

## Sagging Standard of Education

WHAT could be more poignant a testimony to the shocking slide in the country's educational standards than the fact that success rates in secondary and higher secondary examinations this year have been the lowest in five and three years respectively? At both levels, there has been a decrease of some 15 per cent in the passing rates - from 55.48 and 53.40 per cent to 40.36 and 37.47 per cent respectively. Now these two tiers of the country's public education system are left practically overburdened with some 316,702 and 536,283 failed examinees. In all likelihood, most of these students would reappear in next year's SSC and HSC examinations. So, the five education boards will have to deal with almost double the number of examinees that usually take SSC and HSC examinations every year. Such a huge load is bound to have a paralytic effect on the whole system. In other words, while the schools would have to reinvest some more academic hours towards readying the unsuccessful candidates for the tests, the boards will need to spend more in terms of money, time and energy to accommodate them in the examinations system. Overall, it is an unmitigated debacle and seriously calls for a rethink on our education strategy.

The harsh truth is that the system does not encourage quality education. We need to find out where the flaw lies. True, education accounts for nearly 15 per cent of the national budget. But, as percentage of GDP, it stands at just over two per cent, significantly lower than in other countries of South Asia where the average is at three per cent. Also worrisome is the fact that 97 per cent of the budgetary allocation for education is spent on teachers' salary, leaving virtually nothing for resource management, research, teachers' training etc.

Budgetary aspect aside, we cannot help blame the teachers for the debacle. Obviously, they are not living up to their responsibilities. Either they are not equipped and/or committed to impart knowledge to their students. They seem eager to give students private tuition in lieu of money, instead of facilitating the learning process of the students in the classroom.

Basically, the problem boils down to poor educational administration. The education ministry, therefore, should invite the leading educationists in the country for a brain-storming session to devise ways and means to ride out of the crisis at the earliest lest we are thrown by the wayside of a fast growing global mainstream.

## Local Value Addition Pleaded

BANGLADESH government's attempted circumvention of the US pressure on her to withdraw restrictions on formation of trade unions in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) has apparently met with disfavour from the US Trade Representative Office in Washington (USTRO). Chairman Rosenbaum of the GSP subcommittee of USTRO while reacting to our Export Processing Zone Authority's formula for selecting representatives to the proposed workers' welfare committees thought that this fell short of recognising workers' right of association thereby impelling him to recommend for a 50 per cent cancellation of GSP benefits to Bangladesh. The US President is the final authority in this matter and coincidentally our Prime Minister goes on a visit to the USA early next month. Abul Hassan, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs, who will accompany her to the US, is likely to try and persuade the GSP subcommittee chairman to see Bangladesh's point of view on the issue. Hopefully, even a partial withdrawal of the GSP facility will thus be averted.

That said, we now turn to the ups and downs in our story relating to the retention of GSP facility. Questions about use of child labour in the garment units and 'fake' certificates of origin etc had arisen in the past but thankfully we have solved these to the satisfaction of the US authorities, sometimes even becoming a model among developing countries like in the case of the accord on child labour.

Our suggestion to the government and the RMG sector leaders is that whilst we try not to miss out on the quotas we should not allow the passion for sheltered market to get the better of our best judgement, especially when the withdrawal of MFN as a whole is only four years away. Let us concentrate on building backward linkages to our garments industries for local value addition and self-reliance in the manufacturing processes with our export prices becoming competitive in an open, global market with no preferential access accorded to anyone.

## Security for Businessmen

LEADERS of the Dhaka City Shopowners' Association (Dhaka Mohanagar Dokan Malik Samity) met the DMP Commissioner at the Rajbari Police Line auditorium on Saturday and apprised the police boss of the existing situation in city markets. They have very rightly identified three areas of concern for the shopping malls, arcades and centres: traffic jam, toll collection and terrorism. The delegation leaders informed the police commissioner that traffic jam discouraged the buyers from visiting the shopping centres thereby ruining their business. They complained against the traffic police on duty who do not bother to do their job but show interest in collecting tolls from the trucks. The leaders believe that if the traffic police performed their duties properly things would be different. The police allegedly do not also take into cognizance offences of toll collection and terrorism even though these might have been reported to them by the victims.

The business leaders also expressed their dissatisfaction over the speed of the investigation in the recently instituted Shipu murder case in which the son of a ruling party MP is allegedly involved. As the business leaders were talking to the DMP commissioner they were perhaps aware that another of them was shot and killed on Friday midnight. Such murders are being committed almost every day in the capital. Though the DMP commissioner assured the Association leaders of removing all difficulties of the shopowners through the joint efforts of the Association members and the police, he did not forget to blame the national press for misreporting. He does not believe the situation is bad. We think he should look around with his senses open to make his own judgement right.

