

SSC examination results

Perseverance pays dividend in the end

WE congratulate the students who have come out with flying colours in the SSC examination this year. Not only that the pass rate is 59 per cent against 52.57 of last year and 49.74 of the year before, we are happy to see that as many as 24,384 students have scored the highest grade point average (GPA) of 5 in this year's examination. These successful students definitely deserve a pat on the back. They have not only made their parents happy and their educational institutions proud, they have at the same time instilled hope and courage in the heart of the nation to look forward to a brighter and better Bangladesh. We can say this without any reservation that lately we have been having a famine of cheerful news. We feel that spell was broken last night, and the joy and mirth of the successful students permeated every mind after the announcement of the SSC results.

We note that among the top ten GPA-5 scoring institutions, six are located in the capital, two in Chittagong and two in Comilla. And once again Viqarunnisa Noon School in Dhaka did brilliantly with 591 students securing GPA 5. That is the highest number secured by any school, and we congratulate the school authorities for keeping up the good show. Close on the heels is Ideal School and College with 525 students obtaining the same grade point. In Chittagong, 297 students of Double Mooring Collegiate School got GPA 5 while in Co-milla Zila School 271 got the same grade.

From the overall statistics emanating from the results it appears that boys have done comparatively better this year. The other positive aspect of this year's SSC examination is strict control of widespread copying in the examination centres. But, we also note with concern that a large percentage of examinees failed to cross the hurdle. The authorities concerned will have to look into the matter and extend special care to these students so that they may become successful next year.

We may conclude by saying that the SSC results this year further substantiates the fact that if one remains steadfast in pursuing the goal then success cannot remain elusive for long. There is no alternative to hard work. Today's successful students will face even bigger challenges from here on. We wish them all the best in their journey.

Banned Harkatul Jihad still active

Indifference of administration raises questions

THE detailed report of the activities of Harkatul Jihad, a religious extremist organisation, published in the local print media the other day, is not only alarming but also raises serious questions. Apparently an organisation that had been operating in the country for as long as 17 years was banned by the administration about four months back, and yet it continues to carry on with its activities freely. That many of the local religious scholars have openly declared their affiliation with this organisation makes us feel more concerned. Whereas the present administration is high with its claims of razing a war against the extremists, it is not understandable why it seems indifferent towards Harkatul Jihad. Such attitude raises suspicion.

One might ask with regard to the relative successes of the government in catching the JMB top rankers and its proud declaration, whether or not it was diverting public attention at gaining the much needed support for itself at this juncture of politics. The government simply must realise certain facts: that the kind of religious terrorism we are facing is part of the worldwide phenomenon; that the battle against this scourge is a continuous one; that it is an issue if left unattended may turn to the regime itself whenever there is an opportunity. People who run such organisations have a distinct agenda of their own backed by their highest level of commitment and absolute dedication. They are no ordinary criminals in the traditional sense of the term. Mere rhetoric on honest intentions and so-called successes achieved here and there will not either scare or drive them away. In that we fail to understand how a banned organisation is allowed to continue its recruitment, training and despatch of personnel to places abroad.

It is our impression that two things are evidently missing in the administration's efforts with regard to dealing with the religious terrorists; first it has not dealt the matter at organisational level and secondly it has not probed the source and free flow of their funding. The administration must be mindful of such serious flaws so that it does not fail to stem the rot.

Do we have a security policy for Bangladesh?



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

REVIEW of the security needs of Bangladesh has become essential within the current strategic environment in this region. Various facets are associated with security—both from the national and the international perspectives. These factors cast their own shadow on national interests that guarantee a nation its sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and economic viability.

In 1983, Harold Brown appropriately described the ability to ensure national security as the capability 'to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory, to maintain economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms, to protect its institutions and governance from disruption from outside and to control its borders.' As opposed to this clear format, the denotation of ensuring 'human security' has been vague, ambivalent and relative.

The Japanese, however, added to the connotations applicable to human security. Their love for precision expanded the context of security. Denied the right to maintain a large armed force after the Second World War, Japanese Prime Minister Ohira in the 1950s, decided that national security or human security for the Japanese could not just be mere sovereignty. Quite correctly, the Japanese leadership introduced the philosophy that security had to be viewed in its comprehensive context. Consequently, military security would have to be complemented with factors associated with public welfare, related to food, energy, environment, communication and social security. This necessitated

the creation of sound regulatory regimes and international cooperative mechanisms. It was felt that if this could be ensured, then the nation would be less vulnerable to extraneous factors.

India's perceptions of security under Nehru were an example of state effort geared towards self-reliance. The emphasis was on the creation of infrastructure and State ability to find domestic solutions to problems. That in turn meant over-

strategic defence policy would hardly be seen as compatible in the case of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal or Bhutan.

