

Time To End Campus Violence

In yet another outbreak of violence, Friday on the Dhaka University campus, yet another student leader was killed. The shoot-out was the fiercest ever between armed groups of students. This time this was a battle in which live bullets were freely used by the fighting groups. Mercifully, we did not have more casualties than those reported. How long will this go on?

Judging by the fact that campus violence in Dhaka University has stayed unabated for so long and that there is hardly still any sign of this state of terror being called off under a permanent cease-fire agreed on by all concerned and that there is also no indication that those who could help end this recurrent outrage on the campus are making any committal move there is cause for much real worry.

The national press for its part seems to have exhausted its humble resources in an attempt to dissuade rival student groups from a course of collision to one of conciliation. We have, in more than half a dozen leaders on campus violence so far, appealed to student leaders, political leaders, the administration, teachers and intellectuals for help in finding a permanent solution to this festering campus issue. Our appeals seem to have fallen on deaf ears. Nevertheless we are determined not to throw our arms up in despair. Since the situation has plunged to a point where it should bottom out and if university education has any case for survival in this country a turn around must happen and/or made to happen.

We tend to believe that either the essential juvenile good sense will prevail soon or, if that is too much to expect to soon happen, quarters, both political and administrative, that really hold the key to a solution, both for now and for all time to come, would step in as a matter of moral and national duty and stop this violence once and for all. If the quite transparent fact is that the issue is at bottom a political one this is bound to come sooner rather than later.

By the continuity of terror on the campus and its exacerbation by the use of arms and the scare it has already created among students in general, university education has been marginalised and violence has taken centre-stage. Unless the right approach occurs, specially along political lines, and, if the tension created from such recurrent outbursts predictably leads to further polarisation on the campuses, with their impact outside, the country may have cause for far greater worry.

Such a plausibly developing situation needs to be taken into serious account by the administration, and the political leaders on either side of the fence to seriously work out an answer to this question, without delay.

To once again appeal for a rethink among student leaders of different factions and take more seriously into account the general reaction among students of spreading resentment of such violence and the growing anxiety over their security—and future academic career. These are also questions for a representative government of cudgel its head over.

It is time for all concerned to try and help in creating those conditions on the campus in which the police could perform their duties without inhibition and will give no reason for others to think that they are not punctiliously doing so.

The impression created among the general public that the campus problem is beyond solution and that those who could really help solve it are yet to do their active best. That this can only have the effect of the people—apart from parents, guardians and non-involved others—losing their faith in the genuineness of the needed effort or gesture towards restoring campus peace would be the last nail driven into the coffin.

If however this signifies a powerlessness of sorts and therefore an implied, though unintended, signal for violence to go on that would be the limit of general frustration. But we still hope that there is still a good deal of intention even among the fighting faction-leaders of finding an answer, towards which the administration, political leaders and others ought to help with a positive gesture.

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165

165