

## Land administration One-stop management is a right step forward

LET us deal with some facts and figures. Almost 70 per cent of the criminal and civil cases are related to land dispute. The first land survey in Bengal was taken up in 1888 during the British Raj and took 52 years to end. The next, undertaken in 1965 under the Pakistan regime, is yet to be complete. It is evident that what we have now is a burdensome and nearly unmanageable land management system. Therefore, the government deserves a pat on the back for initiating a process to streamline the land administration with a view to making it efficient and transparent. It is indeed regrettable that over the last three decades no step was taken to set the ball in motion.

Be it what it may, people, especially the landowners, would very much like the government to get it done as soon and as efficiently as possible. Introduction of the certificate of land ownership (CLO), which will be issued against each individual on the basis of plot instead of existing family-based ledgers, promises an end to wrangles over land that often end up in long-drawn cases, violence and even deaths. Another encouraging feature of the land reforms proposal is computerisation of ownership data, which, albeit a time-consuming exercise, (according to conservative estimate, it might take 26 years), could prove time, money and energy saving in the long run. Once digitised, the data would eliminate the need for having decades-consuming land surveys over and over. Last but not the least, the land reforms envisages the entire management regime brought under one authority, which, one hopes, would eliminate the hassles the landowners experience at present besides narrowing down the scope of corruption.

Based on what has been reported in the media, the land reforms proposal sounds a good start in the right direction. The pitfall, which the government should be on guard against, is that such time-consuming exercise could test the administration's patience and commitment. More importantly, for such a huge task, there is the need for policy continuity. As we have seen in the past, the first thing the incoming government does is to discard the initiatives taken by the outgoing administration, regardless of their merit. There should be a consensus in the body politic so that change of government does not translate into end to the reform process. Tough task indeed but something that has to be done no doubt.

## What after the two-stroke ban?

Time for a comprehensive public transport plan

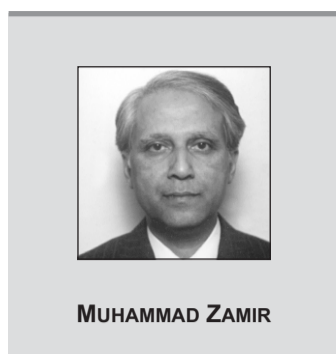
WITH fare-meter on CNG-run autorickshaws a non-starter and not enough alternative transports in place, the January 1 total ban on two-stroke autorickshaws and autotempos looks set to make life difficult for commuters. The crunch should be short-lived, so the authorities would like us to believe. Why should the ban create any vacuum in public transport in the first place? The decision was taken a long time back and the communications ministry and the departments under its wings must have had enough time to arrange for alternatives. Moreover, deferment of the total ban from September 1 bought them more time. Regrettably, the authorities do not seem to have made the most of the time. Not enough four-stroke compressed natural gas-run autorickshaws have been imported and the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) is still bringing in buses (400 will hit the city roads in January).

The ban on polluters has earned the government an acclaim but the failure to ensure smooth transition to safe transports is likely to expose it to public criticism. The government's emphasis on the transport sector is welcome but its plans are showing cracks. New buses are not all there is to it, certain key issues need to be taken into account in view of their likely impact on the post-ban public transport scenario. First and foremost is lack of discipline in designating bus stops. Most designated stops have been taken over by shops or tramps. Besides, curious placement - some are on intersections even - has also rendered most useless. Above all, enforcement inadequacy has resulted in the passenger transports pulling over and picking up passengers whenever and wherever the drivers wish, creating traffic snarl-ups more often than not. Therefore, the authorities should redraw the stops and ensure strict enforcement so that the passenger vehicles only pick up passengers from designated stops.

Another important area is monitoring the drivers of passenger vehicles. Recently, a study carried out by the scouts has shown that most of them suffer from myopia. Just imagine the extent of risk when thousands of passengers are involved. Besides, there is hardly any monitoring of the drivers and the helpers, let alone training.

