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Campus Violence In Further Depth

The campus problem is no longer a subject to waffle about. The Prime Minister has met the leaders of the major political parties for the second time on Nov. 3. FBUTA (Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers) have had a meeting with the Home Minister who assured them of "all-out efforts by the government to curb campus violence." The Nov. 3 all-party meeting adopted a seven point resolution to deal with campus violence. Quite in line with these parleys and assurances and resolutions the Prime Minister has made an impassioned appeal to opposition leaders for 'unity and cooperation to help national development and strengthen democracy.' Her latest public address was more pronouncedly conciliatory, which we have noted with more than usual welcome.

Certainly there is much generalised stuff in what the Prime Minister said or the Home Minister assured the leaders of, or the resolutions contained. But, in the specific context of campus trouble, what has emerged from these coincidental developments is the convergence of views on one point: the campus unrest can be overcome only if the (major) political parties commit themselves to ending it. And, quite hearteningly, they have come close to each other to (literally) put their heads together and find an answer.

This good thing that looks on its way to happening can no longer be deferred.

Circumstances have brought the administration, the police, teachers and students and political leaders into one line with one ruling goal. Each group in its place is transparently aware of it and the speed with which it has to be attained.

The green signal has however to come from political leaders including the Prime Minister who would also be required to perform a vital part of the job. The interesting fact about this line-up or convergence is: although the issue is at bottom thoroughly political, its resolution has to be sought the super-political or national way. That is most necessary to make sense of what is always claimed as the aim of both government and opposition. This is the litmus test which the two major political parties face with equal responsibility. Given the unity of purpose that has brought them all together a positive outcome is all that everybody expects.

Yet another good thing is the return of Dhaka University Teachers to their classes from Nov. 7. They should have done so much earlier, as we had urged them to. They resume work on the same grounds (students' interest) as were stressed by us and the general public. Trouble prevails in other universities also. And local as well as extra-local factors have paralysed also those campuses with sporadic eruption of violence, at the moment, appearing to be more or less a free-for-all.

A ceasefire, forged in Dhaka University with all the parties accepting it will have to be comprehensive enough to include all the universities. Nay, this has to be given the shape and dimension of a national consensus making it easy for both major political parties to bury the hatchet once for all and usher in a really worthwhile change in the way the country will be run. For nothing less than such broad-based unity for purpose putting country before person and party will solve our problems or save the country.

The time is for action rather than resolutions or assurances. They have been in tons over the years without an ounce of action. The position is really dreadful: the nation is reaping the whirlwind rising from the wind it has sown again, over the years. Terrorism is a question involving not merely students. It is one of juvenile lawlessness in its worst form. And the whole question boils down to: either you establish the rule of law or get hoist by your own petard.

We are terribly in earnest when we say this.

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