

Postponement of BCS exams

Leak or rumour, how does it matter?

AFTER days of rumours flying around regarding the leak of the 33rd Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) exams, the exams have been postponed. The Public Service Commission (PSC) claims it is not due to the leak -- which is yet to be confirmed -- but to relieve the candidates of confusion that the exams have been put off. The position of the PSC on the subject is puzzling, to say the least. If, as has been alleged, the leaked question papers were in fact being sold in the last few weeks, and if in fact the PSC slept over it, then the PSC's position is indefensible. If the leaked papers are fake, as the PSC has also claimed as a possibility, then again, why is the PSC signalling a denial mode and a reluctance to plug the holes in the system? Either way, days into such allegations being made, why has no action been taken?

So far, all the PSC has been able to say is that neither student wings of the ruling party -- who had in the past been responsible for such leaks -- nor PSC staff are involved in the alleged question paper leak. Whereas the Commission is unable to confirm the leak itself, how can it be so sure of the lack of involvement of the above mentioned parties?

To be fair, if the BCS exam questions had not been leaked in the past four years as claimed, then it was a trend we were hoping would be maintained by the present PSC. If this is to be ensured, proper security precautions will have to be put in place from the time of setting question papers to that of its eventual distribution. Letting real or fake question papers be sold on the market without confronting the rumours is not the way to go about it. We hope the authorities will take the matter up with urgency and seriousness, and conduct a thorough investigation into the allegations and bring the culprits to book. This is the only way to preserve the sanctity of the examination through which the nation's highest-ranking officers qualify.

Offhand dismissal of a potential witness

ACC's stance perplexing

IT is perplexing that the ACC Chairman would choose to dismiss rather brusquely and out offhand the idea of driver Azam's becoming a witness in the railway ministry scam allegedly linked to the former minister for railways and his PS.

We wonder why the driver's statement would not be taken into account in the inquiry process. This particular case has evinced lot of curiosity in public mind given the peculiar circumstances of the case. It is not always that a minister's personal staff goes around with cash stashed in a car that was, given the statement of the driver, heading for the former railway minister's house at that time of the night.

May we remind the ACC chairman that it was stated by the secretary of the Commission, in May 2012, after the said driver had gone suspiciously missing, that the inquiry into the 70 lakh taka haul would remain incomplete if driver Azam was not to be found. Why this stand now?

The primary task ACC is to prevent corruption and where corruption has occurred to find out the guilty. And to do so objectivity is the main criterion which must be fulfilled. ACC is not the court of law and as such cannot decide who does or does not merit as a witness. The relevance of a person as a witness is not dictated by his or her social status. The statement of the ACC, we are constrained to say, is totally misplaced.

We are not suggesting that driver Azam is telling truth. But how can one determine whether he is lying if he is not questioned. Azam is a material witness who must be retrieved from wherever he is ensconced for his version of the event in the interest getting to the bottom of the matter because there are many unanswered questions

DEEP-SEA PORT:

Catering to own and regional business



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

THE government's "go slow" approach in taking the initiative to develop a deep-sea port off

Sonadia is going to cause the country serious problems after 2015. If we are to go by the Japanese Pacific Consultant International firm's Techno-Economic Feasibility study conducted for the Department of Shipping in 2009 that outlined a three-phase construction plan, the potential for GDP growth by 2% brought about by substantial employment generation and increase in bulk handling capacity should have been impetus enough for the government to have taken a decision by now.

Yet the first phase of the construction that was recommended to begin in 2011, at a cost of Tk.13,000 cr., and completed in 2015 has not seen the light of day.

While Bangladesh has been dilly-dallying with what to do, other countries have not sat idle. The deep sea ports in Karachi and Colombo, both scheduled to open in 2013 and 2014, will sport some of the most advanced facilities in the region. In an age of global economic downturn, it becomes imperative for countries to take strategic decisions to stay ahead by upgrading competitiveness, and in this case deep-sea ports play a crucial role in providing infrastructure that act as a gateway for the rapid movement of raw materials and cargo considered essential for manufacturing and reaching finished products to end users.

