Dhaka, Friday, October 1, 1993

Inspiring Faces and Disquieting Questions

Congratulations to all who have come out tops in the Dhaka Board HSC examinations. It is very difficult to determine whether their high performance is an academic or a media event. For eight days a year the print media, in particular, goes berserk dailies battle dailies in being generous about devoting space to the spectacular performers and ingenious about how to project them - four boards getting two pages each for their SSCs and HSCs. The boys and girls thus riding high into national highlight are in fact done a positively bad service by the media - they get the taste, the murderous and horrific taste of being focussed beyond rational and healthful proportions. Nothing much comes of this alchemy of becoming overnight celebrities besides being pushed under in human pressure for an appropriate follow-up to the already garnered position. In fact, nowhere in the world the national press gets such mad over academic exam result for whatever merit they may or may not represent.

We have on earlier occasions appealed to the board people to rectify two very eminently amenable things. What does this 'combined merit list' mean? It is meaningless bordering on idiocy. And, ye mighty good folks, why do you persist in calling the humanities 'social science'? You weigh the nation's total fund of receptive and creative talents at very important points of developments. What marks do you deserve for imparting Reading, 'Riting and Rithmatic and calling it social science? And worse, you have tailored, in the infamously ignorant Ayubian times may be, the contents of education in the humanities to fit that name and banished the emphasis on linguistic facility and creativity amounting to the development of a taste and love for our national literature. And what social science have you offered the pupils instead? Certain descriptions of social structures and skimpy pieces of very debatably partisan history, very transparently motivated, and a modicum of geography that gives you no idea of your spatial or geomorphological situation. And you call the wholesale damage social science? Phew!

It doesn't require a board top-brass to appreciate that while one can score full marks in Maths in its different offerings, accountancy and bookkeeping and even in subjects like physics and chemistry, no one can in one's sense expect to lit a hundred in any of the humanities subjects. Why bracket all of them in a so-called combined merit list? A star mark in the humanities is a thing of a very different order compared to a star mark in the science and other groups. Is that why you tried to 'scientise' evaluation of humanities so that pupils there can also score like the science students. Some writers have already demanded capital punishment for those responsible for the brainbashing of the nation through introduction of an assessment system that yields a reverse pyramidal results with most numerous coming out as the very best and the dross coming in a very negligible quantity. The logic is impeccable, but we would rather stop at calling this a national disaster.

A quick survey of the Dhaka Board results has claimed that girls have done better than the boys this time. We are happy with this sign of women catching up with the men swimming across the widest gulf of discrimination and prejudice and structured social injustice that divides one human being from another. But in fact, there is nothing new or surprising in the girls doing good in academics. The job at hand is to get more and more of them into the schools and in gainful employment to lessen our social imbalance.

A more interesting observation has been that many of the high performers have claimed not to have engaged private tutors. Good, very good indeed. But then they have read in 'batches' - something unknown to the world outside. Have they paid for reading in 'batches'? Paid whom? The selfsame set that teaches them in the college classrooms? Then what are the schools and colleges are there for? Yes, they are like government hospitals, recruiting patients on behalf of the private clinics the physicians and surgeons either own or serve. And how does a pupil opt out of 'batches' - if that is more than mandatory for colleges occupying the upper perches consistently for ages? Are the textbooks and class-room teaching not enough for a student to score highest possible marks? What do the teachers at the colleges teach in batches that they do not offer to their classrooms?

The happy faces of top-scorers are indeed warming and inspiring. But underneath their 12-yearstint as pupils lie so many disquieting questions!

Students' Attack on **Teachers**

Yet another teacher has been stabbed by one of his irate students. The reason — as it happens in most other cases - is the teacher's interference with the student's copying in examination. Only days before, the principal of Rajbari Government College, along with his wife and other members of his family, was stabbed by unidentified masked youngmen. Had these two unfortunate incidents been isolated, society could still be left to boast a decent value system. But they are just a follow-up of a vice that began to take hold in examination halls during the last SSC and HSC examinations. In one of the worst cases a teacher's eyes were gouged out, another's arms and ribs broken and

others severely beaten. An awful precedence was set then and the mastan students are merrily emulating the 'heroic spirit'. Not long before society witnessed an inhuman orgy of acid throwing. This new-found cruelty to reachers is all set to cause our society to bleed - and profusely. Teachers are not angles, nor are all of them culprits too. With all their fallibilities, teachers have done little to be rewarded so. If teachers can be made so easy target of the socalled students' wrath, the degeneration appears to be unrelievedly hastened by us all.