The government is expected to ensure an efficient public transport system, a system that is pollution and risk free. The ban will take care of the pollution aspect of the spectrum. After the ban, it should focus more on safety.

# The Copenhagen criteria and the new Europe



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

IN more ways than one, the recent EU Summit in Copenhagen was a landmark meeting. It was a transformative Big Bang. It sealed the European Union's eastward enlargement, with the bloc insisting that its historic plan would not be derailed. Billed as a meeting that would reunify the Continent from its Cold War visions, it succeeded to a point.

The new Europe will now stretch from the western islands of Ireland to the eastern reaches of Transylvania, spanning 370 million people and an economy of more than \$9 trillion, rivaling the United States. However it also generated unnecessary controversy over Turkey and its efforts to integrate itself within the EU. In the process, significant gains made by the European leaders were clouded in debate.

Matters have also not been helped by the emergence of a so-called "Penelope" plan. It was revealed by some important periodicals that while efforts were underway for the EU to sign and seal its largest-ever expansion, back in Brussels, the finest minds of the European Commission were concentrating on a different problem: how to kick countries out. It surfaced in the London based journal *Economist* (issue of 14 December) that 'a draft European constitution, code-named Penelope, was being drawn up in secret for Romano Prodi, the European Commission President'...and that 'it dwells in loving detail on the idea that any country that fails to ratify the new constitution should be booted out of the club'.

The idea of inviting an array of new members to join the EU while preparing plans to expel other members would appear to be most paradoxical. One does not know at this juncture where the whole issue will end.

However, it is true that the constitutional convention underway in Brussels is trying to work out exactly how an enlarged EU of 25 countries is going to work. This has assumed particular significance as questions are being asked as to how the EU can possibly impose common foreign, economic and social policies on 25 or more countries, with very different levels of wealth and national traditions. Questions are also being asked whether deeper integration will now be that easily

Foreign and Security Policy (*International Herald Tribune*, 7 December, 2002) that Turkey has already 'booked its place in Europe. In December 1999, the European Council recognized Turkey's full candidate status. This was unanimously agreed upon by the 15 EU heads of state and government.' If this is the case, then efforts should be undertaken to help Turkey to get there.

Europeans are now being compelled to face the changes that

would force the EU subsequently to also open its doors to Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia and Israel. Many EU officials have hastened to disagree with Giscard's comments and have pointed out that Turkey is an official candidate. Yet, the hint appears to have been taken.

to ensure that negotiations for entry would start in 2003. The Turks, most correctly drew the attention of all concerned to the fact that Turkey had now elected a party with Islamic roots and a pro-Western orientation, a rare combination that could serve as a model for other Muslim states. It tried to persuade the European family that it was a secular state committed to democracy and that it had already met the Copenhagen political criteria required to initiate the accession process.

assimilation within Europe. In 2005, not 15 but 25 countries will have to unanimously agree on admitting Turkey. Added will be the possibility that countries like Poland, who are already expressing unhappiness about economic assistance within the EU structure, might point out at that time that there is not enough money to go around. The Islamic card will also become that much stronger with the deeper anti-Muslim sentiment that generally prevails in Eastern Europe.

Nevertheless, I believe that in the coming years Turkey will be invited to join the EU. It will make the European process that much stronger, Europe will become more diverse in character.

It will however be unfair to overlook an important side agreement that came out of the Copenhagen meeting and that is bound to have its own impact in the new Europe. This agreement has cleared the way for the start of military cooperation between NATO and the EU's own rapid-reaction force. Under this arrangement, the nascent European multinational force can get help from NATO in planning and mounting its own military operations, particularly in peacekeeping. It is understood that this measure will be tested very soon in Macedonia. It is also anticipated that this will enable the EU to take over the much bigger job of peacekeeping in Bosnia next year. With an accord in place, key NATO allies, notably the United States, Britain and the Netherlands, will no longer fear that an EU force might start challenging NATO's role as the prime guarantor of Europe's security or drain off defence spending on items such as a big Europe-only planning staff.

