

# Editorial

## A violent and undisciplined society

A tiny island lapped by the Mediterranean and visited by a million tourists a year looking for idyllic days in the sun would be comparable, it is reasonable to expect, to a state like that enjoyed by Eden, where inhabitants spend their time sauntering through Elysian fields and sunning themselves on the beaches.

Such an idyllic picture of our homeland is rudely shattered when one looks around and faces the seething primitive revolt that seems to haunt our dreams. It is enough to look at our pristine valleys to notice the abandon with which our staid and stolid populace are prepared to litter with our rejects. In one single road leading to Ghasri Valley, I counted no less than three abandoned cars. Sanap cliffs seems to be another word for an invitation to dump all kind of rubbish into the sea leaving enough evidence to condemn the perpetrators.

Evidence of an undisciplined society are everywhere to be seen. It is taken for granted that rules can be ignored, regulations broken, directions flouted with impunity. If you are keen to undertake an exercise in futility you could sit and count the number of infringements you can identify within the space of a few minutes: dangerous overtaking, crossing the double lines, objects jutting out a meter behind the vehicle, faulty lights, ignoring priority rules at roundabouts, etc. And yet, what is so obvious to the casual observer seems to defy all the detection and enforcement efforts of the police force as well as those of the more recently instituted but no more efficient local wardens.

A more sinister turn is indicated by recent events: in the space of just over six months we have had three murders: a rate of 10 per 100,000 population. This is almost ten times that of Europe and twice that of America. We have to go to the killing metropolises of South America and South Africa to find figures that exceed this rate. One takes no satisfaction in explaining these as possibly the result of family feuds or long-standing vendettas. A country which

resorts to this sort of violence to soothe its nerves and solves its problems must be struggling with primitive untamed forces which have been left untouched by a civilising education.

It is fair to say that in spite of all the well-meaning efforts of educators, there remains large gaps in our appreciation of the finer aspects of life. There is no evidence that we are reading more, taking part in debate, discussions, or appreciating art and the finer side of human existence. The average person's free time is spent watching numbing television programmes which claim no efforts to increase stimulation of the psyche. If anything, statistics tend to confirm that literacy rates are declining compared to only a few years ago.

It is also doubtful whether we have any better grasp of the meaning of life than did more primitive societies. The impression one gets is that parents seem to be hell-bound on having three or four jobs a day to ensure that their children are supplied with mobile phones and enough money to spend on fattening goods, thus ensuring the onset of obesity with all its complications, including an early demise. I believe it is time we sat back and take stock.

I believe that we have not put sufficient emphasis on priorities. Amidst untold riches which bulge the individual purse, we seem to have lost direction. We are investing in houses and money-making schemes, but not to any great extent in improvement of our internal environment. It would be good if we could devise some sort of thermometer that will assess the intellectual temperature of the nation. We could then compare the changes that we are getting and assess whether society is improving or getting worse. Above all, such indices could indicate whether violence is being tamed and discipline fostered among the inhabitants of this peace-loving but choleric nation.