Then if the teachers have done a disservice to their profession, so have all other professionals in varying degrees. And teachers have to bear the responsibility of shaping the minds that are yet to be acquainted with the ways of the world. Both parents and teachers have failed in their duties but it is the teachers who are falling prey to this senseless violence. Something has gone terribly wrong with the values that hold society together. The question of resorting to all kinds of unfair and immoral practices have created a social convulsion that in its wake is contributing to a weird competition.

No law is strong enough to save teachers from their students' vengeful motives. The crumbling of a most strong pillar of society - that teachers truly are - may end up in disaster. Unless politics here becomes clean enough, and students find a clear guidance based on honesty, justice, respect for human values, the tragedy seems to be unavoidable.

Are We Witnessing a New Political Polarisation?

by Asiuzzaman

nce across the country has made the relation The bipartisan attack on Jamaat in parliament on September 20 indicated a new stand of the ruling between the ruling Bangladesh party but it does not necessarily mean that BNP has cut off relations with Jamaat. It was simply a message to Jamaat that the situation would be different if they (Jamaat) go beyond a limit in unleashing a reign of terror in different educational institutions by its student organisation.

Nationalist Party (BNP) and its post-election ally Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh stained. The schism became visible during a general discussion in the justprorogued session of the parcised the ruling party through liament when Jamaat came press statement and public meeting. Jamaat has also conunder scathing criticism from vened an emergency meeting of the treasury bench. The disthe party's working committee cussion followed the bloody clashes in Rajshahi University to review the situation. At the same time, it slightly changed where Jamaat's student front Islami Chhatra Shibir was held its political strategy and started responsible for killing of one campaigning for a caretaker government for holding any student and injuring scores of general election which the rulothers. BNP's student wing, the ing party opposed. Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Party insiders said that there also came under Shibir attack

HE latest wave of viole

are differences of opinion amoand the JCD activists reng the leaders regarding the portedly resigned en masse. relation with BNP. One group A rift is visible. But the including Jamaat's Parliaquestion that is buzzing in the mentary Party chief Mattur political arena is how wide it is. Rahman Nizami is in favour of is the ruling party severing its maintaining good relation with relations with Jamaat which BNP for another several years gave an unconditional support to BNP for forming the governbut the other group has suggested to go alone to weigh ment following February 1991 its original strength and for the election? Or in other words, is sake of its future politics. To the honeymoon over? The bipartisan attack on review the relationship Nizami reportedly sought an appoin-Jamaat in parliament on tment with the Prime Minister September 20 indicated a new Begum Khaleda Zia who stand of the ruling party but it avoided the request. The does not necessarily mean that BNP has cut off relations with Jamaat leaders who like to maintain good relation argued Jamaat. It was simply a mesthat the party gained a lot from sage to Jamaat that the situation would be different if they the support it provided two and (Jamaat) go beyond a limit in a half years ago. Jamaat and Shibir enjoyed similar treatment unleashing a reign of terror in

Hazarding a Guess on

Pakistan's Election

by Sadri Ispaani

chances.

different educational institu-

tions by its student organisa-

tion. BNP's latest role in par-

liament and JCD's action

against Islami Chhatra Shibir

caused a jittery feeling inside

the Jamaat. In the face of accu-

sation of killing and violence

Jamaat walked out from the

parliament and severely criti-

HY do my friends ask

the coming elections in Pakis-

tan? How would I know? I visit

Pakistan and have never stayed

there for more than a month.

go there to eat the fruits, meet

two, whilst memory serves

about the election in East

Bengal during the 3rd week of

First is the story of Mr.