One thing is undeniable. The old EU is gone. There is a wider membership with different ideals. Creating a common European identity will not be easy. Recent radical changes in its size and composition have altered the traditional fabric. The presence of fifteen million Muslims inside Europe today has set aside the concept of Europe being a 'Christian structure'. Compromises have to be made and flexibility demonstrated. This is important. The success of Copenhagen is an example of how much Europe has progressed, and also how far it still has to go.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

## POST BREAKFAST

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Apparently, Penelope is being designed to stress the unequivocal need for an ever tighter Union. Analysts have pointed out that the European Commission wants Europe to exercise the responsibilities of a world power. In that context it is being considered necessary to have a single foreign policy and a mutual defence guarantee. Stress is also being given to the need for not only fixing harmonised taxes by majority vote, but also expanding powers for an embryonic European police force and prosecutor's office. I am sure that several of the member countries will find this hard to take. In all probability, neutral countries like Sweden, Finland, and Austria will be alarmed by such a move.

The EU's 'forward-planners' appear to be vexed. They do not seem to have the right answers for recalcitrant countries who might attempt to block this process of change.

It is against this backdrop that one comes back to the question of inclusion of Turkey in the EU. This unresolved problem will further complicate matters.

One must not forget in this context the comment of Javier Solana, the High Representative of the European Union for the Common

Europe confronts. Valery Giscard d'Estaing's wisdom has however not assisted the process. Given the most important task of trying to find an acceptable European constitution, he has unfortunately applied the narrow interpretation rather than the wider scope of flexibility. His comment that Turkey's entry into Europe "will be the end of Europe" has been harsh.

One has to decide what is Europe. In principle, according to western historians and social scientists, there exists two Europes. Both have their origins in Greece of the classical period and in the republican, imperial Rome. Both have been shaped by Christianity. Western and Central Europe have been formed by the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Revolution and liberalism. This has set them apart from Eastern Europe, ever since the political and religious schism in 1054 that divided Roman Catholic Europe from Byzantine or Orthodox Christianity, much of which subsequently fell under Turkish Muslim control.

With the joining of Greece, Orthodox Europe became part of the EU. Now, with the decision to include Bulgaria and Romania, this process has been taken forward. By keeping the issue of Turkish mem-

bership in the EU in limbo has however reduced the effectiveness of this process. William Pfaff in his editorial commentary (*International Herald Tribune*, 10 December) has described the reopening of this question by Giscard as "a calculated provocation". This comment was interpreted as Turkey belonging to a different civilization and also that its membership would unbalance the EU and its institutions. Some critics used this opportunity to even point out that admitting Turkey into the EU

However, it was not to be. Turkey was praised for laws adopted in August to abolish the death penalty in peacetime, to permit greater freedom of expression and to increase the rights of ethnic Kurds. However, many members resisted setting a date in Copenhagen for accession talks, saying that Turkey must first implement the reforms. The European Union fumbled its chance to make an enormous contribution towards integrating Turkey into the west. They ignored the urgings of President George W Bush and Prime Minister Blair.

As reported in *The New York Times* on 14-15 December, the Copenhagen Summit "agreed only to meet in December 2004 decide whether Turkey was democratic enough and respectful enough of human rights to begin negotiations, but no date for possible negotiations was set." This in principle meant that Turkey, in the near future, would have to prove that it has met the 'Copenhagen criteria' as adopted in Copenhagen in 1993 for candidate states.

