

BCS question paper leakage and DU admission test scandal

Thorough probes needed

THE question papers of the preliminary test to the 20th Bangladesh Civil Service examinations were reportedly leaked, incredible though it may sound. Although the head of the Public Service Commission has called it a 'rumour', the allegations did give rise to a plethora of questions. It now seems that unscrupulous elements have made inroads into the heart of a system that ought to have been sacrosanct and impervious to such an infiltration. When the validity of a preliminary test thus becomes suspect, people are bound to have misgivings in the credibility of the recruitment system as a whole.

Simultaneously, a report from our Dhaka University correspondent has it that 700 surrogate students appeared in admission tests on behalf of those who had hired them to do so. Again, this brings up the malaise of cheating in areas which were immune to it. There is no doubt that higher academic and recruitment centres where merit should have ruled the roost have become easy hunting grounds of greedy and corrupt people because of lack of vigil, or shall we say indulgence, on the part of the authorities concerned.

What is even more worrying is the conspicuous silence or lack of prompt action on the part of the government following such sordid revelations. There must be some statements or clarifications issued by the ministry concerned or the Dhaka University authorities, as the case may be, following the publication of news reports in order to allay public misgivings so as to restore the lost confidence in the system.

Newspaper reports indicate that police were not impressed by the evidence produced by a student to prove that there was leakage of PSC question papers. But what is irrefutable is the fact that no fewer than 72 leaked questions appeared in the question papers supplied in the examination halls. That nearly demolishes the rumour theory. It defies understanding why the police at the thana did not refer the matter to intelligence agencies or themselves proceed further on the leads provided by the volunteering student to find out who were responsible for the leakage.

What we feel is that the practices eating into the vitals of the higher education and recruitment systems have to be checked at any cost. Otherwise, we would give a very poor account of ourselves in a competitive world where the quest for excellence is the hallmark of national drives.

A thorough probe must be made into the BCS question paper leakage and the DU admission scandal to bring all the facts relating to the unlawful activities to light.

Murderous robbery in the capital

A frightful trend

THE news of a housewife being shot in the mouth by fleeing robbers in broad daylight at Uttara on Friday as she yelled for help, bears testimony to a new dip in the civic security situation. Otherwise how is one to explain the blatancy of the crime committed? It happened on a weekend afternoon when most of the city dwellers were supposed to be staying at home? Just a day earlier, the denizens were shocked at the news of an elderly gentleman at Dhanmondi having been shot dead by a group of robbers before they plundered his house.

Needless to say, such incidents scare the residents of the capital out of their wits. We demand the gangsters be tracked down to freeze those waiting on the wings to commit similar acts of violent dacoity on their tracks. It is the responsibility of the law-enforcing agency and they should not fail in their duties. Local police must have the names of these robbers in their list of criminals. We fail to understand why should it be so hard for the police to preempt such crimes in the first place, and when these occur, take so much time to home in on them. There could be one option for quick result -- police could seek help at the ward level to book the suspected criminals. At the same time, constant vigilance by the police would have to be increased in the residential areas, specially during office hours when the male members of households are away.

Unless this group of hardcore gangsters are hauled up soon, the city dwellers are likely to see more of their kind wreaking havoc on their lives. Not so long ago, the government had ordered all those who had licensed arms to surrender those to authorities. In doing so the owners felt that their security and protection might be compromised. The question is not whether those who have been victims of murderous robbery had licensed arms or not; the issue is authorised possession of weapon for personal security is a matter of necessity. Could we draw the attention of the government to the need for providing the citizens with personal security arrangements?

