

Way to fair examination: Some suggestions

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THE battle of SSC examination is over and we are now fighting the second largest battle i.e. the HSC examination. All our examination centres are battlefields. No body can say how long this situation will continue! Some days ago, we saw the shameful scene at Rajendra College, Faridpur during the Masters Examination. What more we can expect!

It seems that all concerned have been accustomed to this state of affairs and, with dismay, we observe that we have been totally helpless and have failed to bring any positive change in favour of holding fair examinations. Of course, it is not true that the examination authorities take no efforts at all. Every year we see that just 30 or some more days before examination, the Chairman and the Controller of Examinations of Education Board visit different district headquarters, meet the DCs, the UNOs and other officials and share with them their sincere concern about holding fair examination. The officers also suggest some means and assure the bosses of the Board of holding fair examination. Then the DC invites the heads of the school/madrasah/college in a meeting and, of course, gives a sermon about the evil of unfairness in the examination. The teachers also express their commitment. But, so far the experience mostly has been nothing but a farce. We get shocked when we see that some teachers are also involved in the act of unfairness. Somewhere some members of the law and order maintenance authority take part in the act of aiding the examinees; many guardians do not find fault with this; some community leaders say, 'don't be so cruel to the young pupils.' Then what to do to save our children from this curse?

I am sure, I am not the first one who is thinking over the situation. As a teacher and a guardian, this is just a reminder to the conscience of our appropriate authorities as well as the leaders of society and the citizens. Such discussion may help develop an effective system to eliminate the evil culture from our educational institutions.

Of course, meanwhile, over the last few years, some steps have been taken by the authorities for holding fair examinations, such as, shifting of teachers from one college to another in the rural areas, with-

drawal of some examination centres, sending of vigilance team from Board and National University to the examination centres, new marking system (grading) etc. and some results have come up out of these measures and some more will come, we hope. Nevertheless, the question now is that, is this enough to achieve the goals: growth of merit, creditable success in the examination and human development for which we send our children to the educational institutions?

My discussion here is not just to put forth some random suggestions for holding fair examination. First, I would like to draw the attention of the readers to the root causes of this prevailing problem and then to attempt for making a plan of action with some practical measures to solve it.

Since unfairness in examination is nothing but a by-product of a non-learning environment in institutions, therefore, in our action plan for fair examinations, we have to take up measures for creating a culture of learning in the institutions first with a view to standardising education.

According to my experiences in non-govt colleges (however, some of which may be applicable to govt. institutions also), I would like to mention the following causes which are responsible for destandardization of education.

In connection with the students

i) Students are not aware of examination from the beginning of the session.

ii) Most of them do not care for class tests and periodic internal examinations.

iii) Habit of selective study, instead of whole syllabus.

iv) Few students' political activities in the campus, totally forgetting their main role as students.

v) Habit of absence from classes.

In connection with the teachers

i) Teachers are reluctant to follow the work schedule circulated by the education authorities.

ii) A large number of teachers do not try to update their knowledge and skills.

iii) Some teachers do other business at the cost of their duties in the institution holding the reason that they are less paid and not regularly paid.

iv) Some teachers' involvement in party politics in the campus and thus some special attachment with some students which affect the examination.

v) Many of them lack in the pro-

cess and techniques, for want of relevant training, to make the class attractive to the students.

vi) Many of them feel that they are bosses, thus a gap widens between the teachers and the students, and that hampers the true learning spirit.

vii) Many of them encourage selective studies, instead of full syllabus.

viii) Very few teachers care for building awareness of the students in respect of learning, examination and human development.

In connection with institution

i) The Rules of Education Board and National University regarding admission of students and selection of candidates for public examination are not followed.

ii) Unfairness in appointing teachers: Sometimes party affilia-

tion, nepotism, influence of Govt high officials, MPs and Ministers and even silence or special interest of the experts nominated by the National University or Education Board affect the appointment.

iii) Teachers' activities are not properly monitored. Somewhere some teachers influence or compel the authority by showing power or making chaos and somewhere the authority is callous to this.

iv) Reluctance in developing library: It is seen that students are paying fees for library development every year but no books are procured. This leads to less habit less knowledge.

iv) Want of in-house training system for teachers and other staff. In some institutions, even two teachers of the same department do not share their style of performance and experience.

vi) Students' fees for their human development activities very often goes to salary-head.

vii) Very few attempts are made to motivate the guardians and organize the students towards creating a learning atmosphere in the campus.

In connection with the education authorities

i) Very weak inspection and monitoring system. Monitoring is unknown to the institutions. Very few institutions ever face any effective inspection.

ii) Want of facilities for training of teachers. Graduates, fresh from the university, do not know how to deal with the adolescent boys and girls and the seniors. Without fresher's course, the edifice just collapses.