One needs to point out here that ducking the issue and postponing it into 2005 will make the situation even more complex and Turkey's chance more remote. It will also overshadow the process of future

## All about cricket, and umpiring

MEGASTHENES

THE West Indies cricket team has come and gone. In between arrival and departure, predictably enough, it won the one-day and Test series without excessive effort or strain of sinew and nerve. It was not the greatest West Indies side ever. Given the absence of some key players, it was not even their strongest possible combination of today. The results were not surprising but nevertheless a little disappointing for Bangladesh. Our team competed tough and I think benefited from the contests. There is better appreciation of what is lacking and needed, particularly in terms of approach and technique in adapting from one day games to Test matches. We clearly still have some way to go before we can hold our own with the best. Watching television replays, one did get the impression at times that some close decisions, which went against Bangladesh, could have gone the other way just as easily. Not that it would have materially affected the outcome of the matches. It would have afforded a modicum of satisfaction though if we could have extended the touring team to the fourth day in a Test.

In the late 1950s or early 1960s, a few cricket writers had patronizingly mooted the idea of three-day Tests in England for Pakistan and India, following, to be sure, dismal performances by both countries in English conditions. One writer even suggested, how seriously I do not know, changes in the English logo; the traditional three lions for matches with Australia, two for South Africa and the West Indies, and only one or even a pussy cat for the rest. There have been changes aplenty since then.

Next to the one-day game, the innovation -- or intrusion -- of technology has been the major development in modern cricket. Television and instant replays enable those who watch on television to better

appreciate the finer points of the game. These also have the effect, not infrequently, of making the umpires look very fallible.

The umpire's job in a cricket match is pivotal, exacting and unenviable. He is the unsung protagonist in cricket. He alone of all those on the field or playing must remain totally focused and alert for the entire duration of a match. He must be prepared to give decisions on evidence that is seen and sensed and absorbed in a fraction of a

batsmanship as batsmen tend to play with more assurance. Bruce Dooland, who would have had a successful career in the Australian team as a leg spinner if he had not opted instead for English county cricket, was emphatic that in all his years in the game he had come across bad umpires and fallible umpires but never a dishonest umpire.

The most celebrated umpire of all was probably Frank Chester, who officiated in the inter-war years. The

bowlers chucked with impunity and that England had been at the receiving end of a disproportionately high number of dubious decisions -- the main offender Mel McInnes. A demoralized side thus easily wilted under pressure. Even outstanding umpires cannot be immune from the ravages of time that can dull the senses, reflexes and instincts.

For a particular match, a series, a team or an individual, a close decision can make a major difference. In 1958, Pakistan toured the West

gent West Indies led by Frank Worrell. Australia won the series narrowly, 2-1, winning the fifth Test by two wickets. The first Test was tied and the fourth drawn. In the drawn Test, West Indies at one point had the match all but wrapped up. On the last day, with nearly two hours time left, Australia batting in the fourth innings was trailing by over 250 runs with the last pair at the crease; Mackay, a steady bat and all-rounder and the no.11 Lindsay Kline. There was a loud appeal

errors. Years earlier Peter May, in his Book of Cricket, had mildly regretted that there was no interchange of umpires under the aegis of the ICC which would enable high calibre umpires to officiate in countries other than their own. It took time -- as with most novel proposals -- for this to gain acceptance, but gain acceptance and currency it did.

Thanks to technology, umpires today are under closer scrutiny than ever in the past. Shorn as they often are of their traditional white coats and sometimes also with unguent smeared on their faces to guard against sunburn, their appearance too has changed. They still remain dispassionate arbiters of the game, not to be questioned, whose decisions are final. How then to reconcile their role as conductors of the game with the intrusion of slow replays that emphasize every error or doubtful decision? Some possibilities: 1. Matters to stand as they are. Players to accept decisions without dissent or demur. Certainly the easiest option of all. 2. Remove technology from cricket grounds. Will not be popular or even acceptable. Technology cannot be uninvited. 3. Players who feel they have received a bad decision can appeal to the third umpire. In principle a good idea but in practice would simply undermine the confidence and authority of the umpires on the field. Recent games would suggest that differences over some decisions cannot be clarified or resolved even after repeated slow motion replays. 4. Performances of international umpires would be periodically but quietly reviewed on the basis of slow motion replays of difficult decisions. Umpires showing signs of decline could be discreetly replaced on the panel. Has much to recommend it.

