

Disconcerting Signal From RU

What happened between students of Rajshahi University and the inhabitants of an adjacent village is almost a repeat of the violent clashes that took place between them way back in 1986 on the same day. It was the anniversary of death of MAG Osmani. Once again the Chhatra Shibir is thought to have craftily misled the general students to fight against the villagers in its favour. Different versions of the story relating to the violent clashes notwithstanding, most reports have pointed accusing fingers at the student organisation infamous for introducing a new dimension of cruelty to student politics. The student organisation has also drawn a blueprint to capture student dormitories and accordingly Chittagong University was turned into an impregnable bastion by its armed cadres. It also took over Rajshahi University a few years back.

However with the Awami League coming to power, the Shibir's grip loosened gradually until it proved to be a spent force. Losing its hold on university campuses in Chittagong and Rajshahi does not in the least mean that the organisation has stopped hatching conspiracy against the pro-liberation and liberal forces. In both Chittagong and Rajshahi the Shibir made every attempt to win over the surrounding villages. Its cadres partly succeeded in that attempt initially. This explains why they could capture university halls in both places.

Now that their motive is clear to the villagers, the Shibir is no longer trusted. If the leaders of the student organisation were compelled to leave two mosques, as reports have it, without completing their organisational meetings in the shrines, it simply speaks of the disillusionment of the villagers about the Shibir's activity. After the recent muscle-flexing by the religious fundamentalists, villagers are likely to be specially on their guard. The Shibir, on its part, may have remembered the day 15 years ago. They are likely to get inspired by their like-minded elders to fish in troubled water. Like in the past they tried to use the innocent villagers for their ill purposes. When they met with resistance from the villagers, they missed no opportunity to involve the general students in this artificially fuelled bloody confrontation between students and villagers.

It is clear that the Shibir leadership is keen to create chaos and confusion at a time our national politics is increasingly getting polarised. It is like opening as many war fronts as possible. The administration will have a tough time to attend all such fronts at the same time. If our political parties are not great champions of people's causes, the Shibir goes several steps ahead to use common people as sacrificial beasts for serving their own narrow interests. It is unthinkable that students of a university and villagers of the surrounding areas would find themselves in opposing camps and eye each other with murderous hatred unless someone or agents have vitiated the atmosphere. The Shibir has poisoned the relationship between the two unlikely rivals. What a misfortune! It should be the last thing to happen. Let the progressive and liberal student organisations come forward to bridge the gap and heal the wound.