

BCS question paper leaked again?

Let there be a scooping investigation

It was like a *deja vu* reading the headlines in almost all the national dailies on Saturday. Only six months ago, leakage of question paper for the preliminary test of Bangladesh Civil Service got as much coverage; in fact the allegation was so strong that the Public Service Commission had to cancel test. Though this time, there has not been any such announcement as yet, the allegations made by some of the examinees and the circumstances in which those were made can hardly be shrugged off. Something must have gone wrong in the system, otherwise why are we witnessing the same ailment one time too many?

The authority has been quoted as saying that the news of the leakage was a hoax. But some of the examinees have vouched that almost 60 per cent of the questions matched with leaked paper. In addition, four people have been arrested on charges of photocopying and leaking the question paper. On the earlier occasion too, the authority had denied the allegations in unequivocal terms but had to eat the humble pie after the government instructed them to cancel the test. What has been exposed is that sufficient precaution was not taken despite the first instance of leakage which reflects rather badly on the PSC administration.

The BCS examinations are important as tests for recruitment to the Republic's cadre services. Merit ranking is pivotal to the selection process. It cannot be compromised under any circumstances. Where has the sanctity of the examination gone? Something seems structurally wrong in setting question papers and keeping them in safe custody. Not just the sellers or the photocopiers, we want the real culprits identified and punished after a thorough investigation.

Widening dividers

Narrowing roads

DHAKA city's road networks comprise a small proportion of its total land area -- roughly eight per cent. This compares unfavourably with the road to land ratio in some major South Asian cities where it ranges between 12 and 15 per cent. The extremely limited road coverage in the capital city being pitted against surging numbers of vehicles on to its streets, we have had the worst kind of traffic jam in recent years. The road divider broadening flurry that one has begun to see around 20 important traffic intersections raises the spectre of further traffic congestion.

The constriction of the available road spaces is the most likely outcome of the large-scale widening of dividers with its attendant negative implication for traffic management. For the present, what we are seeing though, is the felling of plants and small trees lining the rejected dividers. Construction materials are strewn around blocking traffic in variegated ways. To top it off, in the re-laying of the dividers, coordination is visibly lacking between different utility organisations raising the possibility of a fresh spate in road digging.

The activities are going on under the World Bank-funded Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP), which the implementers say is designed to enhance the beauty of the city and reduce its traffic jams.

The thoroughfares, dividers, islands, fountains or other embellishments to traffic intersections ought to be the enduring facets of the cityscape. But, since 1979 up until today, road dividers have undergone 21 alterations. To cite an example, only one and half years ago, Dhaka City Corporation had spent Tk 10 crore in doing up dividers along certain roads under DUTP. But the DCC's slow pace of work has led up to the same project being handled by the Roads and Highways Department who are widening the same dividers. Add to this, the number of times the roads have been dug and filled in.

Can we afford such unbridled spending of public money year after year on infrastructure which should need just maintenance and not physical alteration so frequently? If one were to say then that it's all a game of money-making would one be too wrong?

The most pertinent question is: can the broadening of road dividers be placed in an overall context of a master plan?

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

CRUSADERS are back. Responding to Byzantine emperor Alexei's plea for help against the Turks at the dawn of the eleventh century Pope Urban II reminded the Christians of emperor Charlemagne's forcible conversion of Saxons into Christianity and of the battles he waged against the Islamic rulers of Spain. Pope's concerns were real. Charlemagne's death saw Christian Europe under attacks on many sides and the greatest threat came from the forces of Islam, militant and victorious in the centuries after the death of Prophet Mohammed(sm). By the eighth century the Muslims had conquered North Africa, the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, and most of Spain. Islamic armies established bases in Italy, greatly reduced the size of the Eastern Roman Empire and besieged its capital Constantinople. The Byzantine Empire, the torch bearer of the Greek civilization, faced a rival culture and a religion.

Pages of history of the time are replete with details of battles fought between the Christians and the Muslims from the early eleventh century to the end of thirteenth century. These battles of European efforts to retake from the Muslims the city of Jerusalem, sacred to the Christians as the site of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, were known as the Crusades. The crusading movement later included the wars against the Pagans and dissident Christians which resulted in the expansion of Europe thus forming an early part of European colonisation and efforts by western Christendom to carry their culture and religion abroad. Though the western colonisation process was not specifically targeted against the Muslims because the "white men's burden" of civilising the uncivilised was an universal duty, the conflict between the two great religions and cultures continued throughout the passage of time. Each convinced of the moral superiority of its teachings aided by the fanatics hammered to break down each other's door to bring to the "prisoners" the nectar from the heaven.