Consequently, foreign policy for countries like Bangladesh has assumed critical importance. Resource constraint has also meant finding trusted friends and forging alliances.

There are however some who want to go that extra mile. They feel that scarce revenue should be

have also read with great consternation that a lobby wants Bangladesh to invest in submarines. I can only hope and pray that such madness does not take over our leadership.

Our security concerns will not necessarily be allayed through hardware.

What we probably need is a more responsible mind-set. We need to tackle the situation by going to the roots of the problem.

breeze of the fan when I switch it on in the afternoon.

Our house, Bangladesh, is seriously unstable. We might be able to build a strong wall around the perimeter and think that we are well protected. That is however not the case. Our Armed Forces can protect us from external aggression. We have also shown in 1971 that Bangladesh is adept in guerilla warfare. I am not worried about that security. I am anxious about

is time that we realised that our national institutional capacity should be the basis for ensuring our own security as a State and also as its citizens.

It is good to have strategic friends, but ultimately we have to stand by ourselves. We have to remember that international respect for Bangladesh and decision to have Bangladesh as a strategic partner will only emerge from our own strength as a moderate, democratic country that believes in international law, in the maintenance of international peace and security and in international trade, based on accepted international regulatory mechanisms.

Bangladesh, I believe, should try and discover for herself the necessary soft power whereby we can regain and add to our existing status within the international community. Our security will lie in opening of fresh windows for those who are partaking the Madrasa format of education. This will give them an opportunity to move away from elements that have introduced militancy within the system. Our security will be re-affirmed through the containment of corruption and the ensuring of non-politicisation of State institutions. These positive steps will enable us to improve our human rights record; will assist in research and development and also in the extension of civic rights that are guaranteed for our citizens.

Our politicians have an important role to play in this regard. So does civil society.

Security cannot be obtained through the purchase of a few jet fighters and missile boats, particularly when we do not have the infrastructure to produce the required spares for maintenance of these costly machines. It cannot also be guaranteed with very large contingents of armed forces. What we need is a national conscience and respect for the principle of bipartisanship. What we require is a comprehensive approach.

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POST BREAKFAST

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regulation and state control over the economy. Dependence was frowned upon and seen as an infringement of sovereignty.

China under Mao dze Dong took international sanctions in stride in the formative years after 1949 and established her own security paradigm through a mechanism aimed at self-sufficiency. Mao believed that the fragile nature of security associated with Communism could only survive and be bolstered through finding solutions to the many problems from within, without any foreign direct investment. This course of action in Mainland China was diametrically opposite to what happened across the Straits in Taiwan. Supported by the United States, they relied on external assistance and gradually integrated with world trading systems.

In the contemporary world, where globalisation and deregulation have made inroads into every sphere of national life, national security has acquired an expanded dimension. It is no longer a question of just ensuring territorial integrity through military usage and power. This is particularly so for smaller countries like Bangladesh. The question of a grand design as reflected by India's

spent in procuring defence hardware and software and also in the arranging of local manufacture of sophisticated weapons systems. I am not so sure that this last bit of the wish list is suitable given our economic imperatives.

I am reminded in this context of my conversation with the Ambassador of a European country wanting to sell the latest generation jet fighters to Bangladesh. He was explaining to me that this particular aircraft could travel at twice the speed of sound and could cross the sound barrier 'within a minute or two.' I asked him a simple question 'which way should the jet travel without encroaching into Indian territory, and being shot down after a minute or two?' I also enquired how many hospitals of fifty beds could be set up with the cost of one plane. I am afraid I am no longer very popular with this Ambassador.

Nevertheless, we have since seen expenditure of scarce resources in the purchase and addition of several jet fighters into our Air Force. Instead of buying commercial jets (Boeing/Airbus), which might have eased pressure on the ageing commercial fleet of the Bangladesh Biman, we have opted for a debatable alternative. I

We have to understand that the security of Bangladesh, and all that it stands for, is today under threat not so much from external factors as from within.

The very foundation of Bangladesh and its ability to function as a sovereign member of the family of Nations is under debate. It has led to some foreign pundits suggesting, most controversially, that we are a 'failing State.' Others have given the Fatwa that we are on the threshold of being not only a source of international concern but are gradually evolving into a Taliban stronghold. This is indeed contrary to the current Government's views that the country is moving forward supported by a 'joar' (flood) of economic development.

I am afraid that ordinary citizens like me are unable to really see evidence of such glorious development. Security of the person, of the individual, of the institutions associated with the family or in the wider sense with the State is in a state of ruination. I have to wear glasses now a days. I need it to be able to read. I probably need better spectacles, which will permit me to see the flow of water when I open my tap in the morning or to feel the

the division within that is distinctly becoming a security threat.