Bangladesh should in time grow in strength in international cricket. Cricket lovers in the country would also hope and expect that in coming years Bangladeshi umpires would be empanelled to officiate in international games.

## LIGHTEN UP

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second, with the ball traveling at times at velocities of 80 miles per hour or more. Television replays, if anything, underscore the magnitude and complexity of his task; there are times when even repeated slow motion replays cannot clarify or resolve doubts about all appeals for caught behind, catches held low in the slips or in the outfield, leg-before-or-run-outs.

Umpiring errors have always been part of the uncertainties of the game; there can be no such thing as the infallible umpire, only very good or good ones and not so good ones. The seasoned player accepts bad decisions without brooding secure in the belief that in the long run bad decisions, for and against, tend to even out. The game traditionally has been premised on the umpire's integrity not infallibility. According to Bradman, top quality umpiring contributes positively to

all-conquering 1948 Australian side that toured England, particularly players who had never seen Chester officiate before, however, discovered a very fallible umpire in him. Hasset's 1953 Australian team to England even officially conveyed dissatisfaction with Chester's umpiring. Hutton's team to Australia in 1954, of which Peter May was the Vice Captain, had nothing but praise for umpire Mel McInnes. And yet Peter May's team four years later reportedly requested his removal from the Test panel. May's team had been considered at the start of the tour as the strongest English side to tour Australia since Douglas Jardine's 1932 side. The results -- a dismal 4-0 defeat -- did not quite reflect this. The Australians surely were the better side or played better. Two other reasons were also adduced to explain England's dismal showing; two Australian strike

Indies for the first time. In the third Test, Garfield Sobers, playing in his 17<sup>th</sup> Test, scored the first of his 26 Test centuries. Sobers went on to break Hutton's record of the highest individual Test score of 364. AH Kardar in his book on the tour asserts that when on 334, Sobers was caught behind off the bowling of Khan Mohammad but not given out. The additional 31 runs Sobers scored after the disallowed appeal made no difference to the outcome of the match. If he had been given out, he would still have gone on to become Sir Garfield Sobers and in no way would it have detracted from his virtuosity and accomplishments in the game. He would, however, not have held the record for the highest individual score for so many years.

In 1961 was played what is still regarded by many to have been the most exciting Test series ever; the champions Australia versus a resur-

against Mackay at one point for a catch behind the stumps which was disallowed. Afterwards, Frank Worrell, ever the gentleman, commented that he had heard a snick and seen the ball deviate in flight, but the umpire may have been right in his decision and those who appealed in error. Against all odds Mackay and Kline stayed at the crease for 100 minutes to save the game for Australia. A different decision would have meant a drawn series.

Imran Khan was possibly the first person to advocate the idea of neutral umpires in international cricket, arguing that this would be consistent with the practice followed in games like soccer. His purpose may well have been to remove or reduce controversy or ill will following any questionable decision. He was as aware as anybody else that neutral umpires would not eliminate

## TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

### Ban on rickshaw

Our esteemed Government has decided to ban rickshaws to be plied at certain points of Mirpur Road. May I, who happens to be an honorary trainee at a certain hospital situated by this road ask the Government to explain me how the female doctors like me who have no experience of riding public bus reach our destination?

It's just like the polythene bags which have been banned but still general people are forced to use them because there are no effective alternative in the market.

Therefore, I request the Government to first provide us with an appropriate alternative and then ban pollutants like polybags and traffic jam creators like rickshaw.

Munnie  
Dhaka

### Image quality

The other day, David Gower living in USA, I enjoy your newspaper and Star Weekend Magazine very much. Unfortunately, the quality of the images that you publish is very poor. I wish you used digital camera to take picture or scanner with higher resolution scan capability to scan your picture.