Although Chittagong port handles about 80% of the country's imports and exports, it will be in dire straits when meeting increased demand if transit facilities are granted to Nepal and Bhutan. Even if infrastructure were improved and better management practices introduced to improve turnaround time for ships, Chittagong port remains essentially a river port. The crux of the problem lies with the narrow approach of Karnaphuli River which means that large container ships more than 617ft. in length cannot pass through and transshipment of containers takes place either in Singapore or in other big regional

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ports.

The increased Chinese interest in helping Bangladesh develop a deep-sea port comes as no surprise particularly with Chinese wages increased to US\$400-500 per month, while average wages in Bangladesh' readymade garments (RMG) sector hovers around \$80 is obviously one of the key drivers for proposed relocation of the Chinese RMG sector.

In the backdrop of global consul-

McKinsey forecasts that the RMG sector can look forward to an increase in sourcing by an annual growth rate of about 10% for the next decade resulting in an export value of \$36-42 billion, up from the current \$19 billion per annum. In other words, we are potentially looking at the market doubling by 2015 and nearly triple by 2020.

With lead-times for sea freight costing the country's RMG sector an



WAHID ADNAN / DRIK NEWS

tancy firm, McKinsey & Company's study "Bangladesh's ready-made garments landscape: The challenge of growth" that predicts that Bangladesh can double its garments exports in the next decade, the arguments for a deep-sea port become more compelling. Beyond the "wage advantage," European and American companies believe that "with a current 5,000 RMG factories employing about 3.6 million workers from a total workforce of 74 million, Bangladesh is clearly ahead of Southeast Asian RMG suppliers in terms of capacity offered (e.g. Indonesia has about 2,450 factories, Vietnam 2,000, and Cambodia 260 factories)."

additional ten days due to the lack of a deep-sea port, it highlights Bangladesh's vulnerability in both import and export. Going back to the suitability of the single sea port of Chittagong, it lacks the required draft (maximum at full tide 8.81 metres) that bars ocean going ships to berth in the port.

As a result 'mother vessels' anchor at the outer anchorage and we have to take the services of lighter vessels to carry goods to and from ships to harbour. This arrangement not only restricts the ports' cargo handling capacity but also adds additional costs and time. Additionally, the cyclone prone Bay of Bengal is not the ideal

zone for lighter vessels operations.

Looking beyond the RMG sector prospects, it is worthwhile to point out that the government plans to generate 7,800 MW power using imported coal within 2015 by installing 13 coal fired power plants in the country. Apart from the investment and cost of power generation challenges, the major impediment is the absence of deep sea port.

The smallest coal carrying ocean going vessel carries 45,000 tonne coal (Handimax) and requires 12 metres minimum draft, therefore, Bangladesh cannot at this stage import large amount of coal (imagine small lighter vessels queuing at the Karnaphuli channel to unload a single coal carrying vessel). All the berths are busy only with coal unloading (8,000 MW power

generation will require annually an estimated 24-25 million tonnes of coal import and handling facilities).

The latest Chinese proposal to finance construction of a deep-sea port is welcome news. What is interesting to note is that China has expressed its willingness to let other countries such as India and the US to come onboard in a joint development effort. We can take advantage of a deep sea port (if constructed) off Chittagong rendering services to our regional neighbours that are beneficial to both regional commerce and ensuring our own future needs.

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The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

Romney's missing foreign policy

DANIELLE PLETKA

IF it hadn't been for the deadly Sept. 11 attack on the United States Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, Mitt Romney probably wouldn't be giving a speech on foreign policy in the waning weeks of this election season. But Romney sensed an opening in President Obama's missteps in Libya, and he plans to lay out his case that he will be a better steward of America's national security.

For an American public fixated on the economy, another Romney valedictory on the advantages of not being Barack Obama will be a waste of time. Americans feel more comfortable when they have a sense of the candidate's vision, because it gives them a clearer road map for the future.

Romney must articulate his vision of America's place in the world in a way that makes sense not only to the American people, but to friends and foes alike. There is a case to be made for a contrast with Obama. But, thus far, no Republican leader has made it. Romney needs to persuade people that he's not simply a George W. Bush retread, eager to go to war in Syria and Iran and answer all the mail with an F-16. He needs to understand that even though Obama's so-called pivot to Asia is more rhetorical flourish than actual policy, it responds to a crying need.

