

Dhaka, Wednesday, September 18, 1991

## SSC Results : a Double Jump?

The Dhaka Board sprang a pleasant surprise on Monday by publishing SSC '91 results without letting an inkling of the important event even to the Press. The dramatic action gave an impression of efficiency which one hopes is true enough in spite of public misgivings about thousands of scripts being lost and the poor candidates given arbitrary and 'average' numbers. The suddenness of the event also led many to feel that the Board was being rather prompt — which is not quite the case.

There are two very pronouncedly disquieting aspects to the results published on Monday. One very obviously relates to the percentage of pass. How could it jump to 67.58 from the niggardly 32.45 of '90 and below-50 figures for years in a row before that? There was a strong suspicion of the results being manipulated — and the most familiar kind of manipulation is ironically called 'grace'. We are sorry to note that has proven more than correct. The Controller of Examinations has owned up giving a 25-mark grace making it possible for many candidates failing even in two subjects to get across.

How many have benefited from this act of 'grace'? An intelligent guess would place the strength of this failed and yet passed students at 15 to 17 per cent of all that took the examination. This guess presupposes a genuine 52 per cent rate of pass which, compared to the previous year's 32.45, is skyhigh and is suspect over again. Were the examiners briefed to mark the script with their crying hearts at their finger tips considering that from '92 candidates would be required to take a completely different kind of examination and the left-overs from '91 should be reduced as much as possible in order to save them the cruelty of that eventuality? That seems quite a possibility. What in that case is left of what we all understand by the word examination?

There is another aspect to Monday's results. The Mirzapur Cadet College has captured 10 out of the first 11 places in the Science Group merit list, sweeping it down to the sixth place and missing out only on the seventh spot. The Mymensingh Girls' Cadet College made a round up of the remaining incommensurate spots with six places starting at a joint fifth. Both of these institutions deserve sky-rocketing congrats for that. But there are people who cannot take it with equanimity if only because the examination centres are situated at their own campuses. Their brilliant performance does not also speak well of the overall state of our secondary level education.

We are grateful to the Board for heeding the advice of making at least two "combined merit lists". It was a downright silly thing to mix the two very different sets from the marking point of view.

It is time that the Board started toying with the open examination idea allowing tens of thousands of boys and girls over the age of 14 who haven't gone to school or dropped out of them to appear for a test at a selected few centres leading to the regular final examinations. This will surely open up a new vista for the multitude which cannot afford regular formal schooling.

## Blow for the US

In a major blow to the prestige of the United States and to that of Philippines' President Corazon Aquino, the country's 23-member Senate voted 12 to 11 against ratifying the new 10-year military base treaty permitting the US military the continued use of the 15,000 acres deep-sea Subic Bay naval base. In a last ditch effort to save the treaty President Aquino declared her intention to hold a referendum on the issue later this year. It is a twist of fate that the Senate, which is composed of conservative politicians coming from the big business and the landlord class and normally expected to back the most important link with the US, is now voting against it and President Aquino, propelled to presidency through 'people's power', who was expected to oppose it — and she did in the early days — is now trying her best to keep the treaty going. The US military's direct involvement in suppressing the last coup against her may have had something to do in this dramatic change of heart.

Why did the Senate vote against the treaty, risking 30,000 jobs of qualified Filipinos and an income of US\$ 203 million a year, plus another several millions through base related activities? The reason is that the average Filipino considers the military base to be a colonial legacy and a sign of their continued dependence on the US. Military base, like nothing else, shows one's intimate link with another country. But if that country happens to be a superpower, then that link looks more like one of subservience rather than anything else. The Senators facing re-election in 1993 and at least a few of them aspiring to contest in the ensuing Presidential election, want to appear very strong on the base issue. To this reasoning was added the rather paltry compensation package that the US has actually offered. US\$ 203 million has been termed by most of the Senators as 'miserly', and one of them said it was an 'insult' to the Philippines.

Since the collapse of the Soviet threat and the warm relations between the US and China, the need to maintain such a large US military base naturally becomes weak. The presence of some 40,000 troops in South Korea, a large presence in Okinawa, in addition to the considerable US military presence in Thailand and the base in Diago Garcia make the case for Subic naval base difficult to justify. Why do the US require the Subic Bay naval base at all in view of the changing international situation?