Relevance of the Non-aligned Movement

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

EUROPEAN Council concluded at its extraordinary meeting on the 17th February at Brussels that it would be useful to talk to the Arab countries and the League of Arab Nations about the Iraq crisis. The ritualistic one-day meeting between the G-8 and the NAM troika is more a matter of form than substance. Though this 116-member movement spans the entire globe (barring the developed nations who belong to NATO and the Second World who belonged to Warsaw Pact) it was hardly taken notice of. NAM does not have a secretariat nor does it have regular meetings at the officials, ministerial and heads of government level as most effective institutions do. Its members are also members of ASEAN, African Union, SAARC, OAS and many others. Because of its unwieldy size enveloping countries having forms of government from extreme left to extreme right and consisting of liberal democrats to absolute despots that the movement failed to have a firm mooring with unwavering commitment to certain principles.

Perhaps, one common bond among the initiators of the movement was their newly found freedom from colonial bondage and their reluctance to change from one master to another. Inherent weakness of the movement was their poverty, abysmal in most cases, and weak or non-existent military power. Ironically both of these negative factors made the members of the movement dependent on the wealthy countries that wanted to entice these subaltern nations into their respective camps with promises of money

and military hardware. Concepts of welfare states in which a nation provides for basic needs by using taxation to finance benefits for low income groups and to deliver free personal services, of distributive justice in which money holding coterie (amassing wealth through unethical and illegal means) or the concept of a society with common ownership of capital and income distribution according to need were neither fully developed nor understood. Those sitting at the apex of the Cold War games needed converts to their camps and these

perhaps due to existing balance of terror, of the impossibility of forcing new NAM members to change camps. Limitation of the Soviet Union and the COMECON to provide economic inducement to court new members was self-evident. On the other side of the spectrum all the NATO countries were developed democratic societies who did not have any compulsive predilection to win over new members. Being democratic they were by and large tolerant of views dissimilar to theirs. Hence there was no Hungarian or Czechoslovak

enclave. The new NAM chairman Mahathir Mohammed feels that the relevance of NAM should no longer be questioned as the movement has become more relevant today than ever for the promotion and protection of the interests of the South. NAM leaders have opposed the trend towards unilateralism and have committed themselves to multilateralism; to the centrality of the UN and UNSC. They said no to a war on Iraq because "of the concerns expressed by millions in our countries as well as in other parts of the world that

hanging like Damocles' sword, Bush-Blair adventurism may push the world towards unpredictable course.

To avoid such catastrophe it is essential that the second largest international assembly (after the UN) must be steered by firm hands. NAM should be, rightly put by the Pakistani President, a voice of principle and not a voice of power and that NAM should play a pivotal role in conflict management. To make NAM more effective President Meghawati suggested that every region/sub-region should

towards the Third World countries; and their unpardonable failure to distinguish between terrorists and those equally afflicted by terrorism.

What we need today more than ever before is a conscience of the world; an oraculous voice to soothe the injured and restrain him from taking vengeance which may harm the innocent more than the guilty; to hold out the promise of a better tomorrow to millions who are trapped in the vortex of extreme poverty. Unfortunately the desire to dominate is subliminal as human beings are not incorporeal persona. Such desire is primordial and immanent. It is therefore necessary for any group, in this case the Non-aligned Movement being the second largest assembly of nations in the world, to be united and strong. Why should not the Chairman of NAM be a member of the UNSC? Why should not be an effective participant in G-8 meetings? Why should he not sit on the board of the IMF and the World Bank? Would other organisations lay similar claims? Unlikely as most of them, except the developed countries who in any case are disproportionately represented in these bodies, are members of NAM. In today's world effective coordination, brilliantly demonstrated by the developed countries, is necessary to produce results. NAM too should emulate them. How best NAM can be result oriented should be explored without losing any more time so that by the time of the next summit NAM is ready to show its members a progress report on the fulfilment of their aspirations.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a retired Secretary to the Bangladesh government and former ambassador.

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converts came from the newly decolonised countries. But their were rebels who differed with John Foster Dulles' dictum that either you are with us or against us.

