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The SSC Exam

This day — the 16th of April 1998 — is very important for people of Bangladesh. About a million students all over the country will take the most important public examination of their lives on this day. All the five Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Boards in the country will begin the Secondary School Certificate Examinations on this day. Besides examination centres all over the country, there will be five overseas centres at Riyad, Jedda, Doha (Qatar), Dubai and Tripoli. The examination covers so extensively that there might be hardly an family in Bangladesh which might not be affected in some way or other.

The opposition political parties that called a country-wide strike on the eve of the examination on April 15 could not ignore the appeal of the day. Their original programme—a dawn-to-dusk hartal on April 13—was shifted to April 15 considering the visit of US Permanent Representative to the United Nations Bill Richardson and reduced it to half a day in view of the ensuing SSC examination. Besides the Chittagong Hill Tracts agreement, the opposition is really agitated about the law and order situation; price hikes of essentials; gas; electricity and water crisis and repression on children and women. Hardly ever has the opposition shown such considerations for visits of foreign dignitaries or local issues. This really augurs well for the future.

All the same our system of education at the primary level and also methods of examination certainly need serious review. We have been hearing of the methods of Dr Maria Montessori and also of kindergarten since the colonial days but those had never percolated beyond the upper class of society. Neither any reforms could be made really effective. These days some take 'O' level and 'A' level (internationally recognised as secondary and higher secondary examinations) but in the overall context the percentage remains negligible.

There is no denying the systems badly need reform. But will those who have a vested interest in perpetuating the obsolete methods would easily allow any change? The government is giving finishing touches to a national education policy. We hope the issue would soon be finalised in a manner that the benefits reach all strata of society. We wish all the SSC examinees success.