On the other hand there appears to be considerable support among several Asian countries for a strong US military presence in the region. In a surprise development the Malaysian Defence Minister Najib Razak offered to expand military cooperation with the US if the Philippines Senate refuses to ratify the new treaty. Last year Singapore offered to relocate the base in case the US decided to leave the Philippines. Thailand and Brunei conveyed to Washington similar feelings.

The popularity that the opponents of the base treaty have, will make winning the referendum a very difficult task for President Aquino, who has her own political future and that of her followers' at stake. Whatever is the outcome of the referendum, it will be fought not so much on the issue of military links with the US, but more with the purpose of gaining grounds in the coming election.

# World's Arms Makers are as Busy as Ever

Alan Chalkley writes from Hong Kong

Despite the average person's perception of a diminished need for heavy expenditure on armaments, there is little or no sign of a global recession in the making, and trading, of arms round the world

equivalent of a year's living costs for hundreds of thousands of inhabitants.

Thus we have the spectacle of a million-dollar tank rumbled past a village, where its cost could have provided a whole new productive set of peaceful assets, which in turn could have doubled the income of the inhabitants within a few years. For several heavily-indebted nations, military debt accounts for over one-third of the total debt.

At the international level, there is a strong current initiative to reduce atomic and biological weapons (although some nations, such as France, India, China, Pakistan and Israel, resist giving up these facilities). But only minor attempts are being made to cut back on other arms: large naval vessels are being scrapped, but only because they are now ineffective.

Following the Gulf War, will arms spending decline? The probability is "no". That war showed the necessity for governments to buy the very latest weaponry if they want to re-

main militarily strong. The war was used by the leading allied arms makers as a test for their electronic wizardry, and their products are being advertised on this point.

Never has the arms trade been so international, or so competitive. Many nations now depend on weapons for large export earnings, and they sell hard in a buoyant world market — America, Britain, Russia, France, Spain, Brazil, China, Japan, Singapore and Israel among them.

There are fierce battles over the marketing of tanks, aircraft, fast surface ships, bombs and guns of all calibres. As if in a supermarket, a plethora of small arms (especially rapid-fire automatic machine pistols) is sold and smuggled all over the world. Fine engineering skills have been deployed in a line of famous machine handguns, from the Bren and Sten to the UzI, Kalashnikov and ArmaLite.

Belgian, Spanish, Czech and Swedish fine-steel craftsmanship is still important in the arms trade. The "cottage

industry" gun-makers of the Philippines, Pakistan and the Middle Eastern countries are very busy. And dozens of feature films and TV series glorify the firing of weapons and the exploding of bombs.

There is great pressure politically to increase arms sales. Some governments sign a disarmament proposal one day and launch big military sales missions the next. Japan is being urged by many countries to expand and modernise its armed forces, and the US Congress becomes angry when Tokyo fails to buy US military aircraft.

The richer Middle East and North African countries are an attractive market for arms makers, and the big industrial nations vie for customers there. China has developed a large small-arms trade through its state-owned "Northern Industries" corporation (the name Beijing uses for its giant Manchurian weapons factories). Without their weaponry income, many large companies would probably go bankrupt — among them Rolls-Royce, Chrysler, Raytheon, McDonnell-Douglas, Vickers and Renault.

At the same time, governments have to keep weapons out of the hands of the wrong users. The definition of "wrong," however, can change over time, and it is not unknown for two sides of a dispute to be using the same brand of weapon. Complicated

limits are placed on components and technology sales between nations (which are usually broken by well-organised smugglers anyway).

The UN Department for Disarmament Affairs notes that much technological advance is devoted to weaponry. Although "technology by itself does not threaten anyone," it seems that governments can be persuaded to finance such advances more easily if they are presented as defence needs.

Indeed, some "peaceful" arguments for military spending can be heard. A "citizen's army" is said to be a fine way of teaching skills and instilling social responsibility; this argument has been used in such varied nations as Indonesia and the US. Disciplined and skilled soldiers can build infrastructures (dams, roads, bridges) in country districts rapidly and cheaply. There is even an argument that army leaders make the best governments — they are trained in managing large bodies of men and materials, tend to be "classless," and can have high standards of morality and honour.