Non-traditional factors are today impinging on our well being as a State. Terrorism, corruption, smuggling, dishonesty, adulteration of food and medicines, criminal nexus between the politicians and the mastans, politicisation of the bureaucracy and the judiciary, failure in maintenance of law and order are making us vulnerable as a State. We are creating for ourselves a situation where we might be confronted as a State with an implosion.

The next few months, till the end of this year, will either generate more controversy or bring consensus. We can either have chaos and confusion or sanity. We must understand that orderly governance is the best form for ensuring the security of the State. Morality, ethics, fairness and legality cannot be purchased from abroad. They do not come in containers nor do they provide agent's commission.

Some in Bangladesh consider that we need to balance our foreign policy by acquiring special status in our relationship with Pakistan and China. They consider that this will ensure our sovereignty against the efforts of other powers. However, it

A journey to nowhere



KULDIP NAYYAR
writes from New Delhi

IF the number of buses started between India and Pakistan were to be the criterion, the relationship would have been normal. The fact is that the enthusiasm over the inauguration of a bus does not last beyond the duration of the ceremony. Many buses have been started -- I have lost the count -- but they generally carry more officials and staff than the passengers. There are too many hassles -- an unending series of checks and rechecks, besides the hazards of going to Islamabad and New Delhi, as the case may be, to get a visa for the bus journey. I wish the two governments would explain the purpose behind this frustrating and non-productive exercise. I find people-to-people contact lessening, not increasing.

Apart from the bureaucratic lethargy, the recurrence of violence in Kashmir is pouring cold water on whatever work has been done to improve relations between the two countries. Who is instigating the terrorists or, more aptly, who is using them to sabotage the peace parleys? Many such questions bewilder the public. The bigger

worrying point is: how does violence help to solve the Kashmir problem? This is not the first time that the terrorists have gone haywire. They go over the exercise every now and then -- throwing bombs in crowded places or shooting indiscriminately at people, including women and children. The security forces respond to the incidents, equally ruthlessly, caring little for the violation of human rights. At times, the security forces

valley quickly. An average Kashmiri is on the dumps again because what he earns from the visitors meets his yearly bill and also provides him with some leeway for the winter when he produces handicrafts and woolen shawls and carpets.

True, the terrorists do not want normalcy to return lest Kashmir goes out of the world's gaze. But how does it matter whether the problem is on the backburner or on

layman will admit that the individual and the state terrorism have to stop for a congenial atmosphere for talks. But here all the three have a holier-than-thou attitude.

Let me begin with the Kashmiris. They are at best indifferent to the terrorists, if they are not their sympathisers. Once in a while, I hear the words of condemnation by the JKLF leaders. The Hurriyat too chips in with its remorse at times. The Abdullahs and Muftis, when in

India's own response to terrorism suffers from a particular slant. There is more dependence on the army than the political machinery even though the top brass have characterised Kashmir as a military problem. This may well be the reason why the proposal for demilitarisation does not take off. Even otherwise, when terrorism remains unchecked, no government can afford to take a chance, even though groundswell of opin-

Sheikh Abdullah, who was instrumental in integrating Jammu and Kashmir with India, told New Delhi as back as 1952 that the Kashmiris should never be made looking like supplicants in the Delhi durbar. He said his people would rather starve than accept India's wheat given as charity or gift. The state had acceded to the Union of India on only three subjects: defence, foreign affairs and communications. The Sheikh did not want New Delhi's encroachment in any other field, directly or indirectly. His straight talk cost him not only the state's prime ministership but also some 12 years of his life in detention at Kodaikanal in the south.

With his exit, New Delhi, under the very nose of his friend, Jawaharlal Nehru, changed the complexion of Kashmir and disfigured its identity on the plea that all the states in the country had to have, more or less, uniformity. Despite the limit of three subjects New Delhi usurped a lot of other authority which was Kashmir's according to the instrument of accession. Worse, after the Sheikh's detention, the chief minister of Kashmir was first selected by Delhi and then imposed on the people through election. The state had never free polls except in 1977 when the Sheikh swept the polls.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was wrong when he sent a letter to the state chief minister to justify the Sheikh's arrest. Nehru realised his mistake. But by then the damage had been done. The country is still paying for it.

Kuldip Nayyar is an eminent Indian columnist.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Sheikh Abdullah, who was instrumental in integrating Jammu and Kashmir with India, told New Delhi as back as 1952 that the Kashmiris should never be made looking like supplicants in the Delhi durbar. His straight talk cost him not only the state's prime ministership but also some 12 years of his life in detention at Kodaikanal in the south. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was wrong when he sent a letter to the state chief minister to justify the Sheikh's arrest. Nehru realised his mistake. But by then the damage had been done. The country is still paying for it.

have themselves been the cause of violence. One side blames the other. This vicious circle has continued for almost two decades.

