Dhaka, Sunday, June 27, 1993

An Academic Aberration

Educational institutions have long lost their sacrosanct image, so have the teachers., But at least during the examinations held under the education boards at the national level, the examina tion centres try to pull together some of its missing aura of respect - notwithstanding the fact that the pretension to do so is sometimes amply betrayed. This false sense of sanctity associated with our education system is now being nakedly exposed. Thursday's abominable incident at Chittagong's Fatikchhari College centre where an invigilator's eyes were gouged out and two others' bones of various organs, including breast and rib case, were broken by merciless beating in a room by unruly mobs - only throw

It all started with a magistrate's attempt to stop a student from copying in the examination. The so-called student punched the magistrate and later on he and others of his type aided by several hundred outsiders ran amok, turning the examination centre into a battle field. For long three hours did the student-mob frenzy make a mockery of the law and order. During this barbarous attack on invigilators, teacher, magistrate and law enforcing agency, they particularly singled out the man of justice and two other invigila-

tors from other colleges of the area.

the residual respect in shreds.

If a student can, instead of feeling remorse when prevented from committing a wrong, take on a legal authority in a manner he did, situation is already bad. But when fellow students take his side, it is worse, and when outsiders, none of whose business this is, join in the fray, all hopes of salvaging the situation disappear. Evidently, this was a preplanned attack on the magistrate and teachers whose integrity dictated them to stop copying in the examination hall. We do not know about the college authority's role in this matter but going by one of the reports on the incident we understand that the police, college authority and the academic council of the college were only conspicuous by their absent when the victims were confined in a room and tortured The principal of a neighbouring prestigious college was very critical of this laxity.

The troubling question is: how could the law enforcing agency let it happen? If still it can happen — and it has really happened and is happening — one wonders if society is sliding into Mafia rule following Italy's example of dominance by the dreaded underground groups. Sure enough, the wielders of arbitrary powers do not always unleash a reign of terror by default of the legal presence but with patronage from powerful quarters in the face of which the law enforcers are either helpless or are made to extend their active or tacit supports. What is most baffling in this particular case is the outsiders' involvement with a vengeful mood. What price was paid for ensuring this mob attack or were it voluntary participation? In the answer to this question lie all the symptoms of a degenerating society.

The incident at Fatikchhari College can no more be seen as an isolated one. According to Deputy Commissioner A H M Abul Kashem, this year's practice of unfair means has far surpassed last year's level in the Chittagong Division. So have increased the incidence of attacks on magis-

trates, invigilators, vehicles and of ransacking of examination halls, reports confirm.

It seems the malaise did not become so complicated unnoticed but nobody cared to have it nipped in the bud. Today the vice has already assumed an unmanageable monstrous proportion. Tomorrow, the disease will gain further popularity, like the spree of acid throwing, in the untilnow uncontaminated other boards. But this apparently incurable malaise can be rooted out. A not-too-sophisticated playboy minister in the Ershad regime made a try and was considerably successful in his attempt. What is needed is a strong political will — one that is solely concerned with the improvement of the standard of education. Anyone found bringing the academic activities to disrepute must be meted out the harshest measure of laws. In the Fatikchhari case the criminals have to be brought to book through a judicial enquiry and be given exemplary punishment so that none dare act in the same devious manner in future.

A Stitch in Time

A sub-committee of the US House of Representative has recently passed a resolution strongly opposing the candidature of Beijing as the 2000 A.D venue of the Olympic Games. The action, prompted by human rights considerations, would go before the full House and eventually to the Senate. Whether or not this is passed finally and becomes the official stand of the United States on the 2000 Olympics, the resolution already constitutes an intervention in the working of the International Olympic Committee. We are happy that the IOC chief did not lose a moment in calling this as much and expressing his reservations about the same in very clear terms.