NO commission, much less the Finance Commission, can reopen its award. Otherwise, there will be no sanctity about it. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is a politician, not an economist. He could easily tell the perturbed Chief Ministers of 'progressive and performing' states to point out to the Finance Commission that its recommendations had hurt them. But he could not have had the verdict changed. It would have set in motion pressures and counter-pressure. Never has the commission revised its recommendations in the past. Nor has the government ever tinkered with them. They have been implemented as they are. New Delhi has very little leeway. The Finance Commission is appointed by the President every 10 years. It is a constitutional obligation to assess the share of states in central revenues.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has a point when he says that the better of states should not be 'punished' for doing well. But have they been? Allotting extra funds for the states that have lagged behind do not in any way indicate a prejudice or a bias against the developed. By pursuing the case of rich states, Naidu may mulet New Delhi. But he is not serving the case of country's homogeneity. India is one unit. The states are its limbs. Even if one of them remains weak, the whole body will suffer. To help them regain health, the affluent states have to forgo something. The aggravating factor is that they have practically no resources to fight poverty or

unemployment.

Most people in Assam, Bihar and UP - Orissa and Rajasthan can be added to the list - continue to live on the periphery. How can they be blamed if successive chief ministers have failed to deliver the goods? There is corruption, graft and misuse of funds. It is not a fault of the inhabitants of these states. Rulers should be punished, not the ruled.

The meeting, which Naidu held in New Delhi to unite the better of states, has not given

forget that they have used the money of poor states to develop themselves. Thanks to one banking system in the country, the deposits in the banks in Assam, Bihar, UP and Orissa have moved to the well-off states. What it actually boils down to is that the savings of the poor have benefited the rich. The World Bank and the IMF too have given most of their loans to affluent states like Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Naidu may say that he is seeking financial justice. But

economic political. The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has 303 seats in the 546-member Lok Sabha. Naidu's Telugu Desam Party has 27.

This number is crucial. The withdrawal of its support from the NDA can begin a process which can bring down the entire edifice of government at New Delhi. The BJP, the dominant partner in the government, realises the danger. That is the reason why every effort is being made to play down the situation. Suggestions have been made in private to rich states that they will be compensated through one package or the other for the 'loss' they might suffer at the hands of the Finance Commission.

However, it looks as if the protest raised by the developed states is only a storm in a tea cup. The crisis, if any, is disappearing. Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha has said that the complaint of rich states will be taken up separately. Still, the basic point remains. Why, after 53 years of independence, some states are too rich and some too poor? After five decades planned economy - the Planning Commission approves annually a state's plan - there is more hiatus between developed and the underdeveloped than before. Rich states are getting richer and poor states are getting poorer. The government should appoint a commission of

economists, public men and other experts to find out reasons for the lopsided development and the mistakes committed. This assessment is more important than the constitution's review, which is spreading its tentacles day by day.

Many years ago, when the national income went up by 42 per cent after a couple of Five Year Plans, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru raised a query:

To whom did the benefits go because the voice against hardships from all over had become louder than before? He appointed a committee headed by a "progressive" P.C. Mahalanobis. The committee found "concentration of economic power in the private sector more than what could be justified as necessary on functional grounds." But it wondered "how far this is an inevitable part of the process of economic development, how far it can be justified in terms of economy of scale and full utilisation of scarce managerial and entrepreneurial resources... and how far the growth which has taken place is unhealthy and anti-social in its consequences."

Even though the radicals found the report grist for their propaganda mill, they could not make a convincing case against the private sector because the report itself was not categorical in its observations. However, the committee never found out why the sun of benefits did not shine on some areas. The present government should help the nation know.

## BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

even an iota of thought to the privations of people living in the conglomeration of backward states. They are too Indians. True, poor states, called the BIMARU, have far more population than they can afford to feed, teach or provide healthcare. But what they need is a series of measures to control the birthrate, not the wall-like attitude to block any subtention to them. In fact, there has to be a leeway for the backward states to span some distance between them and the rich. Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka should also not

forget in the name of justice he is, unwittingly, strengthening the argument that backward states should be left to wallow in poverty and hunger. Their need is, in fact, greater. No doubt, Naidu has a clout. But this should not mean that his demand should reduce the extra money given to poor states. They too can turn back and say that their natural resources should not go beyond the boundaries of their states and that the money they deposit in the banks should stay there. The Prime Minister is naturally wary. The issue can be-

cleared when the rich states are asked to take up separately. Still, the basic point remains. Why, after 53 years of independence, some states are too rich and some too poor?

