misquoted the Vice-Chancellor. Surely, the Vice-Chancellor is more concerned about an atmosphere conducive to academic excellence at the university than with curtailing student politics on the campus.

Niaz Zaman, Department of English, University of Dhaka

Text book

Dear Sir, I recently obtained a copy of the National Curriculum & Textbook Board's English for Today for class seven, new edition. The NCTB has proudly put its logo on the back cover. I'm afraid there is very little to be proud of. In this book of just 172 pages I found the following mistakes during a superficial study.

Spelling mistakes: 17, Quotation marks wrong or missing: 15, Headers missing: 4, Enumerations wrong (a, b, c for example): 4, Page numbers missing: 2, Hyphenation incorrect: 2, Commas used instead of apostrophes: 2.

On 4 occasions it was visible that the film used had been cut. The printing quality was poor: on one format the upper parts of the pages were missing. Seven spots in the rest of the book were illegible as they had not been inked properly.

The binding was a disaster as well: one format had been bound upside down.

Many of these mistakes could easily have been avoided by properly using modern computer software in an organised editorial process.

Nico den Tuinder, The Netherlands

The three-wheelers

At the same time, the Finance Bill 1997 paved the way for supplementary four-stroke taxis by re-introducing the tax-cab scheme under which taxis could be imported on payment of 7.5 per cent customs duty instead of 45 per cent now.

The government should see to it that every vehicle under this scheme should have fare-meters installed and in workable states, and that the rate of fare should be so rationally adjusted that neither the taxicab driver nor the passenger suffers. As in all western countries, and even in Calcutta, a taxi-cab driver on the road does not have the option of refusing a passenger within the limits of urban areas for which licence is granted to a cab.

Strict surveillance should also be kept by the Motor Vehicles Department to oversee that vehicles imported under the taxicab scheme are not converted for non-commercial use, because for cars, station wagons and jeeps the Finance Bill proposes imposition of a supplementary duty of 25 per cent in addition to the duty at present in vogue.

I fully endorse DS's views expressed in its editorial under the heading 'Budgetary Thrusts' (13th June) that 'incentives being proposed in rapid mass transport system and a taxi-cab service in the metropolises as opposed to discouragement of import of the polluting two-stroke three-wheelers are welcome features.'

Quazi Arifur Rahman, 7/1 Hare Street, Wari, Dhaka-1203

Question creates question

Sir, A question has been asked in a poster seen pasted on the wall of a building in the old part of the city. The question is: 'Who are those people beside Khaleida Zia?'

Many enthusiastic people

DCC's garbage cleaning

Sir, Over last one year DCC has placed many big size dustbins which look similar to battle tanks but without any wheel replacing the old conventional round-shaped dustbins for the purpose of collection and disposal of garbage.

Unfortunately the lame battle tank-like dustbins are so haphazardly and disorderly kept on the busy and crowded public thoroughfares that those dustbins not only create obstructions to vehicular traffic but also hamper the movement of the pedestrians. Further, the steel-made body structure of the new big dustbins is so artistically manufactured that the people feel it more convenient to throw their rubbish. The result of this has turned out in other way round: garbage is spread all over the road which causes accidents.

On many occasions, the DCC has declared through press adverts, radio and TV announcements that garbage would be collected and cleaned from the roads and streets daily at night instead of day time for the convenience of the people. But most of the time, especially during peak hours, we find DCC garbage trucks moving over loaded to and fro in the city much to the exasperation and inconvenience of the members of the public.

Nur Hossain, 151, Bangshal Road, Dhaka

OH Kabr

6, Hare Street, Wari, Dhaka-1203.

BCS written test

Sir, The 18th BCS preliminary results were published on May 30 last. The PSC announced written examination to be held in August next. But we, some of the students who have passed BCS the preliminary, are masters preliminary candidates under the National University.

It would be very tough for us to continue two examinations at a same time. So, we earnestly request the PSC to delay the written examination.

Abdur Rozzaque, 248/A East Rampura, Dhaka

HA, it's time for Lalan Shah

Sir, Singing songs in dramas, especially in the popular drama serials written by a popular writer like Humayun Ahmed obviously helps to make those songs popular to

Budget 1997-98

Sir, This refers an article written by Mr Kabir U Ahmed in your paper on the 15th instant. He has pointed out 'the macro-economic background, surprises in the budget, disappointments in the Budget and some concluding remarks.' We like to point out some suggestions as under:

1) There should be a declaration that the state-owned enterprises should be sold by the government by this fiscal year which are harming the economy.

2) To widen tax net, the owners of flats and airconers in Dhaka should have TIN like owners of phones, cars and houses. Because price of a flat is more than Tk. 25 lacs.

3) To have a good administration in government services, the pay scale should not be declared in haste, but at a time.

4) There should be provisions to finance for growing industries.

5) The last but not the least point is to maintain weekly holidays from Saturday to Thursday from 9 am to 5 pm with a claron call for reconstruction of the economy by our government.

M Ali, Dhaka