Much military space-age technology has "spun off" civilian gadgetry which, it is said, would otherwise have been far too expensive for the consumer-goods trade to finance. And so there are many voices speaking for the arms makers. The time of a weaponless world is still far away.

— *Dephineus Asia*

## Sources of Conflict: the Nuclear Gain

The only effective means of curbing the spread of nuclear weapons — and all weapons of mass destruction — is to remove or resolve the sources of conflict that fuel the desire to possess this capability, argues Jennifer Scarlott of the New York-based Campaign for Peace and Democracy.

NEW YORK: The revelation that Iraq has secretly been using a method employed by the West 50 years ago to produce material for nuclear weapons reveals that the institutions and laws developed to contain the spread of nuclear weapons are deficient.

In fact, the non-proliferation regime has been flawed since its inception because it has sought to apply technical remedies — in the form of safeguards and inspections on countries' nuclear activities — to a problem which is profoundly political in nature.

State embark on the road to nuclear weapons capability because they believe that doing so will enhance their political status and power, or will redress some grievance which makes them feel insecure.

Judging from recent declarations, the Bush administration evidently feels that the only way to get around the weakness of the non-proliferation regime is to rely on preemptive military attacks.

This summer's threats of renewed bombing raids if Saddam Hussein does not stop — in Bush's words, "lying,

cheating, and hiding" — vis-a-vis UN efforts to establish control over Baghdad's nuclear programmes, reveal a lack of faith in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) to rein in Saddam Hussein without offering any viable alternative.

This disastrous approach in effect further weakens the regime and creates stronger political incentives for states to acquire nuclear weapons.

Esoteric as it may seem, the matter of Iraq's cyclotrons has profound repercussions for the spread of nuclear weapons. It demonstrates that any country that can bring together electricity, a metal-working foundry, and a moderate amount of scientific know-how — the cyclotron's manufacture and use are openly described in scientific literature — can produce the material nuclear weapons are made of.

It also shows that the assumption among Western experts that countries covertly seeking to make nuclear weapons would use the advanced materials and technologies monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was wishful thinking.

In the final analysis, IAEA cannot ensure that illegal transfers of sensitive nuclear materials or know-how do not take place. Nor can it enforce sanctions. Non-proliferation experts calling for stronger safeguards are barking up the wrong tree.

Technically, nuclear weapons are uncontrollable, since there will always be loopholes through which determined proliferators will slip.

The Bush administration's resort to force to try to stem the tide of proliferation is equally unlikely to be effective. Military action will not prevent

Baghdad from building cyclotrons again once the coast is clear. And it will reinforce the perception that the use of force is a legitimate and effective way of resolving conflicts, indirectly shoring up the prestige and perceived utility of nuclear weapons themselves.

In addition, military action against Saddam Hussein would set a reckless precedent. Iraq, after all, is only one point on the proliferation curve. There are a number of other countries which pose a proliferation risk, including India, Pakistan, and North Korea. Is the Bush administration prepared to implement a military solution to proliferation in these countries as well?

The administration's general preoccupation with military solutions undermines non-proliferation in another important way.

By continuing to send large

quantities of conventional weapons to the Middle East and by pre-positioning US conventional hardware in Israel and several Arab states, the administration is ignoring the link between conventional arms races and the spread of nuclear weapons.

Growing conventional stockpiles have a tremendous destabilising effect in the region, with the likely outcome that more states will seek chemical and nuclear weapons as the ultimate trump cards.

If the technical remedies of the IAEA and George Bush's military remedies are inimical to containing or reversing the spread of nuclear weapons, what is the solution to the dilemma so starkly posed by Iraq?

The lesson of Saddam Hussein's cyclotrons is that the international community must look for ways to address the political, economic, and social causes at the root of conflict. As long as political conflicts

are allowed to fester in the Middle East and elsewhere, countries will seek more weapons, and the cycle will continue.

In the START treaty, the Bush administration has before it a very clear example of the lesson that political threats must come before disarmament.