In connection with the government

i) Frustration of the teachers of non-govt. institutions for disparity of emolument between teachers of same status of Govt and non-govt institutions.

ii) Non-motivation of the students of non-govt. schools and colleges for discrimination in physical facilities and tuition fees.

iii) Want of long term plan to standardize education.

Since unfairness in examination is nothing but a by-product of a non-learning environment in institutions, therefore, in our action plan for fair examinations, we have to take up measures for creating a culture of learning in the institutions first with a view to standardising education. More we can create such situation at institutions, more the students will award us with fair examination.

As regards an effective action plan to overcome the spoiled situation, I would say that there is no short cut way to achieve the result. We may have to take a reasonable period to implement it. To this end my humble suggestion is that a five-year

plan may be taken up to bring about a positive change otherwise every year we will shout and fight and nothing really will happen and thus this situation will only linger on. If we hesitate to begin the process now, we will nourish the problem like the curse of illiteracy. Before leaving the Indian sub-continent the British suggested to take up a forty-year plan to remove illiteracy from this part of the world but our leaders expressed their commitment to do it within 10 years and illiteracy is still a serious problem in the countries of the sub-continent.

The plan should include all the details of the programme of creating a culture of learning keeping in mind the goals to beat the already identified root causes. I do not dare to give here all the details of a model plan. Here I am giving only some

hints on making a plan and what components should be included there. The plan may be made through using the tool Goal Oriented Planning (GOP). This is a participatory planning method that includes representatives from all groups of stakeholders in the planning process and thus it becomes self-explanatory and it is easy to implement since it is a shared plan. The plan itself carries a value that binds every one to follow. The major components of the plan should include (a) orientation workshop for the teachers and the chairman and members of the management committee/governing body, (b) seminar for the students and teachers, (c) preparation of new updated class routine following the work schedule of education authorities, (d) guardians' conference, (e) human development activities, (f) monitoring schedule of the teachers' activities using a well defined monitoring tool, (g) schedule of class tests and internal periodic examinations, (h) reporting time frame, (i) role of the MC/GB, (j) review and re-plan etc.

However, I have some concrete suggestions for the education authorities: (a) They shall have to take up the responsibility of capacity building of the institutions. This will include management development, training of teachers, installation of school/college information

software for favour of bringing discipline in every section of an institution especially in management information system, administration and accounts keeping. They have to make up a well coordinated need-based five-year plan giving facilities to all institutions on priority basis and the information has to be circulated in the first quarter of the beginning year. (b) They should remain strict to their own rules. (c) They should plan a yearly schedule of inspection and monitoring. In this, the process of sending vigilance team during public examination may be included. (d) They should take the responsibility of appointing teachers instead of keeping it with the institution. (e) They should introduce special reward for the institutions which have self-initiated development efforts in education sector.

And now some suggestions for the government: (a) Government should immediately instruct for paying the teachers of non-government institutions the same emolument which they pay to the teachers of government institutions and energize the standardization process of education. In this case, Government can consider the income of the non-government institutions and arrange for the rest. (b) Government should make an appeal to the National Assembly to legislate necessary law to stop students' politics in the colleges and university colleges, schools and madrasahs at least for five years. (c) Government should implement its already prepared Education Policy.

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All health information to keep you up to date

Always children first

Looking after your baby's feet

- Cut your baby's toenails regularly with nail scissors
- Cut the nail straight across
- Don't cramp your baby's feet. The bones are soft and not fully formed, and socks that are too tight can make a baby's foot deformed. You need to give the foot room to grow
- Make sure all-in-one stretch suits are not too tight. They should be stretchy enough to allow your baby's toes space to wriggle
- Babies' feet may grow as many as three sizes in a year, so don't leave them in the same sized socks and shoes they were wearing six months ago
- Socks that are too short or too narrow can do as much harm as shoes that are too small. Look out for children's socks that are a suitable width and match the shoe size
- Have your child's feet measured by a trained shoe fitter from the first pair of shoes on
- Don't use handed-down shoes. Every child's feet are different and need shoes that have been individually fitted
- All babies look as if they have flat feet. In fact, they just have fat feet because of a pad of fat on the inner side of the sole which later disappears

How to prevent nappy rash

- Change the nappy whenever you notice it's wet or soiled
- Urine and faeces (soiling) are irritants, so the longer they are in contact with the skin, the greater the chance of nappy rash
- Most babies pass urine or soil their nappy during or after a feed, so change the nappy after every feed
- Wash or wipe the nappy area clean at each nappy change. Use soap and water and rinse well, or baby wipes or lotion. Dry carefully
- Use a nappy cream. It acts as a barrier to protect the skin from urine and soiling
- If the nappy rash persists or is severe, get help from your doctor to prevent it becoming worse

Tomorrow: Know your medicine

Mexico's past hints at future fights in free trade Americas

Leaders of 34 American nations agreed in late April to establish the world's largest trading block by 2005. But such agreements can have their drawbacks. A Gemini News Service correspondent studies Mexico's early experiences with international trade when it rubs against ecological, agrarian and human rights struggles.