Mothuddin, who started from a

humble beginning at Chua-

danga as a supplier of jute to

Ispahani. By 1954 he became a

Jute Trader having agencies in

Mymensingh and supplying

kutcha bale jute to Ispahani

Jute Mills in Chittagong. He de-

cided to contest the election

from Chuadanga on a Muslim

League ticket. The 1954 election

were held on two consecutive

days. After the first day polling

was completed Moinuddin took

a Hundi of Rs. 2000/- in

Chuadanga repayable by his of-

fice in Narayanganj. He needed

the money to celebrate his vic-

tory among his friends and

supporters. When he got up the

next morning he was informed

that all the voters who had

come to vote on transport ar-

ranged by him voted for the

Jukta Front contestant!

Moinuddin left for Narayangani

by 11.00 am. When the results

were announced Moinuddin not

only lost the election but his

deposit was forfetted. How could

Let me tell you a story or

friends and my relations.

February, 1954.

as to the outcome of

from the administration as the

ruling party enjoys. It success-

fully persuaded in securing a

number of strategic posts of

Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-

Chancellor in different univer-

sities which helped its student

front in gaining ground on

campuses. So they should go

with BNP for while more to face

I have assessed Moinuddin's

chances at the polls when he

who was born and brought up

in Chuadanga and was com-

and before the polling date,

was at the Tejgaon Airport to

see off Mr Gurmani and Mr

Iskander Mirza who were re-

turning to Karachi. Mr Gurmani

asked me what I thought about

the outcome of the election.

told him I knew only what the

governor Choudhury Khaliquz-

zaman and the Chief Secretary

Mr Azfar and IG Police Mr Doha

told me. Their projections were

that Muslim League would win

the election by a substantial

majority and would secure 70 to

80% of the seats in the

legislature. Mr Gurmani took

me inside an told me he did not

think Muslim League would win

visited East Bengal before, an

this historic visit for two or

three days came to right con-

clusion an those who rule the

province were completely wrong

the outcome of the polls in

Pakistan. The fundamentalist

Islamic Group will win with a

thumping majority. Will they be

allow to form the Government?

Remember, what happened in

Algeria could happen in Pak-

trialist and entrepreneur

The writer is a noted indus-

cate known as IRC. In case of

Yes, I will hazard a guess on

in their assessment.

istan as welli

Mr Gurmani who had not

pletely unware of his own

During the same election,

its arch-rival Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, the Awami League and the left-leaning

parties.

The focal point of the latest incident is the Rajshahi University where politics of Shibir was banned by other student organisations since 1982 following bloody clashes between rival groups. Shibir had failed to organise any rally or procession on RU campus until 1989. It started exposing its activities ahead of the anti-Ershad movement and reportedly decided to make the university its secunited anti-Shibir campaign was defused.

But on September 18 a midnight rampage by Shibir on RU campus shocked the ruling party once again when JCD came under attack. A group of JCD leaders in Raishahi guestioned the sincerity of the central leadership to protect the front organisation. This is for the first time the JCD launched a counter-attack along with other organisations in other parts of the country where the clashes flared up. In some places JCD alone fought against

dented stand in the parliament ruling party insiders said that some young MP, and freedom fighter leaders were chosen to speak on the issue there. Most of them became emotional, and made some exaggerated statements which were not approved

or discussed in the parliamentary committee meeting. It appeared like a revolt in the party as two members even offered to vote with the opposition if the latter brought a bill to ban Jamaat constitutionally. One senior party leader said that their speeches do not indicate the party's stand as the MPs are back benchers. But there were other reasons for which they were allowed to speak, a bit out of turn against Jamaat

The source said that for the past several months the ruling party leaders have been campaigning that BNP is a party of pro-liberation forces. The Awami League, which ruled the country after the independence. should not be allowed a free hand in claiming that they are the only pro-liberation party The BNP took the chance to show how many freedom fighters and pro-liberation people they have in the party and what they can do against the anti-libcration forces.

and Shibtr.

Only the speech of deputy leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury may be counted as the ruling party policy on Jamaat. Prof. Chowdhury did not directly

propose to table a bill to ban politics of Jamaat, like his party colleagues, and as opposition leaders, suggested. He said that the Constitution ensures political rights to everybody but it does not allow politics of violence. There is ample scope to think about banning the politics of those who are responsible for violence and terrorism, he told the House on Sept 20.

