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Ominous Sign For HSC Exam

Two pieces of news concerning the HSC examinations scheduled to begin today are highly disconcerting. The first one concerns the probable withdrawal of the Dhaka Board's earlier decision to cancel examination centres with a proven record of mass copying and adoption of other unfair means in the examinations. However, the board authorities are not reversing their earlier decision willingly; rather they are under tremendous political pressure to do so. A report has it that the MPs from the cancelled centres of their constituencies have joined forces to create from above a political pressure too big for the board authority to withstand. So, apart from a couple of centres the rest of the 18 cancelled centres are going to be restored for holding examinations.

The other news item is no less disturbing in that candidates of some areas are frantically procuring a copying aid sarcastically called technique guide—a very small-size book convenient for carrying into the hall for copying. There is no reason to think that this is a localised problem, in fact few places in the country are free from this bane.

Clearly, the signs are ominous. However much the board authority or the Ministry of Education may have tried to create a healthy environment for public examinations, their political co-travellers and a section of the public are yet to be convinced of the merit of such a move. If the honourable MPs can argue that their chances of an election victory next time would diminish unless the misperforming centres were restored, no authority under the sun can get rid of the ills besetting the public examinations.

Politics has wreaked havoc with most of our social systems. For God's sake leave education alone. This is one area where such political interference will cause irreparable damage, leading to the nation's permanent disability. If the political leaders involve themselves in such acts, it is a potential encouragement for the public to help their wards with all kinds of short-cut methods—fair or foul—for success in examinations. Examinations as usual will continue to be held in the most unhealthy and chaotic atmosphere. Instead of their motivation for a strong stand against copying, people will either feel frustrated or make compromise with the situation.

If the board authorities and the Education Ministry really succumb to the pressure, it would be a sad day for the country. The Press has all through supported their attempt to fight this growing monster. How convincing is the argument that the voting prospect will take a reversal if the guilty centres were cancelled? Even if it is true, should a government not make an unpopular choice in the interest of the nation? The politicians must know how to compensate for such a temporary public disapproval. They can make up for the loss of popularity by some other means. Let the government stick to its guns and give education a real chance.

And, mind you, yielding to politics in these matters will be the last nail driven into the coffin of the country's education.