

SSC tests

The non-government school teachers are staying away from work at a time when the SSC examinations are knocking at the door, being scheduled for March 6. Five lakh students have registered this year with the four secondary education boards to take this school final tests which are to open the door to their higher education. Even those who might not be making it to further studies have a stake in the examinations. On passing they would be functionally literate people capable of filling the ranks of a work force having importance at the base level.

Quite conceivably therefore the sense of involvement of parents and students is deep about the SSC examinations, with the teachers partaking of it. When the count-down to the examination day has begun in earnest and the candidates are mentally prepared to sit out the tests, an atmosphere of peace and calm is a natural expectation of everybody. But unfortunately the private school teachers' abstention from work since February 22 has created an unsavoury situation. The Education Minister and the Secretary have said that the examinations would be held as programmed. Despite some stray incidents of interference it is learnt that the question papers and blank examination scripts have reached the delivery points for distribution to the examinees on the appointed days. This preparatory phase could reportedly be completed, because it had begun prior to the start of the teachers' abrupt work stoppage.

The fact remains, however, that the teachers chose a time to press their demands upon the ministry which clashed with the accepted norm of keeping the academic examinations above any defective consideration. It is the moral obligation of everyone concerned specially the teachers to work for maintaining the regularity of examinations. The imperative is further reinforced by the fact that at the higher seats of learning final tests that ought to have been completed in 1983-84 are still mostly hanging as a tangible proof of an enormous waste of national time and money. It is indefensible, both academically and morally, to turn our back, in any way, to the vital obligation of holding the public examinations on time.

Articulation of demands or grievances ought to ring with a better sense of time, with these requiring to be raised and talked out in due time and through normal channels so as not to arouse any misgiving in the public mind about the tactical getting the better of our best judgement. It has been admittedly regrettable that demands which could clearly take time to be discussed were pressed into a limited time-frame with something that must be held taken a ransom. For ending this tendency all concerned must work preventively.

The non-government school teachers' demands boil down to seeking equality of status and financial benefits with the teachers in government secondary schools. Under a new dispensation, the government gives a grant of Tk. 150 crore annually towards an allowance support for the private school teachers. In 1977-78 this grant was a paltry Tk. 31 crore only. The comparison underlines an increase by 500 per cent. In accord with the revised pay scale of 1985-86, the allocation will rise to Tk. 172 crore. By one projection this could increase to Tk. 250 crore in 1986-87.

There is no second opinion that as the architect of good, effective citizens the teaching community deserves everything the nation can afford. But in our resource constrained situation, we can only take gradual leaps. For now, the SSC examinations must pass smoothly.

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