In 1961 twenty-five heads of state/government met in Belgrade to form the Non-aligned Movement. Prominent among them were Pandit Nehru of India, Tito of Yugoslavia, Nasser of Egypt, Sukarno of Indonesia, Nkrumah of Ghana and Seku Toure of Guinea. With increasing number of decolonised states the size of NAM began to increase. Inherent in this transformation was the acquiescence of the superpowers that were too involved in the preservation of dominance over their defined client states as well as their realisa-

rebellion to be crushed. Their prosperity and libertarian values were sufficient to keep those already within the fold of NATO and encourage those outside the NATO to embrace their values and quiescence of governance.

Non-aligned movement, therefore, did not find much relevance in the political world. Its views did carry moral weight but lacked enforcement capacity. Besides, endorsement could only be achieved at the lowest common denominator. Consequently political resolutions of NAM lacked teeth and did not mean much to the superpowers. These were ritualistic and were treated likewise. The just concluded 13th NAM Conference may, however, make a differ-

war against Iraq will be a destabilising factor for the whole region".

Dr. Mahathir's strident criticism of the western unilateralists has given heart to many (though he is scheduled to step down as Prime Minister and Chairman of NAM by the year end) that NAM may be listened to with the respect it deserves by the North. Out of fifteen UNSC members six are NAM countries that have just signed on to a search for peaceful resolution of the Iraq crisis. Given the Franco-German draft to the UNSC as opposed to the US-British draft resolution (supported by Spain but not yet by Mexico despite the recent visit to Mexico by the Spanish Prime Minister) with possible veto by France, Russia and China

have a co-coordinator. Thailand's Prime Minister urged NAM to be a major pole in a multi-polar configuration. India and Singapore called for greater focus on economic issues. Prime Minister Vajpayee's advocacy of clear consensus on key issues like economic development, democratisation of financial institutions, effective North-South engagement, and fruitful South-South cooperation could not have been more timely. The developed countries must be held accountable for their failure to fulfil their obligation to provide a certain percentage of GDP as ODA; failure to open up their markets to the products of developing countries; failure to open their borders to non-white immigration and following a paranoid regressive policy

A day to remember for peace, for ever and after

SAGAR CHAUDHURY

THE last time something remotely similar happened was on 22nd September 2002 when about half a million people converged on central London to join the Liberty and Livelihood March organised by the Countryside Alliance and disrupted normal life in parts of the city for several hours. It happened again this year, but on a scale vastly grander and infinitely more spectacular than that event. As a matter of fact, compared to the Anti-War March of Saturday, 15th February organised by the Stop The War Coalition, together with *The Daily Mirror* group, the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament or CND and the Muslim Association of Britain, last year's Liberty and Livelihood March was a tame affair comprising almost exclusively of the members of the farming and land-owning communities in the countryside, a predominantly all-White section of the British population. The Anti-War March, on the other hand, was by all counts a national event joined in by more than a million and a half people -- two million, according to some estimates -- from virtually all walks of life and all parts of the country, and the participants were from all colours, races, diverse ethnic origins, professions, faiths and religions.

This was indeed the biggest ever rally seen in London or the whole of Britain, which paralysed whole areas in and around central London for the better part of the day and well into the evening, and its aim was to deliver the clear and uncompromising message: "We, the people of Britain, do not want a war against Iraq, or any other country for that matter -- we want PEACE!" Similar rallies were also organised in Glasgow and Belfast on the same day. And it was not just the people of Britain and Ireland voicing their protest against war -- all over the world anti-war marches and rallies were taking place in several hundred countries including France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Denmark, Finland, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, New Zealand, South Africa, Japan, Malaysia and Thailand.

