

## Rehabilitation is the Key

HERE is a welcome departure from heavy-handed raids and scythian operations to wrench terrorists out of their hide-outs. The soft-touch persuasion method worked wonderfully well with 210 outlaws who in a public show of avowal committed themselves to turning over a new leaf in their lives. They surrendered their weapons to the Home Minister in Jessor responding to the government's offer of general amnesty that coupled with assurances for their early rehabilitation. A fresh beginning has been made in bringing armed cadres of outlawed parties, who have been striking terror in southwestern districts, to normal life.

Our thanks to the Home Ministry and its agencies like the NSI, the police intelligence network and the local administrative units which got their act together to make all of this happen under the leadership of Home Minister Mohd Nasim. Hopefully, in time, this trickle of surrender will broaden into a process whereby all kinds of hardened criminals and terrorists will have surfaced from their underworld to embrace normal lives in the mainstream of the society.

For the present though, we would like to adopt a clinical approach and utter a few words of caution. In the first place, all this is nothing new, there are precedents of surrenders of weapons by extremist operatives and amnesties granted to them but these largely founded on the rock of rehabilitation. It is assumed that those who lunged forward to lay down their weapons are the softer species of terrorists. The hard-core ones may be waiting on the sideline to observe how everything goes with the first batch of surrenderers before they make up their mind — one way or the other. So, rehabilitation is key to the reform initiative. And it will be self-defeating if we rest on the laurels of surrender and amnesty. Actually, these terms would be meaningless, even counter-productive, if we should fail to hold them to normal lives by providing them the right kinds of support and incentives. We need to sustain these also till such time as they have fully integrated themselves into the society. So our real task is ahead.

Our key suggestion, therefore, will be that the Home Ministry open a special office to focus on their rehabilitation needs and meet them wholly and squarely, within a realistic time-frame.

## Poverty Alleviation by Attitudes

PROFESSOR Mohammad Yunus' eight-point formula for poverty alleviation stands out because it does not call for additional finances; rather it puts accent on governance agenda alteration and enhanced law enforcement. In the process, he has touched upon professional honesty and sincerity of an individual to stringent punishment for violators of law, matters that certainly deserve serious consideration. His emphasis on similar facilities to all, regardless of social status, may appear utopian to some; but to us this appeals as an accent on average oriented dispensation in terms of utility services.

Development certainly entails responsible inter-personal, professional and social behaviour apart from, of course, investments. Unfortunately, in our country, behavioural inadequacies at the individual and group levels more often than not hamstring our collective development efforts. While law enforcement remains a prime factor to rid the system of violations, imperative are sensitisation efforts aimed at improving, and at times generating, sense of responsibility in the individual. On both counts we are lacking, and the Grameen Bank chief's arguments lend a sharp focus around that fact.

Refreshing bit of news to come out of Tuesday's seminar was that the rate of people living below the poverty line, the hard-core poor, in NGO jargon, had declined by one per cent in the last four years. Globally, the number has actually risen from 300 million in 1993 to 340 million in 1997. The trend is certainly optimistic. The crunch is, however, sustenance, and in this regard inadequacy in governance and law enforcement must be dealt with. Misuse of wealth is rampant, so is violation of rules and regulations. Law-enforcement system needs to be shored up, not only to punish the perpetrators but also to imbibe respect for law and order in the commoners. To that effect, Professor Yunus' suggestions are certainly worthy of implementation.

## Police Station at ZIA

MINISTER for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mosharraf Hossain told the Jatiya Sangsad on Monday that the government was contemplating to set up a police station at Zia International Airport to improve security for incoming and outgoing passengers. The situation at the ZIA has come in for severe criticism from the press and the public alike from time to time. The predicament of the passengers has been under sharp focus along with the breach of security inside this important installation. A couple of stowaways losing their lives caused serious concern about routine security arrangements.

Passenger harassment at the outer concourse of the international terminal building is a daily feature. Rackets operate under the nose of law enforcing agencies. The whole area and the crowding into it give the look of a railway junction instead of an airport. In the absence of a full-fledged police station at the airport, which should have been there when it was opened to international flights, the mafias and culprits have had a field-day. A police station can help curb passenger pestering and harassment by hangers-on if it means business in that small zone of activity.

There are a number of agencies responsible for security, immigration, aviation operations etc., at the airport; but there is hardly any authority that can protect the interest of the passengers. A well-equipped and well-managed police station may provide the answer to the chaos at the international airport.

Genocide is unforgivable

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This is put into perspective by the fact that while air raids are going on over one part of Belgrade, people are going about with their business in other parts. They know that NATO is not going for carpet bombing, whatever their leaders may say for propaganda purposes.

It is true that the Yugoslav people are suffering. But that is due to the policies of their leaders, particularly president Slobodan Milosevic, widely known as the 'Butcher of the Balkans'. Mr Deepak tries to take a high moral tone but is completely silent about the plight of the Kosovars. I agree that genocide is unforgivable. But accidents do not constitute genocide, however regrettable they may be. Genocide is the deliberate slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Kosovars. It is the execution of men, the systematic rape of women and the mutilation of children. It is the tying of innocent people to tanks as human shields. It is the uprooting of an entire nation. Those who support Yugoslavia are aiding and abetting genocide. As we

approach the 21st century, are we losing our sense of morality?

Muhammad Sayem  
Sylhet

Illegal rickshaws

Sir, We wonder and we are bewildered as to why the rickshaw pullers of Dhaka are identifying themselves and displaying and using on the body of their vehicles various number plates/sign boards/monograms of different sizes and colours of several organisations like Dhaka City Corporation, Dhaka Mohanagar Rickshaw and Van Malik Samity, Number Bihin Rickshaw, Parichay, Mohanagar Rickshaw Malik Samity, Number Chai and so and so forth. Why isn't there one common DCC number plate?

It is very difficult for a passenger to know and to find out which rickshaw is genuine and lawful and which one is illegal and unauthorised.

Whatever be the official claim of figure of number of rickshaws in the city, it is generally believed that about quarter of a million rickshaws are plying the roads and streets of Dhaka. As a matter of fact the number of rickshaws are increasing by leaps and bounds day by day and the sufferings of the city dwellers know no bounds due to road traffic jams.

Can't the competent authorities of DCC and DMP trace out and make distinction between an illegal and legal rickshaw?

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