The treaty, the first to actually cut strategic nuclear weapons after decades of Cold War competition, came only after the superpowers called off their political confrontation.

The same applies to other parts of the world, where persistent regional conflicts are feeding a ceaseless appetite for weaponry.

Without radically new thinking on the political underpinnings of proliferation, nuclear weapons — and all weapons of mass destruction — will retain their cachet as quick fixes in an international system far less stable than Bush's "new world order" suggests.

Jennifer Scarlott is co-director of the New York-based Campaign for Peace and Democracy and a fellow of the World Policy Institute in New York.

### To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

### Indemnity Ordinance

Sir, This refers to the letter captioned Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill published on Sept 13 in your esteemed daily. I endorse the view expressed by the writer and want to add a few lines.

The Awami League Bill to repeal Indemnity Ordinance needs a careful examination by the jurists and the politicians to see the motives behind it.

Khondoker Mushtaque Ahmed made the Indemnity Ordinance on 26th September, 1975 as President of Bangladesh during the period of Martial Law. He by a ML decree in 1977 inserted paragraph 3A in the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution to validate all his actions during the period till the end of Martial Law.

After withdrawal of Martial Law the Parliament by the Constitution (Fifth Amendment) Act 1979 (Act 1 of 1979) inserted paragraph 18 ratifying and confirming all actions during the period between 15th August, 1975 and 9th April, 1979 when ML was lifted.

Mr Shawfiqul Ghani Shapan (in his article 'Indemnity Ordinance and the Messy History' weekly Friday, 6-12 Sept 91) has correctly pointed out that the 5th Amendment of the constitution has saved the validity of the enactment of the Indemnity Ordinance and the actions taken thereunder.

In between the lines of the Ordinance, it appears that relevant certificates had also been issued to the persons whom the President wanted to indemnify. This action (issuance of certificate to indemnify) is clearly ratified and confirmed under paragraph 3A and paragraph 18 of the 4th Schedule of the Constitution.

The Ordinance appears to have exhausted its function. It is now lifeless. The repeal of the Ordinance will not make any difference. The action taken by issuance of the indemnity certificates is covered by paragraphs 3A and 18 of the 4th Schedule of the Constitution.

In this context Justice Abdur Rahman Chowdhury (in his article 'Indemnity Bill why the noise' — Weekly Friday, 6-12 Sept 91) has said that the Bill cannot be passed by a simple majority as an ordinary bill, since it has been made a part of the 5th Amendment.

M. Saleem Ullah Advocate, Motiheel C/A., Dhaka.

### The 'Amlas' we need

Sir, The dictionary meaning of the word is 'Amla' (as oft spoken in Bangla) 'officer'. Nothing wrong in it, nor is it an indecent word. Administration needs the Amlas. Yet this very word could not be taken by the general mass in good grace. Like others I myself too could not maintain a good or bright impression.

But, a few days back, I happened to visit the Foreign Ministry to obtain a forwarding from the honourable Foreign Minister for a book to be published on the expatriates.

I had to spend only two minutes in the reception room. From there I went to the Director General. He sent me to the Director. I stood hardly for a fraction of a minute in front his office, an aged well-impressive peon politely collected the purpose of my awaiting there. He then took me along, opened the door and introduced me to the

Director who did not spare a single minute in explaining to the peon to take me somewhere else, rather he himself got out of his room taking me along and passed me on to the PS of the Minister, explaining my purpose of visit in few words — "he needs a letter, please attend him". The PS heard me in a few seconds, sprang up from his seat and took me to another official's room and explained him my objective. He collected the synopsis of my book and my visiting card, placed those to the desk of the Minister, came out and informed that the Minister will go through it. It may take a day or two.

For the whole exercise it took me maximum four minutes. To tell the truth, I did not find any sign of displeasure on the faces of these young Amlas, nor they felt that they were discharging favour to me. They took as if it was their daily routine matter. Their matured consciousness of time saving (for both parties), smartness, at the same time, polite and polished attitude and serving tendency moved me much. It caused a revolutionary change to my 25/30 years of impression I maintained about the Amlas. They appeared to be a well trained well organised nicely concerted team at the Foreign Ministry.