JOHN ROSS writes from Mexico City

DISASTER struck Cordoba 10 years ago but the world took little notice of what has happened in this industrial town 150 kilometres east of Mexico City.

On 21 May 1991, an explosion at a pesticide plant in Cordoba's crowded neighbourhoods sent people running for cover. The conflagration fused a witch's brew of chemicals stored at the Anaversa Farmulary and covered the city with a black dioxin-laced pall of smoke.

Firefighters unaware of the poisons on site washed the deadly chemicals down the drain, contaminating the water supply. Within months, residents began to develop cancers.

Since then, more than 200 deaths associated with the disaster have been recorded. Yet as Rosalinda Huerta, a spokeswoman for the victims, observes, "the explosion and what happened to us afterwards are a blank page. No one knows about it because the government pretended that Anaversa never happened."

The reason for the cover-up: the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The governments of Mexico, the United States and Canada began negotiating a free trade treaty the same month as the Mexican disaster.

North American environmentalists were already complaining about Mexico's poor environmental record and news of the Anaversa tragedy would not have been helpful to Mexico's then-president Carlos Salinas, who put the clamps on the story.

Free trade is now expanding in the hemisphere. The leaders of 34 American nations gathered in Quebec City, Canada, last month and agreed to establish the world's largest free-trade block stretching from the North Pole to Tierra Del Fuego by 2005 under the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA).

The deal has had its critics, as demonstrated by the anti-globalisation clashes outside Quebec City during the four-day gathering.

Those protesters concerned that corporate integration will have catastrophic impacts on the environment, might consider how the globalisation of resource exploitation is driving together human rights, agrarian, and ecological struggles in Mexico.

The Anaversa fire fused such a coalescence. As a function of the NAFTA-induced cover-up, victims were refused treatment at local

government hospitals if they claimed their medical problems were a result of the fire.

The angry Rosalinda Huerta led a group of victims up to Mexico City and camped on the doorstep of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), insisting their human rights had been violated by the government's refusal to treat them. The CNDH eventually issued a scathing rebuke of the health and agriculture ministries for their treatment of Anaversa's survivors.

When CNDH's recommendations were ignored by authorities, the victims appealed to the Organization of American States Inter-American Human Rights Commission. The first time it had ever considered the violation of human rights as being the consequence of environmental disaster.

Examples of such globalisation-driven comings-together abound.

Take oil. Mexico is the sixth-largest producer of oil in the world and its petroleum resources are under the management of PEMEX, the state-owned monopoly that generates 40 per cent of government income.

When the Mexican peso collapsed in 1995, then-president Ernesto Zedillo deposited the nation's oil export revenues in the US Federal Reserve as collateral on a multi-billion dollar bail-out engineered by US President Bill Clinton.

To quickly pay off the debt, PEMEX pumped away full-blast particularly in the southern state of Tabasco where the most important land-based deposits are located venting and burning off vast amounts of natural gas, which triggered acid rainfall and put unwarranted pressure on the country's rusting infrastructure.

Pipeline blow-outs, fires and toxic leaks ruined cornfields and fruit-groves through which the pipelines snaked.

When a gigantic fireball killed eight farmers and charred farmland for kilometres around the rural village of Platano y Cacao, a local priest went straight to the CNDH.

The Commission ruled that the parishioners' rights had been violated by PEMEX's failure to adequately maintain its pipelines and compensation was ordered to be paid.

Human rights abuses, agrarian struggle and environmental disaster also converged when NAFTA opened Mexico's long-distance telephone market to transnational competition.

Modifications to existing legisla-

tion allowed unused communal farmland to be sold to private buyers. US-based GTE Data Systems was quick to seize the opportunity. Using a dummy company, GTE picked up farmland in Tepoztlán, just south of Mexico City, to set up a high-tech industrial park that would manufacture fibre optics for the long-line market.

To make the project more enticing to investors, GTE contracted golf's "Golden Bear" Jack Nicklaus to construct an 18-hole professional course on the site. But Tepoztlán's villagers "don't play golf" said the town's mayor, explaining the fierce resistance of local farmers.

