

Menacing drugs

'Value yourself, make healthy choices'

THE menace of drugs is engulfing our society with such rapidity that preventing it is being emphasised today more than dealing with a fait accompli. Whether it would be possible or how would it be possible -- is the million dollar question now.

According to statistics, the drug trade at present amounts to Tk 6,000 crore in the country, while the budgetary allocation for the narcotics department stands at Tk 1,063 crore, which evidently falls far short of the requirement. Such disparity evidently causes failure in combating the threat that drugs trafficking poses to our country. Thanks to inadequate anti-narcotic budget and inefficient enforcement mechanism, the concerned authorities have nearly always failed to catch up with the real culprits. They must be better financed, better equipped. Taking the magnitude of the problem into account, we wonder how would it be possible to tackle the situation with so little help in hand.

The poor allocation is actually a cruel reflection of the level of priority we give to the dual problem of drugs trafficking and addiction.

The number of drug related cases -- a staggering 27,000 are awaiting disposal. It's a big number no doubt, but it's also the tip of the iceberg. We have no doubt that there have been thousands of unreported cases of drug dealing in the country. Though we cry hoarse over the issue of trafficking, the drug barons have managed to stay out of the reach. They continue to mentor the whole business, run the illegal multi-billion dollar trade without getting caught. They must be tracked down, caught and punished severely.

One of the ways to scare them would be to speed up the process of disposing of the pending cases with deterrent punishments meted out to the culprits. According to the government, raids at potential drug dens around the country have resulted in decrease of drug trade. But unless the law enforcement and penal systems are made more dynamic, the menace cannot be effectively deterred.

At the same time, a social movement along with an aggressive media campaign can raise the level of mass awareness about the negative aspects of this dangerous obsession. We have to save our younger generation, the most vulnerable group of victims, from the danger of drugs. We should not keep our eyes shut any longer.

The UN slogan Value yourself, make healthy choices, should be the buzz words for our youngsters today.

Election in Iran

People have spoken

To some, the election of Ahmadinejad as the next president of Iran may have come as a surprise, but it must be acknowledged by all that his election reflects the majority will of the Iranian people. The outcome may not be regarded as propitious by some countries and some may have their reservations on the conduct of the elections, but let us not forget that it is their democratic process conducted through their institutions that has yielded the result.

The new incumbent is the first non-cleric to have been elected to the post of the president of a country that has been ruled by clerics since the fall of the Shah in 1979. What this win of a religious hard-liner against a twice tested cleric, Rafsanjani, seemingly a liberal, signifies is that the presidency and the parliament are now on the same wavelength insofar as foreign and internal policies are concerned since now the conservatives have a monopoly control of all the elected and appointed institutions that govern the country.

The president-elect, whose description varies between a 'Robin Hood' and an 'inveterate' religious extremist, depending on who is looking at him, has promised to address the economic inequality that persists in Iran today. Insofar as the economy is concerned, the promised move to bring in distributive justice to the earning from oil, must come as a welcome pro-poor move, as much as his express intention of dealing severely with corruption. But then there is a fear, unfounded, one hopes, that there may be a clampdown on social freedom, as well as rollback of Khatami's modest but cautious liberalisation.

Observers credit him with very little expertise on foreign policy matters. It appears that Ahmadinejad is in no hurry to mend fences with the west particularly the US and has made it quite clear that any development in bilateral relations will be on the principle of sovereign equality, without being dictated to by anybody. The west also fears the worst insofar as Iran's nuclear policy is concerned. The nuclear negotiations have been difficult so far, and these are likely to be more so in future.

We would like to congratulate the new Iranian president hoping for an earnest endeavour on the part of new leadership to lead their nation into the new millennium.

French 'No': A fatal blow to EU



M ABDUL HAFIZ

stages of economic development. The founders, notably France and Germany, envisaged a change in the principle of equality and consensus that had hitherto characterised the decision-making in the grouping to a more pragmatic system in which the role of the members would reflect their size and strength. When a constitution was thus crafted for taking effect it had to be ratified by all 25 members in accordance with their

and economic fallout from France's negative vote cannot therefore be without their profound impact on the EU. Notwithstanding a leadership crisis within the EU and growing public disenchantment with what many see as an elite-driven European project the EU leaders are struggling hard to control the damage inflicted by French and Dutch votes while hoping that they can keep the show alive. In the meantime, Luxem-

burg's prime minister and EU's current chairman Jean Claude Juncker has said that the treaty is not dead and ratification procedures in other EU states must not come to a halt.

Reaching to the flow of the events

Francois Bayrou, the leader of France's centrist UDF declared that

the fifty republican out of birth. It was an observation echoed by Jean Marc Ayrault, socialist leader in the parliament. "This is the end of a political cycle," he said, "there are parallels with the death of Fourth republic. The French are somewhat stranger to the British who have been

three days later confirmed the trend. Has there been referendum also in other EU countries the result wouldn't have been much dissimilar.

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