Attempt at politicising sport is nothing new. Most of the nations of the world had used sporting boycott, beside other sanctions, against South Africa to pressure it to give up its inhuman policy of apartheid. The boycott of the Moscow Olympics and a retaliatory one of the Los Angeles Olympics by a number of nations were, however, not born of any highminded idealistic staff that prompted the action against apartheid, but on the contrary were heights of intolerance and absurdity. Is the action in Washington by any chance a lengthening shadow of those unfortunate

episodes?

IOC chief Antonio Samaranch counterpoised the human rights argument with a better one when he pointed out to what can justifiably be called the IOC's South Koran achievement. An Olympic games held in Seoul, which had no better human rights records than the China of the Tienman massacre, can indeed be credited with helping a breeze of liberation to blow over the whole of that country.

Samaranch has said IOC members are not impervious to human rights implications and they can very much vote, on their own, against the choice of Beijing over the other contenders that include Berlin and Sydney, Manchester, Brasilia and Istanbul. But they do not at all need to be told to do so. In fact, it has patently been a faux pas on the part of the US House sub-committee to go for such an unprecedented resolution. And Samaranch's has been a truly redeeming action taken very timely to stem the bad thing before it travels any further towards involving the US government in it. We congratulate the IOC chief.

ELECTION IN CAMBODIA

Beginning of an Era of Peace or the Prelude to Civil War? The stage is set for a new phase in restoring Cambodia to normal condition. The Phnom Penh regime would

not have peacefully surrendered power if the power sharing was not worked out. No one can forecast with any

HE plot in Cambodia thickens. The aging hero, Prince Sthanouk, has assembled all the major actors or rather, all but one of the actors, on the stage. The United Nations is supposed to be the director of the show but no body knows for certain who is directing the play.

It is often said that the UN

operation in Cambodia is the most ambitious that it has undertaken so far. With a price tag of two billion dollars it is certainly the most expensive. But its mandate was rather modest. It was charged with the task of bringing back from Thatland nearly three hundred thousand refugees and organizing national elections in order to install a legitimate government in Phnom Penh. Since it was placed in saddle by Vietnam, most countries believed that the government headed by Prime Minister Hun Sen lacked legitimacy. Of course, in order to hold the election the UN had to secure a large measure of administrative and financial power, partially disarm the rival armed forces and repair the physical infra structure. This was the essence of the Paris accord which all the contending Cambodian factions as well as the five permanent members of the Security Council had signed. The ASEA countries which spear-headed the long campaign against what they believed to be Vietnamese expansionist designs in the region were also party to this accord. Accordingly the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was established with Y Akashi, a seasoned Japanese diplomat with long UN experience, as its

The repatriation and resettlement of the refugees from Thailand proceeded smoothly. Having been in charge of their care and welfare for five years and it was, for me personally, a matter of much satisfaction that these unfortunate victims of turmoil, brutality and civil

war had at last returned to their own soil in peace. But the UN operation came across its biggest hurdle when the Khmer Rouge, the fanatical Marxist faction with a large and battle hardened force, re-

certainty if the arrangement will work.

fused to disarm. Soon it was clear that the Khmer Rouge, fearing electoral defeat, was determined to sabotage the election preparations. The UN as well as the

United States and other great powers who were shaping UN policy reacted rather mildly. The reason was simple. The Khmer Rouge faction had the backing of China which did not want the Vietnamese influence in Indo-China to increase at its expense. The other four permanent members of the Security Council wanted the cooperation of China in order to make their decisions unanimous and hence they treated the Khmer Rouge faction with kid gloves. Thailand also had a soft corner for the Khmer Rouge which was opcrating from Thai sanctuaries for the last ten years. UNTAC thus faced a serious set back when the partial demobilization of Khmer Rouge forces, a major condition of the Paris accord, could not be implemented. However the UN proceeded with the preparation for the election without the participation of the Khmer Rouge. This faction had established its physical control over a sizable part of the country mainly in the western provinces but some in the central province - by force and it was clear that no matter what the UN did it was not going to give up territories it held. Its hostility to the UN forces was shown by several clashes and ambushes when some UN personnel lost their lives. Yet the UN military force, some 22,000 strong, could not fight