The matter was talked out according to the rules of procedure and the ruling party did not hold any follow-up meeting to evaluate their new parlia-

mentary stand. A senior ruling party leader who is one of the policy makers in the party said that the situation will be normalised in course of time, at least before the next parliament session, if

fresh crisis does not arise. He said that he thought Jamaat will ask its front organisations to refrain from violent activities

But the opposition, mainly the AL sources, said that the matter would not be ended so easily. The AL is planning to place a bill in parliament proposing ban on religion-based politics during the next session and would insist on the ruling party to pass it. Political analysts said that it would be a difficult situation for the ruling party either to accept or to reject the bill.

It is clear from the comments of ruling party policy makers that BNP-Jamaat relations are not being severed off. However many things depend on BNP's move if the opposition tabled a bill in the parliament. It may lead the country to a new political polarisation or discredit the ruling party once again as an ally of fundamentalist

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

ond stronghold, after Chitlagong University. Since then the university suffered from a series of unscheduled closure because of clashes between Shibir and other student organisations that left at least 10 students killed from both sides. At a certain stage Shibir started attacking the JCD in RU. A similar bloody clash occurred on February 6 of this year and an all-party unity was forged to fight back the Shibir. The Shibirites went into hiding in the face of united movement in Raishahi following the February incident but the BNP high command had reportedly asked them to discontinue the movement and subsequently

the Shibirmen. At least two Shibirites were killed in Khulna in retaliation. It was also for the first time JCD central leadership threatened Shibir of a dire consequence.

BNP insiders said that the ruling party took the matter se riously for three reasons. First because their own student organisation came under Shibir attack, second, it gave scope for the opposition parties to accuse the government of failing to curb campus violence, and third, the ruling party would not like Jamaat to become a powerful opposition like the Awami League.

Regarding the unprece-

United States: Fight of the New Right Neo-conservatives lash out against Clinton's multilateralism. Jim Lobe of Inter Press

small but vocal group of neo-conservative pol-A emicists and former office holders is charging that President Bill Clinton is selling out US interests abroad.

But it is unclear if their at tacks against multilateralism will have the same impact charges against former President Jimmy Carter had 15 years ago when foreign policy was defined as a life-and-death Cold War struggle.

The 'neo-cons' accuse Clinton of subordinating US foreign policy to cynical and feckless European partners in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and

worse, to the United Nations. "For the Clinton team, implementing the decisions of the UN Security Council and the Secretary-General in Somalia, Bosnia, Cambodia or wherever, is our foreign policy," hissed former UN ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick in the Washington Post recently.

"Even (UN chief Boutros Boutros-Ghali) must be surprised at the extent of the Clinton administration's commitment to global multilateralism," Kirkpatrick said, adding that it reminded her of Carter's "utopian quest for a global community"

Kirkpatrick's blast was part of a cannonade issued in August by prominent 'neo-cons' including the editorial staff of the New Republic magazine and columnist George Will who writes or the Washington Post and Newsweek magazine.

They complained about Clinton's plan to put US troops under UN command and his

Service reports from Washington. acquiescence in NATO's deci-

sion to give Boutros-Ghali veto power over the use of air power in Bosnia. Will charges Clinton with

"surrendering the Stars and Stripes" and attacks his refusal to insist on "America's specialness" as a moral actor in the

The New Republic said these decisions amounted to a "deformation of multilateralism" and compared them unfavourably to former President George Bush's "multilateralism (which) complicated, but did not inhibit America's war against Iraq".

'Neo-cons', who mostly let the Democratic Party in the late 1960s and early 1970s to protest the Party's anti-Vietnam War positions, split during last year's election.