I thought that the terrorists or their masters would have realised by this time that no amount of violence was going to force India to agree to something which it did not want to do. If anything, violence has made the Indian mind more determined than before. The process began after the Kargil war.

The recent killing of pilgrims and labourers, when shown on TV, spread a sense of horror throughout the country. Tourists who had flocked in thousands quitted the

front one? Kashmir is at the point where it was decades ago. The only thing which has happened in the meanwhile is that thousands of people have been killed. The terrorists have alienated more Indians than before. Still worse is the communal edge that the problem has acquired, restricting the space of secular Kashmiriyat.

I concede that the parties concerned -- Kashmiris, Indians and the Pakistanis -- have to agree among themselves for a settlement. But this does not seem to be coming in the near future. What should happen until then? Even a

power, are worked up against the terrorists. But once they are not rulers, they rationalise the terrorists' acts. In fact, I find a conspiracy of silence among political parties in Kashmir. The Congress is no exception. Otherwise, it is difficult to comprehend why the terrorists get shelter in Srinagar itself.

My suspicion is that political elements in Kashmir have come to develop a vested interest in terrorism. They feel that it acts as a pressure on India. Probably, it does. The idea of the roundtable conference of terrorists (called separatists) and others cropped up only after violence cut a swathe through Kashmir.

ion is in its favour in the valley. New Delhi is convinced that Islamabad has not given up terrorism as an option and 'retains' the training camps and recruitment centres.

Pakistan does not seem to understand the compulsions of a democratic system. The terrorists cannot hijack it with attacks here and there. Parliament is in no way cowed down by the attack on it. I am afraid New Delhi is not getting the Kashmir problem right. True, there are separatists in the state and I do not rule out the Pakistan assistance to them. But that is only a part of the problem. The real problem is the people's alienation.

OPINION

It's time they must quit

FEROZ M. HASSAN

WITH MA Aziz in the chair this Election Commission cannot deliver a credible election to the nation. Since the day Chief Justice Aziz was appointed as the Chief Election Commissioner he dealt with everything in a doubtful manner. He not only failed to establish his personal credibility but his actions, together with the actions of his chosen two other commissioners, have eroded the integrity of the entire Election Commission.

On January 16, almost immediately after the High Court verdict against the CEC not to go for a fresh

voter list, the number of commissioners was increased by the government. Two new commissioners, SM Zakaria and Mahfuzur Rahman, were appointed at a time when the disagreement between the CEC and the two existing commissioners started to sharpen.

The appointment, made in exceptional haste, clearly speaks of the motive of the government. Disregarding the High Court verdict, the CEC having got a majority in the commission, continued to carry on the work of preparing the new voter list.

One may recall the remarks made by SM Zakaria in the media about Commissioner Monsef and

The public has no confidence in the CEC Justice MA Aziz and the two commissioners, SM Zakaria and Justice (retd) Mahfuzur Rahman, in their ability to conduct a free and fair election. All the opposition political parties have expressed their lack of trust in them and have also publicly demanded their removal. Therefore it's time they should go.

Commissioner Mohammed and their 'ignorance of the law and incompetence as election commissioner'. Newly appointed Commissioner Mahfuzur Rahman also raised doubts about the validity of the High Court orders.

The image of the Commission has been greatly tarnished by the verdict of the Supreme Court

against the very decision that these two new commissioners, along with the CEC, have been relentlessly fighting for. The court decision dealt a severe blow to the credibility of the Election Commission. In reality it is the 'gang of three' which has tarnished the image of the Commission.

Soon after the CEC assumed

office he got himself into various controversies including the holding of a dialogue with almost non-existent political parties (except the ruling party alliance) and boycotted by the major opposition parties including Awami League, which received 41 per cent votes in the last general elections. Ignoring the opinions of the then election

commissioners the CEC MA Aziz unilaterally decided to prepare a new voter list. He did not pay attention to any legal advice and completely disregarded the opinions of the other stakeholders.

Political pressures continue to erode the integrity of the Election Commission. Public confidence is lacking in the Commission and its

officials. People, now, not only question the ability of the commissioners but also doubt their intentions. For the Commission to preserve its integrity it must not only be independent, but must also be perceived to be so by the general public and the political parties.

The commission's latest decision to update the voter list by asking the eligible voters to come to the Commission and register is a joke. This decision again speaks about the competence of the commissioners and the officers in the Commission. They are in effect asking millions of voters to travel miles to come to the Upazila office. The decision is not only

illegal but also seems to have been taken with mischievous intentions.

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Feroz M. Hassan, a former founder-secretary general of FEMA is Senior Joint Secretary General of the National Executive Committee of Bixopo Dhara Bangladesh.