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TACKLING CAMPUS VIOLENCE UNITEDLY

The leading political parties in the country have agreed to work unitedly to stamp out violence from the campus and restore an academic environment in the educational arena. This understanding among the political parties which have active student fronts has been long overdue. Over 200 educational institutions are now closed because of violence and the remaining few which are still open are constantly under the shadow of students terrorism. Teachers and the administrators of the universities have already given up hope on restoring order by themselves and appealed to the government and the political parties to come forward and help them in establishing a climate congenial to academic pursuits.

The problem of campus violence has perhaps become the most aggravating national challenge. The domestic issue has turned so serious that even the donor community is talking about it. And there are certainly substantial reasons for such concern. If the educational institutions cannot be run properly, the development process will be threatened. The spillover effect of such violence will hamper industries and other economic activities.

The government and the opposition parties agreed on a seven-point accord in a meeting on Tuesday presided over by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. The most important point in the accord is the understanding that there will be no interference from any quarter in police and other legal actions taken against any group or individual found guilty of committing or abetting violence on the campuses. There has been an agreement that campus terrorists will not get any shelter from any political group either in power or outside of it.

With such an accord in vogue, the law enforcing agencies are in a better position than before to do their duty. Their responsibilities are now clear. They will have to track the unruly elements on the campus, plug in the sources of arms supply and keep a constant vigil on those who have records of violence and hooliganism. Simultaneously, the university and college authorities must strengthen their disciplinary measures and use all their enforcement capabilities to re-establish an atmosphere for learning.

The teachers must themselves be above politics and not only be impartial but also seen to be so. Our teachers have apparently lost their traditional moral authority over the students and they must themselves try to find out why their students do not obey them like before neither in the classrooms nor outside. One reason could be that they themselves are not above board, that they are too involved in group politics and also in protecting the interests of one or the other political party on the campus. If they want to win back the total respect of the students they must absolve themselves of such parochial interests. They themselves must be fully engaged in academic pursuits, at least when they are on the campus.