I shall not attempt to describe the London Protest March in detail -- it took place nearly a fortnight ago and the print and the electronic media must have by now provided many graphic accounts and pictures as well as other follow-up news. Instead I shall confine myself to telling the readers of *London Letter* about my personal experience of the day's events. Unfortunately, however, although I joined the march along with some friends and walked to Hyde Park in central London where the main rally was taking place, we missed the speeches made by some of the speakers because we could not reach there in time. Lots of other people also were in the same position because it was no easy matter to walk through the massive crowds -- in fact, from the point where I and my friends joined the march, walking to Hyde Park

direction. Many were carrying placards and banners bearing anti-war and pro-peace slogans and the whole area was throbbing with a medley of voices like the rumbling of distant thunder. At first I was afraid that I was never going to find my friends among the milling crowd, but fortunately I was able to locate them within a few minutes and together we joined a stream of marchers heading for Hyde Park. By the time we arrived at Embankment by the Thames, our number had swelled many, many times and we had become part of a crowd at least fifty thousand strong, all marching in the same direction. The thunder was distant no longer, echoing and re-echoing all around us, engulfing us from all sides as we let ourselves be carried forward by waves after waves of slogan-shouting, placard-bearing crowds of people.

adding "Having so few arrests when so many people are gathered together with passionate views is a reflection on everyone involved -- the marching, the organisers, and police themselves."

Well, we arrived at Hyde Park around 4.30 p.m. I should say 'near' instead of 'at', because it was impossible to proceed beyond the perimeters of the grounds which were already packed with hundreds of thousands of people. From a platform erected at the far end of the park, a number of speakers were addressing the gathering. Although they were at quite a distance and could not be seen distinctly from where we took our position, the excellent public address system made them clearly audible. We caught part of the speech made by Tariq Ali, the radical left-wing activist who as a young Oxford student in 1968 had

from the crowd he declared: "I have one message from the people for Tony Blair -- Resign, Resign, Resign!" The other celebrities and politicians present at the rally included the former Labour Cabinet Minister Mo Mowlam, the Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy, the well known activist Bianca Jagger, the London Mayor Ken Livingstone, the veteran Labour politician and former MP, Tony Benn, pop stars Ms Dynamite and Jarvis Cocker, the Black American preacher and ex-US Presidential candidate Reverend Jesse Jackson who had flown in from New York for the occasion and the Hollywood actor Tim Robbins who was in London shooting for a film. (Incidentally, Tim Robbins' wife Sandra Sarandon was taking part in a similar rally in New York that day.) But as I have said before, we missed the speeches made by most

tainly not the same thing as watching the real thing. The only other speaker we had the chance to hear live was Ken Livingstone who said: "The British people will not tolerate being used to prop up the most corrupt and racist American administration in more than 80 years."

By that time it was nearly 6 o'clock and rapidly getting dark. At this time of the year darkness descends quite early in this country, besides the sky had been overcast the whole day although fortunately it did not rain. Columns of people were still making their way towards Hyde Park, the crowd behind us was already several thousand deep. The singer Ms Dynamite now took the stage to close the rally with a song. Before going into her number she directed a question at the British PM: "How will you cope with the guilt and the sea of blood which will remain on your hands?" she asked. "Don't underestimate or insult our intelligence," she warned: "Let the truth be told."

Well, whether Mr Blair will heed that warning or not is a different question. Perhaps he will, perhaps not. As one columnist for a London weekly made the tongue-in-the-cheek remark: "Mr Blair may well say that out of Britain's 57 million population, only 2 million took part in the anti-war rally, so that leaves 55 million who have not let their views known." And there is also the question that whether Mr Blair remains a staunch ally of Mr Bush in his war against Iraq or decides otherwise, how much difference will it really make to the US position? At the moment he appears determined to maintain his robust position on Iraq and he and Mr Bush have issued another -- perhaps the final -- ultimatum to the Iraqi President. Mr Blair has also had a private audience in the Vatican with Pope John Paul II, the leader of the world's one billion Roman Catholics and one of the most outspoken moral opponents of war against Iraq. Perhaps we will know one way or the other in the next few weeks. But whatever happens, my memories of the day - February 15, 2003 -- will remain forever etched on my mind.