Any new vision for American greatness in the world must flow from an understanding of how the country has changed since 2001. We are still one of the richest nations on earth, but Americans are poorer, war-weary and irritated with what appears to be the ingratitude of nations for which we have sacrificed a great deal in blood and treasure. There are substantial wings of both the Democratic and

Republican parties that wish to wash their hands of the world's troubles.

In that environment, Romney must give a clear explanation of how American power since the end of World War II provided the foundation for the most prosperous and successful era in human history; how our domination of the world's most traf-

Romney must put flesh on the bones of his calls for a renewed American greatness. With a vision for American power, strategically and judiciously applied, we can continue to do great things with fewer resources.

ficked waterways has permitted the flourishing of trade; and how exporting our principles of political and economic freedom has opened and nourished markets that buy American goods, employ American workers and allow Americans to enjoy an unmatched level of security.

More important, Americans must know that it is not for mercantile benefits alone that the United States has exerted its leadership. It is because there is no other power, and no other people, that can -- or, if able, would -- exert the benign influence that has characterised our role in the world. Whether you like the Iraq war or hate it; like the battle in Afghanistan or not; believe in the ouster of Col. Moammar Gadhafi or

revile it -- in no case has the United States intervened for malevolent purposes.

Unfortunately, Romney hasn't made that claim. Instead, when asked for specifics, he has outlined an Iran policy that doesn't differ markedly from Obama's. When pressed on what he would do differently in Syria, he has trodden so carefully that he has found himself to the left of his party's internationalist wing. And he has doubled down on the notion that Russia remains a geostrategic threat, without presenting any persuasive evidence that it is.

It's not that Romney does not or cannot offer a more compelling vision of American leadership. Having heard him speak privately, and having met him on a few occasions, I believe he has one. Now is the moment to show it.

Romney must make clear that he has a strategic view of American power that is different from the Obama administration's narrow and tactical approach. He must tell Americans that he won't overlook terrorist threats, as the Obama administration did in Benghazi; that he won't fight to oust a dictator in Libya and ignore the pleas of another revolution in Syria; that he won't simply denounce Iran's nuclear programme while tacitly legitimising the country's theocratic regime and ignoring its opponents; and that he won't hand out billions of dollars in aid and debt forgiveness to Egypt's new leaders when the principles of religious and political freedom are being trampled in the streets of Cairo.

Clearly America cannot do everything. But we must always champion our founding beliefs and reject the moral, political and cultural relativism that has flourished under Obama.

Romney can make the case that

when people fight for their freedom, they will find support -- sometimes political, sometimes economic and sometimes military -- from the American president. When Russians and Chinese demand accountability from their governments, we can stand with them and work with their governments to further common interests. When terrorists target us, we will not simply eliminate them with drones while ignoring the environment that breeds them. And when our allies look to us for support, we will help them fight for themselves.

Criticisms of Obama's national security policies have degenerated into a set of cliches about apologies, Israel, Iran and military spending. To be sure, there is more than a germ of truth in many of these accusations. But these are complaints, not alternatives. Worse yet, they betray the same robotic antipathy that animated Bush-haters. "I will not apologise for America" is no more a clarion call than "let's nation-build at home."

Romney must put flesh on the bones of his calls for a renewed American greatness. With a vision for American power, strategically and judiciously applied, we can continue to do great things with fewer resources. The nation's greatest strength is not its military power or fantastic productivity. It's the American commitment to our founding principles of political and economic freedom. If Romney can outline to voters how he will use American power to advance those principles, he will go a long way in persuading them he deserves the job of commander in chief.

The writer is the vice president for foreign and defense studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

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THIS DAY IN HISTORY

October 9

1264

The Kingdom of Castile conquers the city of Jerez that was under Muslim occupation since 711.

1708

Peter the Great defeats the Swedes at the Battle of Lesnaya.

1760

Seven Years' War: Russian forces occupy Berlin.

1854

Crimean War: The siege of Sebastopol begins.

1911

An accidental bomb explosion in Hankou, Wuhan, China leads to the ultimate fall of the Qing Empire.

1966

Vietnam War: Binh Tai massacre.

1966

Vietnam War: Dien Nien-Phuoc Binh massacre.

1967

A day after being captured, Marxist revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara is executed for attempting to incite a revolution in Bolivia.

1970

The Khmer Republic is proclaimed in Cambodia.