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# Examination scandal

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On my way back from Cox's Bazar I passed by Chandanaish High School at 11 a.m. on 7.3.87 when the S.S.C. examination on Bengali Paper I was being held. Initially I thought it was a fair because a huge congregation had gathered all around the School.

I saw clusters of young men seriously poring over books and papers in deadly earnest. I was wondering whether the examination was being held inside the school or outside. On my wanting to pursue the matter, I was advised to move on speedily lest the govt. jeep we were travelling should be recognised and stoned.

Every time an examination commences Sec. 144 Cr. P.C. is promulgated routinely and announced pompously with fanfare. But I found no evidence that it was being enforced at Chandanaish. An elderly policeman was mixing with the crowd probably asking the copiers to be a little more discreet.

But in Patiya Primary Teachers Training Institute, I found a single police officer standing alone in the compound with no intruders inside. He gave me the impression of an officer standing erect and upright bent on exercising authority. Unfortunately this attitude is now rare among officers not for any failing on their part.

The driver of the jeep understood our conversation and related how the previous year a magistrate at Cox's Bazar was manhandled and humiliated.

On 3.4.87 a national daily published a report with pictures of largescale malpractice in the degree examination at Domar College which attracted more candidates than at Saidpur or Nilphamari. According to the newspaper the professors of the college actively assisted their relations in wrongdoing.

But at Adina Fazlul Huq College, Shibganj in Chapai Nawabganj, the candidates had the courage of conviction to demand copying as a matter of right and, when prevented by the conscientious authorities, the candidates set fire to the centre. According to the newspaper report last year the examination was held at Chapai Nawabganj but the University again allowed a centre this year.

The Education Minister Mahbubur Rahman had announced that the number of examination centres indulging in malpractices would be eliminated but, in the event, the govt. has merely constituted inquiry committees to investigate the Domar College scandal.

The cancellation of the centre as an immediate step would have a deterrent effect for the next year.

In Dhaka the parents of unsuccessful candidates are advised by the school authorities to sit for the examination from outside Dhaka which will enhance the chances of success for the unsuccessful candidates.

The Minister hinted that semester system might be introduced. In my opinion the cancer has grown so malignant that nothing short of abolition of the examination system as it is practised now, will avail.

The system has benefited the boards which have developed into redundant bureaucracies with enormous outgrowths of corrupt pockets at the expense of the students. They do not perform any educational function except to declare an overwhelming number of students failed year after year.

It has benefited the syndicate of corrupt teachers who will not teach in the class but only at their home on commercial consideration. The examiners set the same questions year after year.

As a first step towards any reform, the police should be completely withdrawn from the scene. It is not the business of the police to help the teachers conduct examinations peacefully. The cadet colleges do not invite the police to act as invigilators for the examination. If the teachers are not in a position to prevail upon the students to sit for the examination without books, they may do the same with books.

It is permissible within the system and will still be better than a mockery of an externally conducted examination which develops into a trial of strength between the police versus everybody else.

Since the boards have outlived their utility they may be abolished and examinations decentralized at the upazila level where ad-hoc committees with the upazila Chairman will hold examinations on the basis of questions objectively prepared by a central examination bureau seeking to test intelligence of students rather than their memory or copying skill. The scripts will be examined locally. I have no doubt in my mind that it will be opposed by the vested interest.

Alternatively ambitious students seeking entry into professional courses may volunteer to sit for an externally conducted examination to test their academic achievement. The rest of the students may be certified to have attended school or college for a certain period of time.

The employers may examine their candidates to their satisfaction. A decentralized system will enable a modicum of decency to develop by way of local examination.

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