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39

### Exam Centre or Hooligans' Den?

THE build-up to Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations was marked by the right kind of noises. It went abuzz with a robust new determination set afloat by the board and administrative authorities to ward off cheating at exam centres and rowdy intrusions by purveyors of the crime. The offences were declared as 'culpable' going beyond merely attracting expulsions from examination halls as used to be the standard penalty meted out. All of this roar, however, proved to be sound and fury signifying nothing on the very first day of the SSC examinations.

As if to add another dimension to the endemic lawlessness making a mockery of the public examination system the scourge of attempted sexual assaults causing deaths by stampede has entered our book of vice. This happened at Kalaroa Govt College examination centre in Satkhira on Thursday. The narrow collapsible gate to the equally constricted staircase of the college building was callously opened to entry of not merely the 900 examinees on the list but also a stream of outsiders pressing along with the former to barge in like some storm troopers. The rowdy elements along that narrow strip starting to molest some female examinees in the melee a lady teacher protested the act of outrage only to be a victim herself.

In the ensuing panic compounded by the police-men's lathi-charge and tear-gassing the stampede turned from bad to worse within the narrow space. Particularly when the gate was foolishly ordered closed to escapades.

Two questions arise out of the reported sequence of events: first, why was the entry through the gate not made exclusive to examination candidates by demanding that admit cards be shown by all jostling to gain access to the place? Secondly, when stampede followed the onset of panic, why was the lone exit blocked?

In addition to this unheard-of mayhem at an exam centre, a petty employee was beaten to death in Comilla on the first day of the examinations. The newspaper photographs of goons clambering on to cornices and window ledges to deliver material for cheating to the examinees depicts the sheer number of offenders overwhelming that of lawmen or the invigilators. When the high number is such a evil power it is the system that can only overpower it. We need one.