The resource at stake was water. The golf club would have sucked millions of litres from Tepoztlán's fragile aquifer just to keep the greens green, and left the locals high and dry.

The villagers barricaded Tepoztlán and threatened to torch construction equipment. One farmer was killed by elite police and others were taken prisoner. But GTE surmised that the resistance was unquenchable and pulled up stakes.

Amnesty International (AI), an international human rights organisation, is a key player in another instance. Mexican farmer-ecologists Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera are high-profile AI prisoners of conscience and the London-based group has organized, along with the US Sierra Club, a worldwide campaign to set the two free.

Their crime? In 1998, the pair blocked mountain roads along Guerrero state's Pacific Coast to keep American timber giant Boise Cascade from clear-cutting in their area and drying up mountain streams that farmers needed to irrigate their corn patches. Boise Cascade used the NAFTA-inspired modifications to enter into "association" with powerful village bosses and set up shop in Guerrero.

The blockade curtailed Boise's log flow to its mills and the transnational closed down its operations and headed for Chile.

Soon after, Mexican army troops arrested and tortured Montiel and Cabrera. The two are now serving six and 10-year terms in a federal prison, although pressures by international organisations have provoked President Vicente Fox to review the sentences.

As free trade exposes the hemisphere's wealth to foreign markets, Mexico's experiences serve as a warning to those who ignore the environment and the people.

John Ross is a freelance journalist covering Mexico.

Excerpts from the 'declassified' main report of Hamoodur Rahman Commission

MILITARY ASPECT-VIII

IN spite of this and regular intelligence report of Indian troops movements immediately outside the border and even of local skirmishes we find, to our utter surprise, that the top leadership of the Pakistan army, including Gen Yahya himself and Gen Abdul Hamid stated that at no time did they expect open Indian intervention. We cannot but regard this as another glaring example of Gen Yahya living in a dream world of his own, utterly divorced from realities. Apart from purely military intelligence, the then foreign secretary stated before us that if the president ruled out Indian intervention he was under an illusion. The capabilities of the enemy included from October, 1971 onwards a simultaneous attack coordinated under Lt-Gen Aurora GOC-in-C Eastern Command, comprising three corps of approximately eight divisions strength. Of these, No 2 corps, comprising two divisions and one armoured regiment, faced Jessore-Kushia-Khulna area. No 3 corps, comprising two divisions, one independent brigade and two armoured regiments, faced Dinajpur-Rangpur-Bogra area and No 4 corps, comprising three infantry divisions and possibly two additional brigades faced Sylhet-Comilla-Feni-Chittagong area. Two additional detached brigades faced Momin Shahi-Jamalpur area. A parachute brigade was held at Calcutta as the command reserve. A number of artillery brigades of divisions facing China were also reported to have been moved to support the formations against East Pakistan. All of these forces would include a proportion of the 35 BSF battalions available to the enemy, in

themselves representing almost four additional divisions.

In East Pakistan IAF was capable of putting up 200 sorties per day for strike and/or any support and 200 sorties per day for air defence, that is a total of 400 sorties a day against East Pakistan.

For riverine and seaward support the enemy had naval support which was available from the base at Vishakhapatnam, which was specially equipped as a submarine base. The naval forces stationed in the Bay of Bengal comprised one submarine, the amphibious force capable of landing one battalion group supported by a squadron of tanks, approximately 5 patrol craft augmented by 20-25 patrol craft of the BSF and some frigates/destroyers.

Further it must be realised that naval forces are characterised by their complete mobility and ease of re-deployment. Thus the forces in the Bay of Bengal could always be augmented from the vast fleet based on the west coast of India in accordance with requirements.

The question has troubled our minds whether, this being the situation, we should not have done something to increase our defence capability in East Pakistan. We have elsewhere stated our view that the traditional concept of the defence of East Pakistan lying in West Pakistan needed at least some modification in the context of the circumstances prevailing in 1971. No effort, it seems was made to reinforce East Pakistan despite the threat that we have summarised above.

Generally the explanation given to us by those at the helm of affairs has been that no amount of addition of strength in East Pakistan would

have made any material difference. This is, of course, entirely in line with the traditional concept of defence that we have mentioned. If that concept indeed had been correct, we should have expected the opening up of the western front immediately after the all-out war in the East and that, in anticipation of such a war, all possible steps that could be taken before an actual outbreak would have been taken, so that on the open invasion of East Pakistan we should be immediately able to take necessary measures in the West.