Many supported Clinton's stance against Bush's passivity on Bosnia and his pressure on Israel to compromise with Arab neighbours. But some, like Kirkpatrick, lent Bush tepid support, worrying publicly that Clinton would turn out like

Clinton's appointments after the election gave them little comfort. Some of Carter's key foreign-policy officials, like Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Undersecretary for Policy Peter Tarnoff and National Security Adviser Tony Lake landed top positions, while

neo con leaders were by passed Their fears worsened when

Clinton retreated from promises to intervene in Bosnia, insisting instead that Washington would act only in concert with NATO and the UN Security Council

But what really got them were the of-the-record remarks to a group of journalists in May of a "senior official" later identified as Tarnoff.

He said ceonomic constraints on Washington required "a very different view of collective action than what might have been the case during the Cold War". Tarnoff added that while he could conceive of unilateral military action by Washington under Clinton, "these will be the exceptions"

"We're talking about new rules of engagement," he said. stressing the need for "genuine power and responsibility sharing" with US allies and the United Nations.

Clinton and Christopher insisted Tarnoff was talking out of school, but policy decisions have since bolstered the 'ncocon' conviction that Washington was moving towards the multilateralism so scorned by former President Ronald Reagan.

A presidential directive was drafted for the first time, authorising US troops for UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) under foreign command.

Clinton has also committed US soldiers to the PKO in Somalia (UNOSOM) even after its mandate expanded from a humanitarian to a "nation-building"

Clinton has repeatedly ruled out unilateral US military action in Bosnia, and has gone along with NATO's decision to give Boutros Ghali a veto over the use of air power there.

These decisions have clearly galled the 'neo-cons' who see them as an abdication of US global leadership "Oh, for the days of primus

inter pares," the New Republic wrote, charging that Clinton's notion of collective action required that Washington be treated as "just another nation."

Will and Kirkpatrick, who both question Washington's continued involvement in Somalia, say Clinton has substituted the pursuit of US national interests for the "goal of honouring the priorities of the UN secretary general."

Only Congress, which holds the purse strings for US foreign policy initiatives, can prevent the progressive loss of control by Americans of our resources and our future," says Kirkpatrick.

But the 'neo-con' pleas have fallen on mostly deaf ears. While some Republicans have voiced support for their concerns, foreign policy is not the attention-grabbing issue it was 15 years ago.

In the post-Cold War era, neither major party has achieved internal consensus on either Bosnia or Somalia, let alone Washington's global role.

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.

Industrialisation handicaps

Sir, Apropos The Daily Star news captioned "Reforms face opposition: Saifur' (23.8.93) wherein the Finance Minister was found lamenting about his frustration, due to opposition even from his colleagues in the cabinet and party stalwarts of the BNP in case of reforms both in macro and micro sectors of the economy. If such eminent personality like Mr Saifur Rehman invariably feels such frustrations so frequently, as this is not the first instance of his outburst lashing out at his near ones, what about we mortals running from pillar to post trying to invest in industries and facing the said ministers or their secretaries? ! narrate some difficulties being faced by my business associates, aspiring to divert to the new avenues for industrialisation as being encouraged by the government through the print and electronic media from time to time.

The impediments faced by the industrialist are honestly daunting especially to those who wish to divert from the trading sector. The first opening blow is struck when we turn towards a simple certifi-

an importer or an indentor or even both, it requires hardly 3/4 hours to become the brief case variety. In fact no extra premium is involved whether one has an established office or otherwise. Unfortunately, this magic issuance of IRC within 3/4 hours vanish in thin air once a case of an industrial IRC question arises. As in case of an industry issuance of IRC may take as long as 3/4 months or years, strictly depending upon the size and volume of production of the industry, irrespective of whether the industrialist is in possession of sanction letter of the industry in question from the BOI (issued from the Prime Minister's office). As, only after necessary construction and installation of the 'capital machineries up to the turn-key point is reached, then only can an industrialist receive the regular IRC/Pass Book for imports of raw materials. Since the duration of the construction of the factory/industry and subsequent arrival of capital machineries up to the installation and production may last for months and even years, the most painful part for the industrialist commences when he has to run from pillar to post for the IRC at such a late

stage of having invested his capital. I wonder if these cumbersome stages can be eliminated and issuance of IRC made as simple, in line with the commercial importers which, I am sure, will go a long way in attracting those who have been so long shy in joining the industrialisation of the country.

