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On SSC results

The four education boards announced the results of the secondary school certificate examination on Thursday revealing a pass percentage of 55.18. A total of 408,476 candidates appeared at the school final examination across the country in the city centres as well as in remote villages. The sheer number of candidates makes the task of holding this crucial national examination a rather difficult one. Of late a new dimension has been added to this task which has greatly undermined these nationwide public examinations. Last month we witnessed a near anarchy in most of the centres where the boards were conducting the higher secondary certificate examination—the tests which follow after two years in college. Reports say as many as 500 people were injured and more than 3000 students had to be expelled in the wake of violence which followed when authorities tried to check mass copying. In some centres, according to newspaper reports, students brought out processions demanding the right to cheat in the examination halls. In others, teachers and other staff supervising the examination were manhandled. The situation became so grave in some areas that police had to use batons, tear gas and bird shots.

In the SSC examination whose results have just been announced, students had also resorted to unfair means in many centres. Certainly this has undermined the prestige of the examination. In many places the authorities had to suspend the holding of examination because cheating was taking place on a rampant scale. It is tragic but true that the prestige of these national examinations have fallen so low in the public estimation, that many even cast doubt on the results of students achieved at the cost of hard labour and perseverance. No wonder, the universities and other professional schools conduct their own admission tests and do not take students on the basis of their SSC and HSC performances alone.

There is no doubt that something has to be done to salvage the examination system. Education Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud said in Parliament that the government was actively thinking of altering the system of examination so that the possibilities of cheating could be drastically reduced. He suggested a change in the setting of question papers making them more in tune with modern methods of education.

In fact, the entire issue of public examinations needs to be properly studied before any step can be taken. Teachers and education administrators should be closely involved in the process of making changes.