May the whole Amla community, irrespective of rank and department, be inspired with this example, so that the very word 'Amla' is taken at high esteem by the people.

SA Hussain, Baranoghbar, Dhaka.

### Shortage of Govt. College teachers

Sir, A good number of posts of teachers at different Government Colleges in the country have been lying vacant for long. Effective teaching as such is being hampered causing a lot of inconveniences to the taught and also their guardians. This problem is impeding the

creation of suitable academic atmosphere which unless given due attention is sure to create discontentment in the educational institutions of the country. Although the government is well aware of this imperative but the given system of filling these positions through the competitive Service Exams cannot entirely solve this long-standing problem, because teachers coming out after qualifying in the BCS examinations are not many to cope up with the increasing number of vacancies existing in various institutions. As such the existing shortage of teachers still remains, as the core of the problem.

But delay in solving these problems may create a sense of uncertainty among the students. It is true that for effective education quality of the teachers is a priority, and for assessing the quality of the teachers competitive examination is a foremost necessity. Hence it is being conducted by the Public Service Commission. But this system of recruiting the teachers can be made easier if special BCS examinations are conducted by recruiting teachers from time to time. Many teachers in the non-government colleges of the country can also sit for this special superior service examination (held in consideration of the increasing number of vacancies). Many of them are age barred to try for government jobs. If special BCS exams are conducted giving opportunities to such age barred teachers fixing the limit at forty years, it will enable many of them to get absorbed in the vacant positions lying at the Govt. Colleges.

This on the one hand will include many experienced teachers and on the other, solve the long standing problem of 'vacant positions'. So the attention of the concerned authorities is drawn to the humble suggestion.

Sakawat Hossain Chowdhury, Lecturer in English, Pabna Cadet College.

### OPINION

## Control Population to Check Poverty

My heart saddened as I looked at the photograph on the front page of The Daily Star of 11th September, the day we were having the by-election in Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur area. Four women and twenty children are looking in despair at their shelters (we cannot call them impoverished structured even as slum houses), submerged by flood-water from rain. Their helplessness touched my heart. The simply naked, malnourished children made me depressed with thoughts of millions more unfortunate, under privileged children of our country. It does not matter anything to them who is going to be their representative in the Parliament or which system of government accepted. The system of government does not have any effect on them — until and unless they get the benefit from the system.

We have seen Parliamentary form of Government, Presidential form of Government, and again we are having a democratic Parliamentary form of Government. But the condition of the vast majority of our people remain unchanged. The disproportionate number of children in the photograph gives us an idea about the failure of our family planning programme and over inability to provide housing and education for the population. We all know that democracy cannot be effective as a means to development of any country where illiteracy and poverty reign over simple wisdom. Any Messrs Tom, Dick and Harry would conclude that Government of Bangladesh (no matter of what form it is) cannot implement effectively any development programme unless the basic problem of population boom is solved.

We agree with the President that the referendum on form of

government lifts our image as a democratic nation. But what about our image as one of the poorest nations of the world? Leaders of the political parties always speak about democracy, autocracy, referendum, amendment as if these are the only problems the nation is facing. What about trying to reach people their basic needs? What about identifying the main 'enemies', so that people start seriously fighting with the same? For the past months our elected MPs, speaking in the Parliament and outside the Parliament, are always blaming each other for any failure as if people had no role in these matters, as if only the previous governments were responsible for all their misfortunes.

I think (as a conscious citizen), it is high time our people are made to understand the problems and involved in efforts to change their lot. No government alone would be able to improve our condition by what had been in vogue — begging (seeking aid in other words). The people are to control the population boom themselves; they are to learn the letters to stand on their own feet; they are to grab the opportunity wherever and whenever apparent with self-dependence. And leaders should be there to inspire them, to lead them. But the government should give utmost priority to the appropriate planning and effective implementations of programmes on population, our number one problem, and see that people are obliged to not legally but morally, to cooperate with the government. They should clearly realise the number one problem as number one and sensibly feel that if the country cannot check the growth of its population, the nation is doomed to ruin.

Mumira Khan, Green Road, Dhaka.