Proponents of the dueling civilisations found prescience in historian Bernard Lewis' observation dating back to the nineties that the world has a "clash of civilisations" Islamic vs. Christian and post-Christian; rigid theocratic hierarchy vs. permissive secular modernism charged with, as Lewis perceived, the Muslim world's "downward spiral of hate and spite, rage and self-pity; poverty and oppression". It

has been argued that the Muslim world is horrified by the fundamental debasement and moral corruption in western society, the west's tolerance of every sort of decadence fuelling Islamic contempt of a dissolute culture which effectively could be termed as a dereliction of duty by the church. This wavering and tenuous belief in Christianity by modernday westerners, it has been argued, resulted in the simultaneous assault by the followers of Marx and Freud -- one contending that evil springs from unjust social conditions created by unfair political

perpetuating unfair distribution of wealth in those societies; and perhaps the cardinal sin of US policy is its totally one sided support of Israel in the Arab Israel dispute.

Middle East road map is not seen by many as implementable or reflection of US equidistant policy in the Palestinian dispute. If the virtual regime change from Yasser Arafat to pliable Abu Mazen was necessary for a Middle East peace deal then it becomes difficult to understand how Ariel Sharon/ Benjamin Netanyahu or other Israeli leaders waiting in the wings can credibly

at the head of the Iranian Revolution would not have happened.

That US General Ginni who has had extensive experience of the region had given the Iranian clerics a few years at most before they are gone with the wind or that Michael Leeden of the American Enterprise Institute considers the Iranian people as the most pro-American in the area are separate issues. The fact remains that many Muslims retain a strong historical sense of the Anglo-French colonization of the Muslim countries which assaulted not only Islamic religion and culture

alternative civilisation that people actually wanted to live in after discrediting socialism, monarchy, fascism and other types of authoritarianism. Fukuyama, however, seems to concede that nine-eleven events might have strengthened Samuel Huntington's premise (*The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of the World Order*) that instead of progressing towards a single world order the world could be faced with several cultural groups and thereby produce fresh fault lines for global conflict. Fukuyama is also intrigued by Huntington's central question:

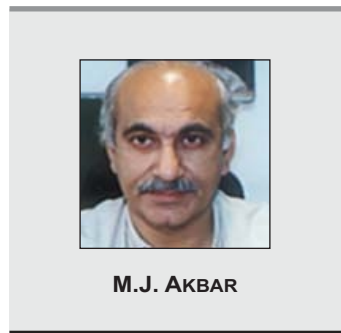
Equally one should think about the most recent rejection by the Arab Foreign Ministers to send troops to Iraq to share the burden of occupation being borne by Anglo-US forces. Ivan Elad of Cato Institute (Does US intervention overseas breed terrorism? December 1998) reached the conclusion that large number of terrorist attacks that occurred in retaliation of an interventionist American foreign policy implicitly demonstrated that terrorism against US targets could be significantly reduced if the US adopted a policy of military restraint overseas.

But would it necessarily be so? Jessica Stern of Harvard University advises the west to spend on health, education and economic development to prevent the rise of Osama bin Ladens. Former Turkish President Suleyman Demirel feels that fundamentalist forces draw sustenance from poverty, inequality, injustice and repressive political system. President Clinton held the view that forces of reaction fed on disillusionment, poverty and despair. But empirical study on Islamists and terrorists found them to belong "significantly above the average in their generation". It has been said that like fascism, Marxism-Leninism in their heydays, militant Islam attracts highly competent, motivated and ambitious individuals.

So if militant Islam is not a function of poverty and as Birthe Hansen of Copenhagen University puts it that the spread of free market, capitalism and liberal democracy is probably an important factor in the rise of political Islam, the West may have to look for a solution less confrontational and more based on diplomatic and, when necessary, economic engagements. In this respect President Bush's declaration that US respected the faith of Islam; British Foreign Secretary's admission of the existence of Christian, Jewish and Sikh fundamentalists along with Muslim fundamentalists; and Tony Blair's call to reach out to the Arabs and the Muslims; US resolve to encourage democratisation in the Muslim world and to forsake the policy of democratic exception followed hitherto; and western willingness to enter into dialogue with the Muslim world on the basis of equality and respect for differences -- are welcome signs. Faith is like Dresden china to be handled with care. While crusades will always remain a part of human history reenactment of the old scenes can only spell disaster for the world at large.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

A problem with a heart



M.J. AKBAR

SRINAGAR: If you want to see Pakistan, sit on your left; if you want to see the mountains sit on your right, said the pilot of Indian Airlines Flight-825 from Delhi to Srinagar. It wasn't a difficult choice. The Himalayas are preferable to politics any day. For the pilot, the 752 km journey of an hour and six minutes -- with half an hour added for the Indian concept of *chalta hai* -- is mundane. For a journalist, flying into the heart of a problem always raises a frisson, no matter how respectable the mission. There is neither crisis nor crisis management on the agenda of this visit. I am heading towards the University of Kashmir to participate, at the request of Ajit Bhattacharjee, now director of the Press Institute, in a seminar on "Media and Human Development".