but more important, they were not supposed to enforce the Paris accord but merely implement it, with the voluntary support and cooperation of the four faction. In other words, the UN forces were not supposed to fight the Khmer Rouge or the other factions The Japanese and the Australian governments were not prepared to get their troop involved in military operations. It was therefore a most difficult and delicate task for UNTAC to continue the prepa rations for holding the elections without derailment or disruption. The Khmer Rouge actively sought to discourage voters from participation in

the polls by threatening retal-

impossible, to peacefully dislodge the regime headed by

Hun Scn and sought a coalition between Funcinpee and the Cambodian Peoples' party. In fact, he announced the forma tion of a government of national coalition with Hun Sen even before the counting of the ballots was completed. When the UN protested that this would preempt the election results, the Prince backed down. However, he was determined to ensure a peaceful transfer of power from the regime in Phnom Penh and a

coalition seemed to be the best

way. Therefore, once again, af-

Prince Sihanouk realized

that it would be difficult, if not

ON THE RECORD

by Shah AMS Kibria

iation. When it appeared that the UN would go ahead with the polling despite these subversive efforts, the Khmer Rouge, in a clever move to weaken the regime in Phnom Penh, threw its support behind the royalist party, popu larly known by its French acronym Funcinpec Sihanouk's son Prince Ranaridh is the effective leader of this party

In the election held under the auspices of the UN the Funcinpec — the royalist party has secured 58 seats and the Cambodian People's Party led by the government in Phnom Penh headed by Chea Sim and Hun Sen got only 61 seats. The Buddhist Liberal Party led by Son Sann secured 10 seats. Despite protests by the Cambodian Peoples' Party about alleged irregularities in the polling, the UN stood its ground and the attempt to over turn the election results

ter the UN duly announced the results, and the relative strength of the parties were known, a compromise with Chea Sim and Hun Sen worked out under which Sihanouk has assumed the position of the Head of state and his son, Prince Ranaridh, the leader of the majority party and Hun Sen, the leader of the second largest party, are designated as the co-chairmen in running the executive government. It is not an elegant arrangement but compromises are not often veryaelegant. The two men will jointly run the ministries of defence and interior. Meanwhile the UN will have to begin a massive operation of pulling out of Cambodia. It has been a thankless task for the UN but it has given the organisation much needed experience in assuming the responsibility of running a country's

administration under ex

tremely trying conditions.

have nothing but admiration my friend Mr Akasht who

The stage is set for a new phase in restoring Cambodia to normal condition. The Phnom Penh regime would not have peacefully surrendered power if the power sharing was not worked out. No one can forecast with any certainty if the arrangement will work. But the newly elected Parliament will perhaps get a breathing spell to write a constitution. It has been given three months to complete the job. Despite the rivalry between Prince Ranaridh and Hun Sen it is quite possible that the two men will have to solidify their coalition because of the common threat posed by the Khmer Rouge. This fanatical faction will not like the coalition government to stabilize and strengthen its hold in the country. It will most probably begin its operations against the newly installed government

without losing any time. Thus Cambodia is on the verge, once again, of a civil war which the UN tried so hard to prevent. The Khmer Rouge faction was pampered by the UN and other Cambodian parties desp e us brutal record. The horrors perpetrated by Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge leader, when he was ruling the country, is still vivid in people's memory. Yet the faction seems to have some appeal for a small section of Cambodians who believe that only the Khmer Rouge will uphold the true Khmer culture and national interests. There is lively speculation about the nature and seriousness of the threat to the newly installed government in Phnom Penh headed by Sihanouk. Much will depend on the Chinese. If China stops giving political and military assistance to the faction as they have done in the past, its ca