Coming back, however to the explanation put forward for not reinforcing East Pakistan we know that it is entirely inconsistent with the fact that three infantry battalions were in fact rushed to East Pakistan as late as 26th and 27th November, 1971.

It has also to be realised that as soon as winter set in, around the middle of November, India would be less worried by the necessity of keeping any troops facing China. The USSR was already formally committed to help India and there was no apparent reason to fear the intervention of any other power. Consequently if India could time her intervention in East Pakistan sometime after the middle of November she would have, in addition to the forces that we have already mentioned, those that she had reserved for use in the north-east frontier area (NEFA). In estimating her strength on the western and the eastern border we have taken no account of these forces, which we understand amount to about five divisions. Out of these perhaps one or two could be pulled out to rein-

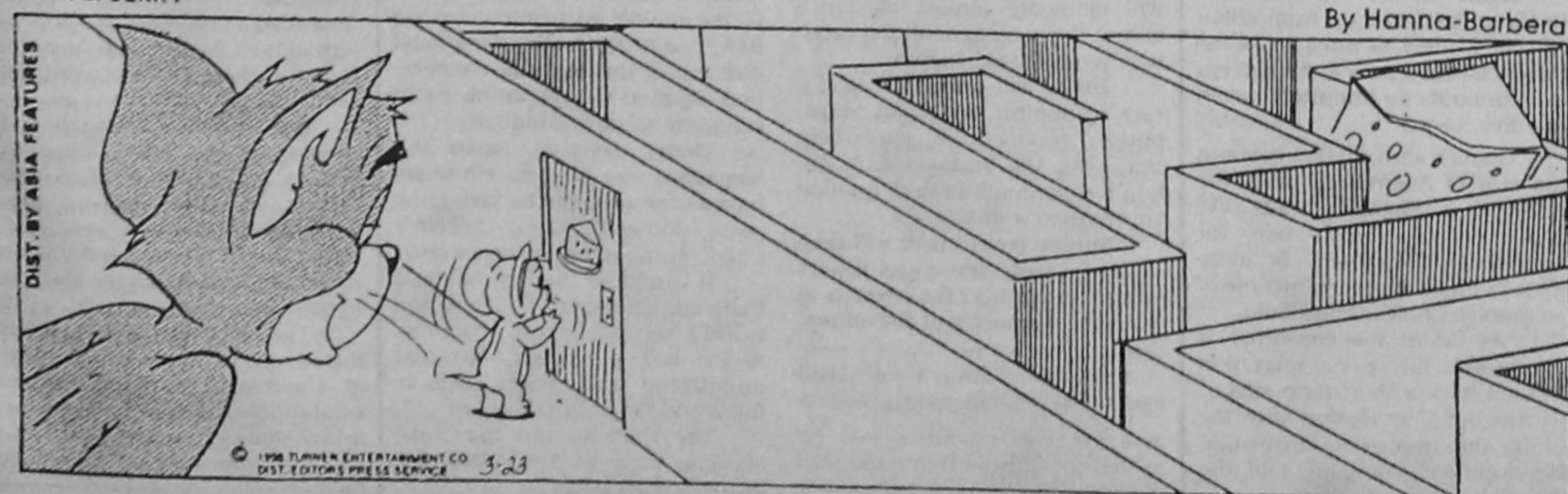
force the East Theatre. It should not, therefore, have been difficult to foresee that India would prefer to let things take shape in such a way that, politically, the climate for her intervention should become favourable during November.

When, therefore, Gen Yahya and Gen Hamid maintained that they did not believe that India would go to war with us, we are driven to the only possible conclusion that, obstinate in his determination not to negotiate politically with the Awami League, Gen Yahya chose to ignore the facts and imagined what he wished, namely, that there was no fear of Indian intervention.

Against this ostrich-like attitude of the then president it was the other world of fantasy in which the so-called hawks were living. During the course of the visit of the Pakistan delegation to China, headed by Mr Z.A. Bhutto, Pakistan was advised to avoid war and to use all other methods of achieving a solution if possible. We have had good evidence that Air Marshal Rahim Khan, then commander-in-chief of the airforce, and Lt-Gen Gul Hassan, then Chief of General Staff, were entirely averse to accepting this advice. Their view was that they had in their hands the opportunity of settling scores with India finally, though in the process they would have to write off East Pakistan.

Such a view, we must confess stuns us, both by its callousness and its entirely unrealistic ambition. The whole thinking, as we have pointed out before, behind the opening of the second front in West Pakistan could have been justified only on the basis that by so doing we would either relieve pressure in East

TOM & JERRY



By Hanna-Barbera

James Bond

BY IAN FLEMING
DRAWING BY MORAX