Trust the earnest heart of Ajit to link the two. Media and Inhuman Development might have been a more truthful subject to ponder. But Ajit, one of the veterans of Indian journalism, still believes sufficiently in idealism to call the monthly journal of the Institute Grassroots. The roots of successful modern media are no longer in grass, but in the celebration of celebrities. The only grass that would-be celeb-journo are familiar with these days is the kind that is smoked in the undressing rooms of fashion shows. The only animal that roams through the pastures of modern media is big bucks. Since I don't get the big bucks yet, I place my hat in the

idealism corner. When, or if, the big bucks arrive I shall change sides. Here I am waiting to sell my soul, and there's no one around to buy it. Or, more accurately, no one both sensible and independent. By gad, Sir!, I am willing to trade with Mephistopheles as much as any newspaper chockfull with ads, but the devil must keep some place in hell for the joy of freedom.

"Please book your flight early since there is a rush," wrote Ajit Bhattacharjee in his invitation. The left eyebrow rose a cynical centimetre or two. A rush to Srinagar?

backward glance. Show Miandad a back and he won't miss it with his knife, particularly if he knows that he is hitting an already sore spot.

The darkest day in Pakistan's cricket history was surely the day the team lost to India in Bangalore during the World Cup in March 1996, not because Pakistan lost to India but because it lost a match it could easily have won and marched to a successive Cup trophy on the momentum. That loss has fuelled allegations of bribery that smoulder till today. Miandad is sanguine about the result, clearly because he

Lahore to watch the Sri Lanka-Australia final on 17 March, he is a smug wounded hero, rather than senior player of an embarrassed side: "I had nothing to hide and nothing to fear. The other members of our team apparently saw it differently. They stayed away from the public eye and slunk away to different parts of the country. A rumour started that Wasim Akram had been bribed by the bookies to miss the quarter final." Ah. I am not sure, you see, I just heard that these guys were crooks who had sold their country. "I had no personal knowl-

edge of this and as far as I could tell it was just a rumour..." So why lay such vicious stress on it, except to malign Wasim and implicate Imran without any evidence?

Let me tell you, Javed Miandad, something which is not a rumour: you are a marvellously talented cricketer, among the finest Pakistan has produced, but as a human being you are the pits. You inferiority complex has turned into permanent envy of those who might, through no fault of theirs, be better educated than you are. This autobiography has not exposed anyone you dislike; it has only exposed you. Normal guys have hair under their armpits; you think you have wings. They still stink.

Everything is nearby in Srinagar and everywhere takes a long time to reach. If it is any consolation, it used to take longer. Time is the best measurement of development: horsepower has progressed from being a literal fact to a metaphorical one. You reach Srinagar from Delhi at the pace of the 21st century, and then slip into the 1960s as you negotiate your way through the capital. The roads are jagged at either side. They do not travel straight, but lurch a little, as if in the first stages of drunkenness. The city has a corporation, but its problem is the traditional Indian one of corporation-corruption. Construction remains a busy fact, but control and planning are not the priorities of city planners. There is a sense of work all over, including the old road around the shrunken Dal Lake (it used to be over 41 square kilo-

metres in area and is now just about ten) but not yet of progress. Fortunately, nature cannot be corrupted or venal human beings would have managed that as well.

But there is growing sense of normal life, with even the security forces, guarding both themselves and the city, merging into the urban landscape. Long years of presence in the veins and sinews of Srinagar have created an easy flexibility of social manoeuvre. They live in patched cantonments, but saviour and saved chat amiably enough in shops, the tension diminished by the fact that both are equally vulnerable. Human rights violations continue, but the excesses have calmed. Any self-congratulation would however be premature. The culture of the gun is etched sharply on virtually every public moment of the visit. It is impossible to treat the sight of two men in T-shirts, their legs swaggering apart, standing behind the minister on the dais, the

BYLINE

Change has only one judge: aspiration. If change does not satisfy aspiration then it is inadequate. But change has reached the air. I do not refer to any change in the secretariat or the legislature, in names that fill the headlines or faces that occupy front pages. I saw change in the heart of a university. The library that was once a repository of dust is now clean, spacious, fully computerised, accessible to the world of knowledge.

Was this overdoing the PR? Or was the rush to Jammu, where the aircraft was scheduled to stop after Srinagar? We would see what we would see. I checked into my right-hand window seat, banished the evil of doubt, opened the book I had brought as travelling companion, and sank into the mind of Javed Miandad, another place where civil war has been raging since birth.