pacity for a sustained guerilla war will be significantly reduced. The attitude of Thatland will also be crucial. Will Thailand give sanctuary to the Khmer Rouge guerillas? It will be politically difficult for Thailand to give any open support or sanctuary to these guerillas. Covert support is still possible though it is not clear why Thatland should continue to be seen as the patron of a universally condemned faction led by a man whose very name strikes terror in the hearts of the Cambodians. The Chinese may also be re-

luctant to continue their sup-

port for Pol Pot. If the gov-

ernment in Phnom Penh headed by Sihanouk is not particularly close to Vietnam, then China will have no special reason to give support to the Khmer Rouge faction. If this line of reasoning is correct then the ahmer Rouge will be eventually defeated. I said "eventually" because even without any support from any body the army led by Pol Pot has the capacity, according to most observers, to continue its guerilla fight for a few years. But without external support it will be a losing battle. Without replacement of its arms and ammunitions its fighting capacity will gradually get weakened. Of course, it is generally believed that the regime under Sthanouk will have the blessing of the western powers and therefore it is likely to get political, economic and military help from them. The scale will thus be tilted in favour of Phnom Penh. If, however, China decides to go on backing its protege despite disapproval and opposition from others, the Khmer Rouge guerilla operations may assume the character of a serious civil war. So the future of Cambodia depends, not only on the wisdom of its leaders in Phnom Penh but also other powers who have been using this small country as a pawn in their political chess board. The Cambodians are not yet in full control of their destiny.

Approaches to Drug Abuse Prevention by Dhiraj Kumar Nath sive systems for the collection curtailed, addiction and traf-

N order to reduce the human suffering, loss of life, social disruption brought about by drug abuse world-wide, the international community felt the need to adopt measures and evolve effective actions to treat all aspects and causes of the problem of drug abuse. Different approaches were thought to formulate appropriate strategy taking into consideration relevant social, economic and cultural factors conducive to drug abuse prevention.

SCHOOL OF THOUGHT : There are different views as to the best way of fighting drug abuse and illicit trafficking and of dealing with their attendant phenomena. According to one school of thought, it is the source of illicit supply of drugs that should form the primary target of concerted and determined action; for so it is ar-

ficking would cease or reduce substantially. The other school of thought holds that efforts to deal with, what has come to be regarded as a social scourge, should concentrate on the reduction of illicit demand for drugs. According to this school of thought, the more efficacious way of dealing with the criminal activities associated with drug abuse and illicit trafficking would be to reduce the illicit demand for drugs. For this purpose, dealing with the totality of the problems posed by drug abuse and illicit trafficking, both the supply of an demand for drugs, should be taken to break the link between demand an supply. In fact, UN Single Conventions on Narcotics drugs, 1961 as gued, if the supply is halted or amended by the 1972 proto-

back. They were lightly armed

col, Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances were framed and guided by the same considerations.

BALANCED APPROACH The International Conference on Drug Abese and Illicit Trafficking was convened at Vienna from 17 to 26 June, 1987 as an expression of the political will of nations to combat the drug menace on a world wide basis. Transcending the traditional concerns of the international community with the control of the supply of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and of the illicit traffic in drugs, the conference made a

major breakthrough by decid ing that a balanced approach was needed to deal with the plague affecting society and that the prevention of drug abuse and treatment and rehabilitation of drug abusers should be accorded the same importance in policy and action as the reduction of supply and illicit traffic. The 26th June of each year is thus observed as an International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

The Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline of Future Activities in Drug Abuse Control (CMO) as adopted unanimously in the Conference contains 35 action targets in its four chapters as follows : i Prevention and Reduction of demand, ii) Control of Supply, iii) Suppression of illicit trafficking; and iv) Treatment and Rehabilitation.