Hopefully in future we will be able to see better quality pictures on your website.

Enam Huq  
Dallas, USA

### No play in Zimbabwe!

The other day, David Gower former England's cricket captain commented that his country should not play any match in the forthcoming World Cup at Zimbabwe's capital Harare while Robert Mugabe's regime remains in power. Particu-

larly in the West, Mugabe of late, has become controversial because of his firm policies and for his determination to evict white farmers and replace them by blacks who have been deprived and exploited even after their country attained independence.

Going by Gower's logic, no team should play any kind of sports in the UK for Britain has practised racism, slavery and colonialism for centuries and destroyed the heritage of many countries.

Robert Kader  
Chittagong

### Growth of slums in Gulshan

The land areas besides both sides of the Gulshan-Banani lake (parallel to Gulshan Roads 41, 43, 47 and opposite by Banani WAPDA colony) is totally occupied by slums that

provide breeding ground for drug dealers and criminals and gives shelter to anti-social activities. At the same time, due to the unhygienic conditions in these slums, there is high risk of spread of contagious diseases.

The authorities concerned have in the past repeatedly failed to put an end to such illegal slums on a permanent basis. We now request the army to clear up the slum areas to bring about improvement in the law and order situation.

Kazi Anwarul Alam  
Gulshan Road, Dhaka

### Catalytic converters

We need informative articles on environmental pollution in your esteemed daily. There is a section of people including reconditioned vehicle dealers who believe that CNG decreases the life of a motor

engine eroding its parts unlike liquid fuel. They also argue that reconditioned vehicles do not need catalytic converters since those are in built.

We would be glad if someone lets us know the truth.

Zaman  
Dhaka Cantonment

### America does not need new pretexts to attack Iraq

There is a consistent theme in most anti-American ranting of critics that the United States is looking for a pretext to attack Iraq. But most critics ignore the fact that America doesn't need any new pretexts to attack Iraq. Already there are many pretexts if America is only looking for attacking Iraq.

The Iraqi dictator has invaded his neighbours twice, he has attacked

his own Kurdish minority and brutalised the Shia majority. Most Iraqi dissidents are hunted down and the people of Iraq continue to suffer because of his oppressive rule. Now his forces have shot down an American plane in the "no-fly" zone. If the United States is looking for pretexts, it would have already invaded Iraq.

It is obvious that the Americans are themselves divided about what to do with Saddam Hussein. In this PR battle, the plight of the Iraqi people is taking a back seat. The biggest concern of America has always been whether to liberate Iraq where the Shia majority must have the fair share of power in any representative system of government. The Americans are worried that Iraq's Shia majority will come under the domination of Iran with its much larger Shia population. Iran and Iraq are the only Muslim countries with

an overwhelming Shia majority and they may come together if Iraq's deprived Shia majority regains power.

And the US sees Iran as a bigger and long-term threat in the region. This is why America earlier provided logistic and political support to Saddam when he attacked Iran. But such policy backfired when Saddam attacked Kuwait when the war with Iran was over. If the United States let Saddam get away again for such myopic strategic considerations, it will again pay a heavy price when Saddam, armed with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, will threaten the world again. They never learn from history.

Mahmood Elahi  
Ottawa, Canada

### Discipline and safety

### on the roads

To ensure safety on the main roads of Dhaka, traffic management must bring an end to two things. One is pedestrians crossing the road anywhere and the other is public buses letting passengers on and off any place without even coming to a complete halt.

Pedestrians must be made to cross the roads safely at fixed points. Public buses must be made to pick up and drop off passengers only at the fixed stoppages. The buses must come to a complete halt for the passengers to get on and off and any bus that lets passengers get on or off in the middle of the road must be heavily penalised.

A. K. M. Hojuddin  
Lalmatia, Dhaka