

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 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?

The return of the crusaders

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 victories in the centuries after the death of Prophet Mohammed(m). 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 "heavenly" nectar from the "prisoners".

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 modern 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 by Huntington's central question:

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.

systems while the other saw it as a product of psychological dysfunction. The strict adherence of Christian belief would disregard both contentions and lay the blame on endemic human nature -- the doctrine of original sin.

They further claim that atheism and radical secularism are denial of essential human spirituality and that both Christianity and Islam claim exclusive universal moral sovereignty. Therefore modern Christianity despite adulteration and degradation added by its practitioners (and thereby the faith having no degrading causal connection with degradation) is essentially in a state of clash with Islam.

Of late the term "Islamic fundamentalism" has gained global currency though as Professor John Esposito has noted on several occasions that the term "fundamentalism" originated in Christianity and can be misleading if used in equal measure for Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iran who have entirely divergent political systems. He sees in the resurgence of Islam deep malaise typified by widespread feeling of failure and loss of self-esteem, failed political system and stagnant economies. Stephen Zunes of the University of San Francisco goes further and lays the blame squarely on US policy towards political Islam (Foreign Policy in Focus, June 2001). He identified problems of current US policy being US support of hardliner repressive Islamic regimes making democratic and non-violent opposition as a nonviable option; US tolerance of "democratic exceptions" in many Islamic countries on grounds of vital national interests and in the process

lead to a lasting solution of the Middle East crisis. Muslim suspicion about the US brokerage is not ill founded. As Stephen Zunes keeps on reminding us of the fact that from the time of the crusades through European colonisation and the Iraq war western Christians killed far more Muslims than has been the case in reverse and the Muslims have a very strong sense of this historical fact.

It has now been revealed that several British embassies across the Middle East had warned London two decades before the emergence of Al-Qaida about the revival of Muslim fundamentalism. Though most Arabists of the time believed that political Islam was historical phenomenon few inquisitive British diplomats were told that since Arab nationalism had manifestly failed people were turning to Islamic nationalism. A British ambassador in Algeria confirmed fears of a revival in the interest in Islam almost twenty years before the internecine war in Algeria which claimed the live of thousands of people. Prescience of some notwithstanding the British intelligence, CIA, Mossad etc were reportedly caught with pants down when the Iranian revolution happened. Apparently the suddenness of this historical event was comparable to the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989 when people were still in a daze about the unfolding drama. The skeptics would, however, point out that had the Americans not been instrumental in the overthrow of popular Iranian Prime Minister Dr. Mohammed Mosaddegh and replacing him with Reza Shah Pahlavi then Ayatollah Khomeini's triumphant return to Iran

but also caused the death of a million Algerians in their fight for independence from France. Despite Tony Blair's claim that NATO forces fought for the Bosnian and the Kosovar Muslims against Christian Serbs it has been alleged that the massacre at Srebrenica could have been avoided but for NATO's delayed decision which perhaps was occasioned because the victims were Muslims.

It is recognised though that Christian oppression was not confined to the Islamic world but had victims across a wide spectrum of different religions. It has been argued that but for the mounting body bags Vietnam could have gone the way of Iraq if the Vietnam war had been fought today with precision bombing instead of when it was fought (1959-1975); that Rwandan carnage was inflicted by the Catholics on their co-religionists; that racism in the US did not differentiate between followers of different faiths; that Lebanon has found peace now that the Muslims are in charge but was in war when the Christians were in the majority. Such arguments trying to establish moral superiority of one religion over another are not only irreverent and pugnacious but are fraught with the risk of losing the quintessence of the "clash of civilisations".

Francis Fukuyama (of *The End of History and The Last Man* fame) has maintained that the tragic events of nine-eleven did not nullify his thesis that mankind has reached the end of history which is "understood as a single, coherent, evolutionary process, taking into account the experience of all peoples in all times" because it was hard to find an

whether institutions of modernity like democracy and capitalism are peculiar to the west or have a broader appeal. Though the modern institutions are doing well in East Asia, South Asia, Latin America, and Africa, most of the Islamic countries suffer from democracy deficit and none of the Islamic countries have made successful transition from a developing country to a developed country like Singapore or South Korea.

Despite universal condemnation throughout the Islamic world of the carnage of nine-eleven questions have been raised whether radical Islam can constitute a serious alternative to western liberal democracy. One would wish it not to be so. For example despite the chaos which envelops Afghanistan most of the people seem relieved at being freed from the Taliban Caligula. In case of the Iranians after more than two decades of clerical rule it is generally believed that the youth who constitute the majority of the Iranian population would like to live in a freer and more liberal society. It can therefore be safely assumed that majority of the Muslims are not sent into paroxysm of anger and hatred over everything American. But then here one should pause to ponder over the Franco-German-Mexican abstention on the UNSC resolution on Liberia (the point of conflict being the immunity that would be enjoyed by the US soldiers on peace keeping mission in Liberia from possible prosecution before the International Criminal Court should they be accused of violation of the legal code of conduct which would apply to the soldiers of all other participating countries).

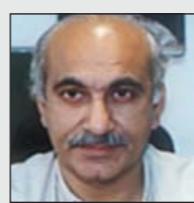
Equally one should think about the most recent rejection by the Arab Foreign Ministers to send troops to Iraq to share the burden of occupation being borne by Anglo-US forces. Ivan Elad of Cato Institute (*Does US intervention overseas breed terrorism?* December 1998) reached the conclusion that large 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 Laden. 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 right 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-journoes 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

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. Your 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 that 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

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.

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The story from Srinagar is that there is no political story. What could be better news than that? The Himalayas will always be a better story than politics.

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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 it 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 Pakistani'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

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