TARGTS FOR DEMAN REDUCTION: Let us concen trate on the prevention and reduction of demand, considering it as an appropriate approach for a country like ours To attain the objectives, tar gets have ben identified as follows: 1) Assessment of the extent of drug misuse and abuse. ii) Organisation of comprehen-

and evaluation of data. iii) Prevention through education. tv) Prevention of drug abuse in the workplace. v) Prevention programmes by civic, community and special interest groups and law enforcement agencies. vi) Leisure time activities in the service of the continuing campaign against drug abuse. viil Role of media. STAGE AN STRATEGY OF

DEMAND REDUCTION: There are basically three stages to achieve the goals of drug abuse prevention considering the demand reduction as an appropriate strategy for a developing country like ours. These are follows:

[A] Primary : (Incidence Reduction): At this stage, it is necessary to ensure that nonusers of drugs specially children and adolescents do not initiate the abuse of drugs.

This can be achieved by — i) Generating Awareness through Press Conference, Public forum, advertisements. ii) Public education, eg coverage on TV, Radio, newspaper features, school curricula, etc. iii) Attitude and behavioural change enforcement, such as, Peer counselling, parentteachers training etc. iv) Social and public action, cg school programme, creation of drug

[B] Secondary (Prevalence Reduction): It is necessary to ensure that experimenters and casual drug users do not escalate use and help them to return to non-use. This can be don by : i) Out-

free zones, police patrolling.

reach identification and referral, such as, community based information and referral networks, contact with social service agencies etc. ii) Intervention activities like crisis counselling, operation of health clinics, etc.

[C] Tertiary (Treatment and Follow-up): At this stage, arrangements should be provided for treatment of drugs addicts and recovery of such persons.

This can be done by - i) Detoxification of inpatient and outpatient. ii) Providing medical assistance and residential treatment. iii) Relapse Resistance, such as, house visits, after care programming, organising support groups etc.

In fact, among the different approaches to drug abuse prevention, the social, economic and cultural factors are in favour of 'demand reduction' as appropriate strategy. In order to counter the escalating incidence of drug abuse, there is urgent need to adopt the stages and strategies as highlighted above. For a country like ours, in fact, motivational factors can play a pivotal role to contain drug abuse.

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.

Oh Calcutta!

Sir, Dhaka wails, while Calcutta sings!

The cosmetic facade of Dhaka city becomes meaningless when the contrasts form a bizzare mosaic of socio-economic inequality.

In Calcutta at least one is comforted by the fact that the entire city is plain, simple but efficient. Old buildings, indigenous cars and a low profile people contribute to create an atmosphere of class congenial-

Truly, Jyoti Basu has done a

good job! Despite ethnic and religious differences the mass of Calcutta appear much more calm, controlled, united and humane than the Dhakaites!

If the poor man carries a chip on his shoulder, at least he doesn't throw it down at the least provocation. The most remarkable

achievement has been the near elimination of the beast of burden called the 'Rickshaw-wal-

Doctors are sincere and teachers dedicated.

No wonder many guardians who can scrape together the money are opting to send their wards to India for education. The number of patients visiting Calcutta has increased tremendously! These are disturbing signs. Signs of no-confidence on our own! Politicians should well understand the ominous signals.

The so-called 'Intellectuals' of Bangladesh should be buried in the past and a new set of young educated patriots must come forward before it is too

late to take action and ac-

A B Sattar Mohammadpur, Dhaka

......! Joy Bangladesh!

Public Health Service

counts. Politics of dis-unity

must end. Let 'Bangladesh

Zindabad' and 'Joy Bangla' be

united under a single slogan

Sir, Further to the Star editorial of June 17 on the proposed setting up of five more medical college in the country, it is understood that the national medical (treatment) policy is based on the western allopathi system. This system, although widely popular and effective, is very expensive, with elaborate procedures and methods of pre-testing routines before the medicine is prescribed. For developed countries, the patients can afford it, although the state has to bear a huge burden on health nationalization programmes.

It would be in public interest to clarify whether the government supports and encourages other systems of medicines such as homeopathy, hakimi, and kaviraji, along with the allopathic system; and whether the rural health services would be based entirely on the allopathic system.

Also, as you pointed out, the existing quality of teaching has to be improved considerably. Hence the announcement of a simultaneous upgrading project would be reassuring.