LONDON LETTER

"Mr Blair may well say that out of Britain's 57 million population, only 2 million took part in the anti-war rally, so that leaves 55 million who have not let their views known." And there is also the question that whether Mr Blair remains a staunch ally of Mr Bush in his war against Iraq or decides otherwise, how much difference will it really make to the US position? At the moment he appears determined to maintain his robust position on Iraq.

would normally take about forty-five minutes, but that afternoon it took us more than three hours to cover the distance!

Anyway, on Friday, that is, the day before the march, my good friend John Welch, the poet, telephoned me to ask whether I would like to join him, his wife Amanda and a few others on their way to Hyde Park. I had never taken part in a march or attended a rally in this country before, so I felt it was too good an opportunity to miss and said: "Yes, I should love to." Accordingly around 1p.m. on Saturday, I arrived at Covent Garden where I had arranged to meet my friends. As I came out of the Underground station, I found that at least five to six thousand people -- men and women, the young and the elderly -- had already assembled there, with hundreds more arriving in continuous flows from every

Our number kept on swelling every minute as streams of people were constantly arriving and what was indeed impressive was that in spite of its vastness the march was exceptionally disciplined and orderly. We were with just a small fraction of the total number of people who had joined the march on that day in just one section of the city, but the same orderliness and discipline was perceived everywhere throughout. At the end of the day, a spokesperson of the Metropolitan Police admitted that during the huge scale of the event, the 3,500 police officers deployed at different points along the various routes of the march did not have to tackle any really serious incidents of disorderliness or rowdiness and a mere seven persons had to be arrested and removed. The Met spokesperson called this number "incredible",

led the anti-Vietnam protest in front of the US Embassy. Dressed in a red bomber jacket with a flowing white scarf wound round his neck, he was saying: "If there's one country which needs a regime change, it's Britain." His target, obviously, was the Prime Minister Tony Blair. "Bring Blair down!" he called, and the crowd responded with thunderous applause.

Another speaker, the noted playwright Harold Pinter, well known for his progressive views and leftist philosophy, was equally scathing in his attack on Mr Blair for siding with the US President in the planned war against Iraq. He read a short poem condemning war composed exclusively for the occasion and said, with direct reference to the United States: "It's a country run by a bunch of criminals with Tony Blair as a hired Christian thug." To loud cheers

of them as we were late in reaching Hyde Park.

I particularly wanted to hear Tony Benn speak because he is a politician whom I have always admired for his outspokenness and genuinely sympathetic attitude towards the ethnic minority communities. Later that night I was of course able to watch him on TV speaking at the rally. After making his speech, in which he made his opposition to the war against Iraq quite clear, he remarked to a BBC journalist present there: "Mr Blair says that he considers it his moral duty to liberate the Iraqi people by ousting Saddam Hussein, by force if necessary. But where is the morality in killing hundreds of innocent Iraqis in the process, which is inevitable if there is a war?" I also watched some of the others making their speeches on the same news programme, but it was cer-

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Hate begets hate

We are all sympathetic to the struggle for a homeland of the Palestinian people. But that does not mean we should outright hate a group of people because of their religion. That is racism. I am writing these things because of some shocking dialogs in a TV drama "Rumanar Golpo", I watched the other day.

In the drama, several characters were having a conversation about world politics and all the characters were portrayed as very progressive and educated as they made it sure by naming several books by V.S Naipaul and Amitav Ghosh. But I think these writers would shudder in horror if they heard the conversation the drama characters were having on national TV. The point of discussion was the current world situation with 9/11 and the Middle East. And at a point of this conversation one character says "Hitler was the right medicine

for the Jews"! Then he goes on to say that the 9/11 attacks were perpetrated by the "Jews" and that no "Jews" died in the world trade centre.

I was stunned when the ease these hateful and racist remarks were made by the very liberal (assuming) people of our cultural landscape. Wouldn't it be the same thing if someone said that all Muslims are terrorists in public TV? If this is what the liberals are saying and projecting in national TV I just shudder to think what the fundamentalist right is spewing.