Salahuddin Jamal Banshghata, Chittagong

England, my England

Sir, Through you esteemed daily, I would like to extend a few comments to the English cricket team and their selectors.

In the sixth and final Test at the Oval in this year's English Ashes, Graham Gooch became England's highest Test run scorer, surpassing David Ivon Gower's 8,231 runs. Records are made to broken, there is no doubt about it. Hats off to Gooch for breaking Gower's record. But the way he and the selectors "let it be", by keeping Gower out of the scene, is really pathetic and unethical.

In cricket, a captain has a big say in selecting a team. The great Pathan, Imran Khan was a big example. Gower is probably the most stylish batsman of his generation and, no doubt, the most stylish England has ever produced. Gower has not retired and is still playing in the country. Prior to this year's English Ashes, there were only three playing batsmen who have crossed 8,000 runs in Tests

Gower was one of them. Prior to this year's English Ashes, Gower was the only playing batsman with more than 3,200 runs in the Ashes (Border surpassed him in the series). Gower is the highest English Test run scorer in the Ashes in England in one series (732 runs in 1985). Gower saved England from a 3-0 humiliation last year against Pakistan when he was recalled. Nowhere in the vicinity does one find the name of Gooch.

(Border, Miandad, and Gower).

My offense towards Gooch

will be finally established when one reads his autobiography. There Gooch says, Gower has been my worst failure of management. Gower never 'begged' the English selectors for keeping his captaincy, not to mention his side on the team. Gooch, however, did.

England has paid the price dearly for keeping Gower and Botham out of the Ashes this year. In passing, it may be noted, Botham is the second highest wicket taker in the Ashes (148 wickets), second to the great Dennis Lillee (167 wickets).

The act of Gooch and 'the wise English selectors by keeping Gower out of the scene and Gooch eclipsing Gower can never be accepted by the lover's of the art. Gower is the most majestic batsman of our time. Come back after 50 years and you will hear his name hailed in the ranks of Bradman, Hammond, Hedley, Sobers, Gavaskar and Richards. That is where his genius lies and that is where history will rehabilitate

Had the great priest of love and art, DH Lawrence been alive today, he, I am sure, would have written his "England, my England", pitying Gooch and 'the wise' English selectors.

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Sick movies

Sir, In Bangladesh owning a V C R is a luxury which most people can't afford, but there are a good number of cinema halls where people can go for entertainment. Most of the Bengali movies shown are obnoxious and weird, but our topic is not Bengali movies. Through this column I would like to draw the attention of the sensible people of this society upon the sort of English movies that are shown in various cinema halls of Dhaka. There was a time when decent English movies were shown in the halls. People of all standards went to these movies not only to find entertainment but also to learn something. Excellent English movies like Benhur, Antony & Cleopatra, Count of Monte Cristo etc were shown in these cinema halls. The type of cinemas shown now are far from satisfactory. Cheap movies with absurd themes are now shown in these halls. Most of these movies are made in Hong Kong.

Violence, sex, sadism are the subjects of these films. English used is of very low standard. What impact will these films leave on the young generation?

Have the companies which import such films given it any serious thought on how these films will motivate the young generation towards violence? Watching such filthy movies what should our boys and girls learn?

They will probably learn (1) some new methods of violence, (2) how to derive evil pleasure from sadism and, (3) as in these films slang is used, they will learn to use vulgar language.

People are still very much inattentive to the results of watching such films. The society will pay for this in the near future. Not only in the capital, such perverse movies are also being shown in other parts of the country. These movies are moving our young generation towards destruction. Ultimately they will lose all sense of judgement, will be unable to determine between right and wrong, will have no moral values. And will have aroused animality inside them.

Films are supposed to entertain and at the same time point out what is wrong and what is right, what is good for mankind and what is not, why we should discard violence and embrace peace. But these movies do the opposite. These films can be pointed out as one of the major reasons for two much violence in the country. Before it's too late steps should be taken to prevent import of such movies, otherwise the social cost will be immense and the harm caused will be incalculable

Towheed Feroze New DOHS, Dhaka.