Allf Zabr

Dhaka

"Tariff burden on books"

Sir, I fully endorse Mr Shahabuddin Mahtab's views under the heading "Tariff burden on books" published in your paper on the 16 June 1993. I only wish the gentleman was more vociferous.

He gives three possible reasons for the government to have imposed these tariffs: a) to boost the publishing industry of Bangladesh; b) to increase badly needed taxes; c) keeping away harmful books of foreign origin;

It seems that only the third is a valid enough reason. Even this is a non-runner since far stronger harmful imagery is available invidious that are supposed to be banned but are equally easily available at any video shop almost anywhere.

So banning books is not going to solve anything. It's our minds we ought to worry

Any government that talks about an 'uplift in', 'education must for progress' etc. and then goes and imposes taxes on books is just mouthing platitudes and cannot possibly be serious about this aspect of its

I sometimes wonder whether donor countries/organisations take note of the attitudes of our government on issues such as these. I hope one of these groups is reading this letter.

It is high time for a Government Book Policy, It would be better still if the Finance Minister puts forward his reasons for the imposition of tariff on books. I certainly did not give him my mandate to restrict the scope of my education.

N R Choudhury Sylhet

OPINION

New Medical Colleges

Your editorial "Go Slow on New Medical Colleges" (The timely, factual, realistic and effective implementation examining critically many sysand the West, specially as the bring a big ovation for our chairman of the Bangladesh democratic government. National Education Commission, I lend my full support to your statement: "Lack of funds deplorable condition. A closer and lack of technical support look at the practical classes of have reduced our current all science classes starting medical colleges into mere from SSC to M Sc of all boards lecture centres Visit any and universities reveals a medical college and the colossal mess. All practical inadequacy of the facilities classes are more or less outbecomes obvious This has dated, devoid of required resulted in the drastic fall of equipment and facilities.

produce. ... adequate resources for proper and technology

taken a gigantic task of offer- ondary education and a project

Mofiz-ud-Din Ahmed

Daily Star, June 17) is indeed ing primary education to all, deserves serious consideration which is no easy means. It calls (or re-consideration?) of our for a capable and competent policy-makers and govern- management, constant watch ment. Having spent more than and supervision, regular half a century on teaching, re- scrutiny and evaluation and search and management of ed- consequential changes based ucation and research, closely on such studies and sincere efobserving the conditions of our forts of all concerned - teacheducational institutions and ers, guardians, officials, local studied the various areas of MPs and finally overall controleducation in home and abroad, ling authority. A successful implementation would do imtems of education of the East mense good to our nation and

Higher education, be it general or professional, is in competence of the doctors we Practical examinations are held just to satisfy the minimal While no body will object to requirements of certificates wide spread of education, far and degree awarding proless for professional education cesses - not for imparting and would welcome well supporting knowledge of the thought-out plan of the gov- theoreticals. Examinations are ernment, a move that hinders held on minimum number of the progress and deter the experiments based on available quality should certainly call for equipment, chemicals etc. A reexamination and critical condition is only helpful for study. Let us remember, our deterioration of educational medical colleges are short of standards in fields of science

Our government had started Government has under- an equipment board for sec-

for degree (pass) with assistance of aid giving agencies but the effect is of little or no significance. The situation is no better in our higher educational institutions including universities.

Now it indeed necessary to invigorate the existing science education-general as well as professional in terms of qualified teachers, equipment and lab. facilities and modernise the practical syllabuses and implement those in letter and spirit with adequate support for the theoreticals to enables the students to learn science through experimentations and apply them for economic development.

Therefore let our government rethink and reconsider the setting up of new medical colleges which is by itself praiseworthy but not desirable in the context of the existing condition of science education in general and medical education in particular. I would thus join you in urging the government to opt for a decision which is not based on political or partisan considerations but serves the national interest

The writer is a Professor Emeritus, Dhaka University; formerly: Founder Vice-Chancellor, Jahangirnagar University; Chairman, Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research; Chairman, Bangladesh National Education Commission.