

## The Bangladesh Times

### STAND UP FOR EDUCATION

The public examinations at the secondary levels conducted by the concerned boards in the country begin today. It seemed difficult just a few days back because of the impending strike by the government college teachers. They have since decided to defer their programme in the interest of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinees.

The HSC examinations are being held by Dhaka, Rajshahi and Jessore Boards and the SSC (secondary school certificate) examination by Comilla Board. The last SSC examinations of Comilla Board were cancelled due to leakage of question papers. The examinations are now being held afresh for 130,000 candidates. These incidents caused not only colossal wastage of money and serious inconvenience to the examinees and their families but also eroded confidence in the system itself. The HSC examination of Comilla Board will begin on September 15.

The Dhaka Board, one of the four boards in the country, has 89,422 candidates for the HSC examinations. It is indicative of the percentage of the families that have a stake in the successful holding of the examination. And the government paved the way for it by accepting some of the demands of the teachers and assuring sympathetic consideration of the others. Elaborate arrangements have also been made for maintaining peace in the examination centres.

The Education Ministry has finalised proposals for amendment of the Public Examination Offences Act 1980 providing for severe penalties for violation of rules relating to examination. The leakage of question papers will draw a minimum of vigorous imprisonment for 10 years and a maximum of life imprisonment. The candidates indulging in malpractices during the examination would face expulsion, made ineligible to reappear at the examination for five years and disqualified for any government job.

In another development the Education Ministry has decided to drop the new examination system that was to be operative for SSC examinations from 1992. The decision is said to have been taken in the interest of peace and discipline. The existing examination system has long been proven outmoded and the new one, now abandoned, is considered 'progressive' and is in operation in many countries including our neighbours. The decision to introduce the system was taken in 1988 and students were being prepared for the last two years and a half for the same without any objection being raised from any quarters. But it had to be given up to appease the agitating school kids who had for days been obstructing traffic and damaging vehicles on the city roads.

Meanwhile a large number of educational institutions including the universities remain closed. The council of Bangladesh Universities comprising the Vice Chancellors has in a meeting expressed concern over the situation and spelled out conditions necessary for reopening the universities which were closed down following violent clashes among rival student groups. They want the government, the political parties and their student fronts to take responsibility of ensuring congenial atmosphere on the campus. The law enforcing agencies should be free to take action against all gun-runners and outsiders. The media would also be expected to play a more constructive role.

We must understand that the developments on the campus and the education sector in general are not isolated events. These are very much related to the overall situation in the country. There are elements bent upon not giving democracy a chance. They would certainly try to cripple the education sector too. The sensible section must stand up to resist these sinister moves.