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S.S.C Exam Toll

Belying the expectation of the authority, this year's S.S.C examinations went off inauspiciously. There is perhaps no doubt that the authority was keen to put an end to copying and adoption of other unfair means in the examination halls. But as ill luck would have it, tragedy struck even before the first day's examination could start properly. Six people, including two examinees, lost their lives in a bizarre incident unheard of at any other examination centre in the country before. The stampede that started due to a combination of mismanagement by the centre concerned and a group of sex maniacs' predatory act claimed the lives of those six people. Had the rooms on the first and second floors of the college building of the centre not been under lock and key, the heavy rush on the stairs could have been avoided giving no opportunity to the depraved youths. It was an injudicious decision to open the gate before opening the hall rooms.

Clearly the board authority had little contribution to this tragic incident. It is not even remotely responsible for the death of a bearer of a college in Comilla, who stopped copy suppliers when they were using the passage between his college and the nearby girls' school, an examination centre. The enraged copy suppliers later on stabbed him to death. More deaths from copy suppliers' attacks on examination centres have not been reported from across the country, although violent attacks were carried out in many places. An examination centre in Rangamati had to be closed down in the face of such violent attacks.

If the authority cannot be blamed for not visualising a scenario like the one at Kalaroa centre in Satkhira, it surely had to take into consideration the possibility of incidents like storming of examination centres by outsiders. Sadly, the authority has shown neither enough discretion nor imagination for successfully conducting the examinations. We can applaud the authority for its manifest intention of curbing copying in examinations. But unfortunately the issue is not so simple that just instructions for strict vigilance at the centres would bring about the desired results. It is exactly because of this that the strictness has been resented and met with violent opposition. If a decision for clean examinations has to be implemented, a lot of groundwork must be done first. The authority cannot hold examinations without taking the trouble of making the system responsive to such a task.

Has the authority ever thought why guardians and even teachers turn illegal helpers to the examinees at the centres? The answer is very simple. Preparation for the examinations was poor and both the teachers and guardians must share enough blame for this. But scoring high marks at the examinations is a precondition for the examinees to have access to next higher stages of education and opportunities. If they cannot achieve the feat by dint of merit and perseverance, they must do so by unapproved means. And some guardians are not averse to making such an attempt.

The authority must realise that a corrective measure must target the whole system, not just a small part. Mass copying has its root in the system and the outsiders are representative of society itself and its attitude towards this most important academic issue. Let society take a firm stand against adoption of unfair means in examinations. To do that society must grow ethically, morally and in terms of education. The authority must try to remove the cause of this malaise rather than prescribe for the disease itself. Only then the present trend of mass copying can be stopped.

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