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✓ SSC examination

THE Secondary School Certificate examination under the four boards of the country is on. A total of 4,49,342 students of whom 30 percent are female are appearing. As might be expected, the figure this year is slightly higher than last year's (4,16,000).

The SSC or matric examination is a momentous event in an individual's life but nowadays the examination has come to represent a trying experience for the country as well.

Mass copying and sometimes even breakdown of law and order are often reported from different centres, especially the outlying ones. This year is no exception and on the very first day of the examination two thousand examinees were expelled for adopting unfair means. In 1988, according to the Education Minister, eight thousand SSC candidates and seven thousand HSC candidates had been punished for adopting unfair means at examinations. Such high numbers of expellees reflect a sad state of affairs obtaining in examination halls but in a way they also indicate a tougher stance of the authorities in regard to the malpractice. What causes particular concern is not the number of expellees but reports received from time to time about total inaction of the authorities in certain centres in the face of mass copying which has reduced the examination to a farce. A report from Mirjaganj (Patuakhali) carried by a national Bengali daily on Saturday says that Dakhil examinees were copying from open books with complete freedom in the presence of invigilators. Such

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reports are by no means exceptional. In this case, the report further says, on the first and second day of the examination six examinees of this Madrasah centre were expelled from this hall. It follows that even punishments have ceased to have any deterrent effect and a sense of resignation has overtaken the invigilators and the authorities.

The examinee resorting to unfair means can take one defence which though not morally supportable can partly explain or extenuate his conduct. It is that the standard of class room teaching has fallen deplorably and the syllabus remains vastly uncompleted. There are other factors involved. The frequent reports of leakage of question papers also affect the morale of examinees.

Measures to check the adoption of unfair means at examinations are certainly to be intensified. But the problem is complex with extensive ramifications. Punitive action against candidates, while necessary, is only a partial remedy of the problem. SSC examination is a turning point in manpower development and therefore credibility of this examination should be maintained.