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Our Public Examination System

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THE public examination system, as it exists in our country, has proved wholly inadequate in meeting the requirements of our transitional society. The system as such is not reprehensible or repugnant and hence it need not be repudiated or rejected lock, stock and barrel.

This system is producing desired results in neighbouring India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and in other South and South East Asian countries. In the past when it was not contaminated by corruptions of all sorts including unfair means starting from leakage of questions to adoption of spurious practices in writing answer scripts etc this system produced many brilliant minds in our country.

As dusts settle over a mirror to destroy its transparency and make it look murky, unscrupulous practices over the past several years have managed to find their way into the system of public examination prevailing in our country to render it counter-productive and inefficacious. It is because of the intrusion of corrupt practices in the system that it has lost its credibility in the eyes of the general public. But the intensity of the tragedy is heightened by the painful fact that nobody seems concerned

about this painful degeneration and decay in the system of our public examination system.

Of allied interest is the system of teaching at the secondary and higher secondary levels. It is common knowledge that not all teachers read subjects with their taught in the classes and students join tutorial homes started by teachers at their residences or elsewhere outside schools. Boys and girls from affluent families join batches of eight to twelve in those private tutorial homes for knowledge imparted to them in capsule forms, good enough for success in the public examinations but far from adequate in enriching young minds, broadening their mental horizon and helping them to face life with confidence. It is a pity that the younger generation is deprived of real knowledge regardless of the schools and tutorial homes they go to. Hardly anybody cares if children are receiving right kind of education. This apathy is largely attributable to the fact that many of those who are at the helm of administration send their wards to public schools in Britain, the United States or nearer home at Koda Canal or Nainital in India and hence they care very little for the standard of teaching or for the

quality of lessons imparted to boys and girls at home.

Many examinees change centres in the nick of time and opt for centres in mufassil areas to avail themselves of unfair means. Even at the examination centres in cities like Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi etc where the administration is supposed to be in full grip of things question papers sometimes leaked out well in advance and fraudulent practices in the examination halls is not unheard of. We also hear allegations that some guardians affluent run from pillar to post to get results of their children in the SSC examination improved. The allegation sounds much too odious and is certain to hurt sentiments of conscientious persons. But unfortunately there seems an element of truth in it requiring investigation.

Proposed Reforms

The former Education Minister, Sheikh Shahidul Islam, sought to introduce a number of reforms in the prevailing public examination system to purge it of the ills vitiating it. The reforms included the setting up of a question bank consisting of more than a hundred questions set by a group of

teachers for each paper and selection of question on the basis of lottery, restriction on the number of examination centres, computerisation of the tabulation process and rationalisation of the registration system of SSC and HSC students at the entry points and total ban on the shifting of examination centres. The reforms Sheikh Shahid proposed also included cross-invigilation system, cross-checking of answer scripts by chief head examiners to be appointed by the boards. There were a number of other reformative measures he contemplated.

Had those reforms been put into operation, our public examination system would have been to a great extent, purged of the malaise eating into its vitals. But, unfortunately, he was transferred to some other ministry before he could put into effect his contemplated reforms.

Thus the system is allowed to continue as usual. But if the system of teaching and public examination are allowed to continue without any reforms, their products will be morally depraved and intellectually imbecile. Let all take note of the grim reality facing this nation.