

## The Bangladesh Times

### LET US HEAL OURSELVES

Frankenstein's monster has again been let loose on the Dhaka University Campus. It took two lives on the spot and wounded over a dozen others, in a two-hour gun battle between rival student groups Sunday afternoon. As usual there are several versions of the incident from different sources. While a left-leaning students' coalition group blames both the Awami League-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League and the ruling BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, newspaper accounts of the scene from start to finish implicate the pro-Awami League group as being on the offensive.

It started with a convoy of seven motorbikes, carrying about a dozen youth, trying to storm the DUCSU office where the pro-BNP executive committee of the students' union was in session. Failing to force in, the gang dispersed shouting anti-BNP slogans. Later snipers shot at an anti-terrorism procession brought out by Chhatra Dal supporters triggering a pitched gun-battle with shots coming from all directions.

The scene could have been one from any low-grade gangster movie, except for the very unreal non-involvement of the positioned police force. Was it helplessness, apathy or wisdom that dictated the spectators' role for the law-enforcing agencies? As one neutral student commented, it is a political problem and must be solved politically.

In any case, the police, in a berserk state of student politics, is bound to find itself impotent. Either way—by action and inaction—it could become a handle with which to beat a democratic government. To be on the safe side why not let these misguided youth be at one another's throats and thus let the monsters do away with themselves? Certainly such a strategy cannot be sanctioned by the Home Ministry which is "determined to control terrorism" and hoped that all concerned quarters would extend all out cooperation to the government to maintain peace and discipline.

Such statements are released as a matter of course but despite repeated warnings against destabilising activities and appeals for letting better judgement prevail, settling of scores continue to be done through violent means.

The issue sparked off an unscheduled hour-long debate in the Jatiya Sangsad the very afternoon. The Deputy Leader of the House repeated his conviction that violence on the campus could be stopped if only all political parties would shoulder their responsibilities and handle their berserk boys. It is one thing to use these young people as political pawns and quite another to let them make murder the only means of settling differences.

The godfathers are no less murderers—albeit by proxy. They seem to regard the lives of youth to be of no value, and patriotism, democracy, honour and other lofty principles no more than empty words rolled off the tongue.

That such incidents can recur is a shame for all political parties, ruling or otherwise. Let us heal ourselves.

76