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Amity And Initiative On Campus

Battle-lines look as clearly drawn on education campuses, starting with Dhaka University, as could be reasonably feared from the polarisation of rival forces on it. We recall with a great sense of loss the interim period of peace brought to Dhaka University (and by and large, to the other Universities) by the student unity under the banner of APSU or all parties student unity everywhere.

This idea and achievement of campus peace spilled out to all other universities. It was hailed not only by the non-political section of university students: the country as a whole having almost despaired of peace among university students, hailed it. Even in some public quarters the popular satisfaction over this student wisdom went as far as to imply that youth and students have at long last succeeded where adults had long failed. Indeed, the great political change linked to the beginning of a democratic process had a critical deal to do with student unity formally established on the campus. They even, (a rare phenomenon in third world politics) figured in quite a big way in national elections, with votes won and thus, both theoretically and functionally becoming an integral part of the democratic process the nation has seen launched after decades of frustration.

Neither the country nor, for that matter, the student community and their leaders can afford to reverse this excellent record of amity and co-existence on the campus. The most spectacular result of this peace on the long-troubled campus was the absence of violence, which it looked very much it would endure because it was backed by the rival parties not only getting together on one platform but solemnly declaring their allegiance to the ideal of student harmony.

Needless to say the immediate beneficiaries of the consummation were the students themselves. Need one remind them what the continued campus trouble had cost them in loss of study hours, session-jams, dislocation of examination schedules, delayed results and loss of employment opportunities besides other disadvantages.

To be sure, idealism that goes with youth, particularly students who are yet to get inducted into the 'ways of the world', mainly accounted for this miracle-looking success in this country.

Guns recently booming louder on the Dhaka University campus, for instance or the reported chases and counter-chases, or the clashes in the residential halls reflect a pattern of group and party rivalries which, with a sincere will and determination, student leaders can yet again rise above and deliver the peace that is the crucial need.

There was a time when those interested in how a university was run, principally in academic matters, were the parents and guardians of students. Ever since the campus started sliding over the past three decades or so, it has become a matter of profound concern for the nation as a whole. All including people in all strata, otherwise with little stake in a university, not functionally as it should, are painfully watching this scenario and wish most wistfully that peace returned to the campus soon.

If it does not the result is bound to be, as it has already been to a great extent, a further country-wide disappointment and a loss of face for the student leadership. Since the clashes among them have recognisable political over tones may we not expect the party leaders, together with intellectuals and academics, would eschew their stand-offishness and do the needful to dissuade the students from the war they seem to be headed for.

Without the students joining in the move for peace, policing the campus or campuses by the administration alone would remain a most inadequate means to it.

As we have just said the first next move to be made in this direction has to be one initiated by the political leaders of rival parties or alliances. And that will certainly not come automatically. A bold positive effort alone could make it possible. Even while we say this we still believe that student leaders on their own (i.e. independently of political leaders) can once again pull together and demonstrate that while they, out of their adolescent passion, chased each other they could also bury hatchet and embrace each other. If youth and education would not bring this miracle about, what or who else would?

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