How do you write a book with a knife instead of a pen? Very easily, if you have the mind and passions of Pakistan's second-greatest cricketer, Javed Miandad. No wonder he called his autobiography Cutting Edge. He was not referring to cricket. He was describing what he intended to do to all the teammates who had played with him over a long career. Miandad has no time to hate the opposition; the rancour against his own side is all-consuming. His knife also has all the strokes in the cricket book: cut, slice, drive forward, sweep and of course the

believes that his team deserved to lose since he had not been named captain. He says as much: "Aamir Sohail was made the substitute captain in Akram's place when in fact I should have been asked." Aamir Sohail stood in for an injured Wasim Akram. Even though Akram had told Miandad on the morning of the game that even painkillers were not helping, Miandad strews his copy with poisonous suspicion. "Even as the time for the toss approached, we still thought Akram would be captain." Why, when he had no reason to think so.

Then the knife twists a little. "Imran was at the ground and I noticed Akram chatting with him, though I have no idea what they talked about." Of course you don't. But before you darken the page with insinuation, Javedbhai, just pick up the phone and ask. Both the players named have been your colleagues for decades. They would have taken your call. When Miandad reaches

edge of this and as far as I could tell it was just a rumour..." So why lay such vicious stress on it, except to malign Wasim and implicate Imran without any evidence?

Let me tell you, Javed Miandad, something which is not a rumour: you are a marvellously talented cricketer, among the finest Pakistan has produced, but as a human being you are the pits. You inferiority complex has turned into permanent envy of those who might, through no fault of theirs, be better educated than you are. This autobiography has not exposed anyone you dislike; it has only exposed you. Normal guys have hair under their armpits; you think you have wings. They still stink.

Everything is nearby in Srinagar and everywhere takes a long time to reach. If it is any consolation, it used to take longer. Time is the best measurement of development: horsepower has progressed from being a literal fact to a metaphorical one. You reach Srinagar from Delhi

metres in area and is now just about ten) but not yet of progress. Fortunately, nature cannot be corrupted or venal human beings would have managed that as well.

But there is growing sense of normal life, with even the security forces, guarding both themselves and the city, merging into the urban landscape. Long years of presence in the veins and sinews of Srinagar have created an easy flexibility of social manoeuvre. They live in patched cantonments, but saviour and saved chat amiably enough in shops, the tension diminished by the fact that both are equally vulnerable. Human rights violations continue, but the excesses have calmed. Any self-congratulation would however be premature. The culture of the gun is etched sharply on virtually every public moment of the visit. It is impossible to treat the sight of two men in T-shirts, their legs swaggering apart, standing behind the minister on the dais, the

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Ashaky campus

The campus of the University of Dhaka has become restive again and that is by no means an event to be overlooked. As reported, the students were agitating for the recognition of 4-year Honours course as equivalent to Masters and that seemed quite sensible. It is also reported that the university authority accepted the demand. Then we found in the media a elaborate pictorial view of the horrid activities

of a section of the students who attacked and battered the innocent students including a reporter of the Daily Star and evicted them from the students' halls at the dead of night and that's too before the nose of the law-enforcing agency. We are quite at a loss to make out the logic behind such an ugly show of muscle power by the vested quarter.

However, here in Bangladesh the laws of Newton hold good in the campus too. As an equal and oppo-

sition reaction, the other student fronts called out a strike and paralysed the university activities. Inter-mittent skirmishes between the rival student fronts with the slanting law-enforcing agency pose a real threat to the already deteriorating law and order situation. The need of the hour is not the flexing of muscle, but a pragmatic approach by the establishment to fuse the situation by taking into confidence the students' community irrespective of their

political affiliation. I would urge the policy makers to remember their student days and refrain from being harsh to our greatest resources, our pride and our future.

Hafeejul Alam
Dhaka

Thanks should go to The Daily Star

The Daily Star has a great renown for bringing social problems in

focus. This newspaper acts as a mirror to the social problems. The publication about the shortage of teachers in private universities bear this kind of example. There are lots of private universities in our country. But there arises the question of "quality education" about these universities. Can we say that these universities and coaching centres have the same standards? The main problem of these universities is the dearth of teaching staff. Students are the "ingredients" of an

institution and teachers are the engineers whose duty is to use them effectively. So business and quality education should go parallel.

Sanjeev kumar
South Badda, Gulshan, Dhaka

"Relocate Tannaries"

Your article entitled "Relocate Tanneries" published in the Star City on August 4, 2003 is a timely reminder of the imperil caused by tanneries using hazardous chemi-

cal which are not only endangering lives of the inhabitants of Hazaribagh but also causing massive pollution of the river Buriganga. The magnitude of this pollution is so alarming that the prime minister had to issue a second directive to the ministry concerned to take immediate actions. It is also important to note as stated in your article that despite being identified by the Department of Environment that "Tanneries is the single most pollut-

ant industry across the country", no tangible steps have so far been taken by any government to save the people of Hazaribagh from this impending danger. We the residents of the area fervently appeal to the prime minister to ensure that her directive has been taken care of with due consideration.

Humayun Hyder
Zikatola, Dhaka