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Right Approach To Campus Problem

Tuesday's reopening of Dhaka University looks attended with circumstantial grounds for it to be closed again.

But it should be not necessarily so despite the incident on Tuesday—the police raid on Jagannath Hall and Wednesday's sequel to it on the campus. Our reason for optimism, in the first place, is that both university authorities and student leaders on the campus have at long last taken a pragmatic approach to the entire question of campus violence.

In the second, it is mainly in pursuance of it that meetings with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and opposition leader Sheikh Hasina have taken place and the problem has been seriously discussed. Both leaders showed their understanding of where the root of the problem lies by assuring the university authorities and student delegation of their cooperation in the matter of restoration of campus peace.

By now there should be no winking at the fact that the campus violence is essentially a political issue and its resolution must, therefore, wait on the sincere and active cooperation of the chief political leaders in the country. This much-needed collaboration between the leaders of the government and the opposition can no longer be withheld from a process of solving the question—a process initiated by the joint efforts at this bilateral level. This is absolutely necessary if the goal of peace on the campus is seriously to be achieved.

The imperative of such joint action by the leading political elements and government can no longer be put off for the obvious reason that efforts by others—rival student groups or university authorities vis-a-vis student leaders—have been of no avail so far. One stronger reason than this is that (1) joint action and movement brought the recent revolutionary change in the politics of this country—the end of the old regime. And the same spirit of cooperation is to be credited with the historic change from the presidential to the parliamentary system of government. The same spirit of cooperation and action based on it can alone help us cross the Rubicon so far as this long-festering campus problem is concerned.

If education—University education at that—is as vital to the nation as the political goal of democracy or the economic one of recovery of the country, and if this is to be saved from utter collapse, this concerted action must start right from now. Nowhere in the world and in no third world countries either, can be seen such a dismal academic scenario to exist or expand.

It is time political leaders, leading academics and intellectuals knock their heads together and in a search for a permanent answer to campus violence. If the heart of the problem is politics then the politicians should come forward, and give the lead in working out an answer.

As for student leaders themselves since they are adults and capable of judging things for themselves and have been seen, in student and public forums, to be as patriotically inspired as their political counterparts to serve the country it is time they did not leave the task of thinking or rethinking (as well as decision prompted by it) wholly to political leaders. They can and ought to decide on their own that violence on campus should end and thus, make the task at the leader's level also much easier and quicker to accomplish.