A reminder to the intellectuals and the liberals of Bangladesh - hate begets hate. Do not commit the mistake of lumping everyone in a hate group just because of their race, religion, colour of their skin or nationality. It is exactly the bigotry and racism that we are trying to fight together.

Saeed Khan

Minnesota, USA

"Image of a nation"

This is in reference to the letter "Image of a nation" by Abdul Munim Chowdhury, USA (February 12)

I have been to the office of Bangladesh Consulate General in New York, 211 East 43rd Street and I totally agree with Mr. Chowdhury. As an American married to a Bangladeshi, I was appalled at what I saw. There was no promotion of tourism whatsoever and all the reading material was in Bangla!

At the same time I must state that the American Embassy in Dhaka is a fortress also staffed with unfriendly officers (American). It was filthy and also did not promote any tourism to the US either. Wonder why? How many tourist visas do they grant, less than 1% I am sure, but they are more than happy to take you \$100 dollar fees. Michele

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Mass murder and ethnic cleansing

In 1969 the UN organised and sanctioned a fraudulent unrepresentative "Act of Free Choice" in West Papua legitimising the Indonesian invasion and take-over of it. Since then many thousands of West Papuans have been killed as result of Indonesian military, police and paramilitary action.

For reasons of political convenience, indifference and cowardice this mass murder and ethnic cleansing has been ignored, countenanced and/or hushed up by the rest of the world particularly ASEAN, US, EU, China, Japan, Australia, Papua New Guinea and, of course, the UN itself. The murder and oppression of West Papuans continues right now. Unquestionably the UN should be taking an active lead in rectifying this situa-

tion which it itself arranged and legitimised. Does the

UN have any institutional independence, responsibility and accountability, or is it merely a tool to be used for the political and economic purposes and convenience of the powerful nations? The world needs an independent, responsible and accountable UN, and a forgotten, ignored, slaughtered and subjugated people needs help urgently.

John Finch
Australia

War on Iraq"

Apparently, MA (February 28) and all those who think that the looming war against Iraq is to get rid of Saddam Hussein seem to be missing the point. If they listen to American political analysts, pay attention to what the pro-war lobby, which includes right wing Evange-

lists and Zionists, is arguing in support for the war then they will find out that it has nothing to do with Saddam Hussein. But it has every thing to do with controlling the Middle East oil reserves in post Cold War scenario and also give Israel a freehand in handling Palestinians and its Arab neighbours. They also talk about the waters of Euphrates and Tigris rivers for Israel's use.

No doubt that Saddam Hussein is a dictator. But since when the US turned against dictators? Papa and Baby Docs of Haiti, Ziaul Haq of Pakistan, and Pinochet of Chile were the darlings of the United States. So were the King Hussein of Jordan and King Hassan of Morocco. True Saddam Hussein attacked its neighbours and built or at least tried to build weapons of mass destruction. But Israel has committed the worst crimes and still is the most favoured ally of Washington.

USA is risking the lives of its soldiers and billions of dollars not to liberate people of Iraq. As a matter of fact those who are advocating war on Iraq are the ones who cannot hide their hate for Arabs and Islam. They have only one thing in their mind when they talk about war. And that is how to serve their own interest. Are Muslims and Arabs aware of their own interests?

Jamil Ahmed
Houston, Texas, USA

Respect both Bangabandhu and Zia

I have no doubt that both the leaders Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman are national heroes and should be honoured and respected. They both played major roles in liberating our country. But I still feel that Sheikh Mujib should be placed above Zia because no one should be compared with the

Father of the Nation.

Do the Americans compare anyone with their Father of Nation: George Washington? No. Rather than arguing about this useless topic, we should be more concerned about the development of our nation.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

Bangladesh vs New Zealand match

The return/inclusion of veterans Akram Khan and Khaled Mahmud in the Bangladesh Team was a good move considering the inexperience there is at the moment. But the management should have made this move a bit earlier. Perhaps it would have come to the betterment of the Team's performance. Any thoughts out there?

Fuad Bin Rahman
Dhaka