After five decades planned economy - the Planning Commission approves annually a state's plan - there is more hiatus between developed and the underdeveloped than before. Rich states are getting richer and poor states are getting poorer. The government should appoint a commission of

command area (Dhoom Ghat) between September and October miscreants were killed by firing squads. On coming to know about it I stopped the same forthwith."

Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Division, conceded that "there were rumours that Bengalis were disposed of without trial." Similarly, Brigadier Abdul Qadir Khan (Witness No. 243) Commander 93 (A) admitted that "a number of instances of picking up Bengalis did take place. Lt. Col. S. H. Bokhari, CO of 29 Cavalry, appearing as Witness no. 244, stated that "In Rangpur two officers and 30 men were disposed of without trial. It may have happened in other stations as well." An admission was also made by Lt. Col. S. M. Naeem (Witness No. 258) CO of 39 Baluch that "innocent people were killed by us during sweep operations and it created estrangement amongst the public."

Lt. Col. Mansoorul Haq, GSO-I, Division, appearing as Witness No. 260, has made detailed and specific allegations as follows:

"A Bengali, who was alleged to be a Mukti Bahini or Awami Leaguer, was being sent to Bangladesh - a code name for death without trial, without detailed investigations and without any written order by any authorised authority."

Indiscriminate killing and looting could only serve the cause of the enemies of Pakistan. In the harshness, we lost the support of the silent majority of the people of East Pakistan.... The Comilla Canton massacre (on 27th/28th of March, 1971) under the orders of CO 53 Field Regiment, Lt. Gen. Yakub Malik, in which 17 Bengali Officers and 915 men were just slain by a flick of one Officer's fingers should suffice as an example.

There was a general feeling

command area (Dhoom Ghat) between September and October miscreants were killed by firing squads. On coming to know about it I stopped the same forthwith."

Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Division, conceded that "there were rumours that Bengalis were disposed of without trial." Similarly, Brigadier Abdul Qadir Khan (Witness No. 243) Commander 93 (A) admitted that "a number of instances of picking up Bengalis did take place. Lt. Col. S. H. Bokhari, CO of 29 Cavalry, appearing as Witness no. 244, stated that "In Rangpur two officers and 30 men were disposed of without trial. It may have happened in other stations as well." An admission was also made by Lt. Col. S. M. Naeem (Witness No. 258) CO of 39 Baluch that "innocent people were killed by us during sweep operations and it created estrangement amongst the public."

Lt. Col. Mansoorul Haq, GSO-I, Division, appearing as Witness No. 260, has made detailed and specific allegations as follows:

"A Bengali, who was alleged to be a Mukti Bahini or Awami Leaguer, was being sent to Bangladesh - a code name for death without trial, without detailed investigations and without any written order by any authorised authority."

Indiscriminate killing and looting could only serve the cause of the enemies of Pakistan. In the harshness, we lost the support of the silent majority of the people of East Pakistan.... The Comilla Canton massacre (on 27th/28th of March, 1971) under the orders of CO 53 Field Regiment, Lt. Gen. Yakub Malik, in which 17 Bengali Officers and 915 men were just slain by a flick of one Officer's fingers should suffice as an example.

There was a general feeling

command area (Dhoom Ghat) between September and October miscreants were killed by firing squads. On coming to know about it I stopped the same forthwith."

Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Division, conceded that "there were rumours that Bengalis were disposed of without trial." Similarly, Brigadier Abdul Qadir Khan (Witness No. 243) Commander 93 (A) admitted that "a number of instances of picking up Bengalis did take place. Lt. Col. S. H. Bokhari, CO of 29 Cavalry, appearing as Witness no. 244, stated that "In Rangpur two officers and 30 men were disposed of without trial. It may have happened in other stations as well." An admission was also made by Lt. Col. S. M. Naeem (Witness No. 258) CO of 39 Baluch that "innocent people were killed by us during sweep operations and it created estrangement amongst the public."

Lt. Col. Mansoorul Haq, GSO-I, Division, appearing as Witness No. 260, has made detailed and specific allegations as follows:

"A Bengali, who was alleged to be a Mukti Bahini or Awami Leaguer, was being sent to Bangladesh - a code name for death without trial, without detailed investigations and without any written order by any authorised authority."

Indiscriminate killing and looting could only serve the cause of the enemies of Pakistan. In the harshness, we lost the support of the silent majority of the people of East Pakistan.... The Comilla Canton massacre (on 27th/28th of March, 1971) under the orders of CO 53 Field Regiment, Lt. Gen. Yakub Malik, in which 17 Bengali Officers and 915 men were just slain by a flick of one Officer's fingers should suffice as an example.

There was a general feeling

command area (Dhoom Ghat) between September and October miscreants were killed by firing squads. On coming to know about it I stopped the same forthwith."

Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Division, conceding that "there were rumours that Bengalis were disposed of without trial." Similarly, Brigadier Abdul Qadir Khan (Witness No. 243) Commander 93 (A) admitted that "a number of instances of picking up Bengalis did take place. Lt. Col. S. H. Bokhari, CO of 29 Cavalry, appearing as Witness no. 244, stated that "In Rangpur two officers and 30 men were disposed of without trial. It may have happened in other stations as well." An admission was also made by Lt. Col. S. M. Naeem (Witness No. 258) CO of 39 Baluch that "innocent people were killed by us during sweep operations and it created estrangement amongst the public."

Lt. Col. Mansoorul Haq, GSO-I, Division, appearing as Witness No. 260, has made detailed and specific allegations as follows:

"A Bengali, who was alleged to be a Mukti Bahini or Awami Leaguer, was being sent to Bangladesh - a code name for death without trial, without detailed investigations and without any written order by any authorised authority."

Indiscriminate killing and looting could only serve the cause of the enemies of Pakistan. In the harshness, we lost the support of the silent majority of the people of East Pakistan.... The Comilla Canton massacre (on 27th/28th of March, 1971) under the orders of CO 53 Field Regiment, Lt. Gen. Yakub Malik, in which 17 Bengali Officers and 915 men were just slain by a flick of one Officer's fingers should suffice as an example.

There was a general feeling

command area (Dhoom Ghat) between September and October miscreants were killed by firing squads. On coming to know about it I stopped the same forthwith."

Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Division, conceding that "there were rumours that Bengalis were disposed of without trial." Similarly, Brigadier Abdul Qadir Khan (Witness No. 243) Commander 93 (A) admitted that "a number of instances of picking up Bengalis did take place. Lt. Col. S. H. Bokhari, CO of 29 Cavalry, appearing as Witness no. 244, stated that "In Rangpur two officers and 30 men were disposed of without trial. It may have happened in other stations as well." An admission was also made by Lt. Col. S. M. Naeem (Witness No. 258) CO of 39 Baluch that "innocent people were killed by us during sweep operations and it created estrangement amongst the public."

Lt. Col. Mansoorul Haq, GSO-I, Division, appearing as Witness No. 260, has made detailed and specific allegations as follows:

"A Bengali, who was alleged to be a Mukti Bahini or Awami Leaguer, was being sent to Bangladesh - a code name for death without trial, without detailed investigations and without any written order by any authorised authority."

Indiscriminate killing and looting could only serve the cause of the enemies of Pakistan. In the harshness, we lost the support of the silent majority of the people of East Pakistan.... The Comilla Canton massacre (on 27th/28th of March, 1971) under the orders of CO 53 Field Regiment, Lt. Gen. Yakub Malik, in which 17 Bengali Officers and 915 men were just slain by a flick of one Officer's fingers should suffice as an example.

There was a general feeling

command area (Dhoom Ghat) between September and October miscreants were killed by firing squads. On coming to know about it I stopped the same forthwith."

Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Division, conceding that "there were rumours that Bengalis were disposed of without trial." Similarly, Brigadier Abdul Qadir Khan (Witness No. 243) Commander 93 (A) admitted that "a number of instances of picking up Bengalis did take place. Lt. Col. S. H. Bokhari, CO of 29 Cavalry, appearing as Witness no. 244, stated that "In Rangpur two officers and 30 men were disposed of without trial. It may have happened in other stations as well." An admission was also made by Lt. Col. S. M. Naeem (Witness No. 258) CO of 39 Baluch that "innocent people were killed by us during sweep operations and it created estrangement amongst the public."

Lt. Col. Mansoorul Haq, GSO-I, Division, appearing as Witness No. 260, has made detailed and specific allegations as follows:

"A Bengali, who was alleged to be a Mukti Bahini or Awami Leaguer, was being sent to Bangladesh - a code name for death without trial, without detailed investigations and without any written order by any authorised authority."

Indiscriminate killing and looting could only serve the cause of the enemies of Pakistan. In the harshness, we lost the support of the silent majority of the people of East Pakistan.... The Comilla Canton massacre (on 27th/28th of March, 1971) under the orders of CO 53 Field Regiment, Lt. Gen. Yakub Malik, in which 17 Bengali Officers and 915 men were just slain by a flick of one Officer's fingers should suffice as an example.

There was a general feeling

command area (Dhoom Ghat) between September and October miscreants were killed by firing squads. On coming to know about it I stopped the same forthwith."

Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Division, conceding that "there were rumours that Bengalis were disposed of without trial." Similarly, Brigadier Abdul Qadir Khan (Witness No. 243) Commander 93 (A) admitted that "a number of instances of picking up Bengalis did take place. Lt. Col.