

The Bangladesh Times

ON CAMPUS VIOLENCE

The Dhaka University has further postponed the holding of classes and examinations till Nov 7. This is the second time since the Oct 27 gunbattle on the campus between rival student groups that the country's largest academic institution has deferred resumption of normal activities. Nobody can say for sure, not the Vice Chancellor Prof Maniruzzaman Mia nor the syndicate, whether the university can actually reopen this year. After the spine tingling macabre drama of last week one shudders to ponder over the prospects of this university which has a glorious past but which is now mired in problems spawned by violence, bloodletting and academic indiscipline.

The nation is concerned over the situation in Dhaka University; Parliament is worried and so are teachers, guardians and students. And yet campus violence grows and becomes deadlier than before. In the general discussion in Parliament Members from both the Treasury and Opposition benches have called for tough measures to rid the campus of terrorism. Despite the apparent national consensus, such measures are still wanting. Government agencies seem to be lacking in taking positive action against campus terrorists although the Home Minister has time and again expressed the determination to take firm and concrete steps against those who have brought insecurity on the campus and vitiated the academic atmosphere.

There is no doubt that the universities are sensitive places and no government will hastily move into such a delicate zone lest more complications arise. It is always better and more effective if the problems of the universities and other academic institutions are dealt with unitedly with the agreement of all parties. This is precisely what the parliamentary special committee entrusted to deal with the question of campus terrorism is doing. The committee has members from all political parties and therefore it should be possible on its part to work out a formula effective and nationally acceptable.

In the present parliamentary system, parliament is the focus of national attention and is also the machinery which is expected to deal with national problems. It cannot and should not fail in seeking out a solution to the problem of campus terrorism which is now being identified as the most critical national issue.

Both the government and the Opposition which are committed to uphold and promote democratic principles must unmistakably show the willingness and the courage to work together on a problem that the nation wants to be resolved. One cannot talk about democracy in Parliament while the campuses are the abodes of terrorists and trigger happy students.