

Wednesday, May 27, 1992

STUDENTS AGAINST ANARCHY

Representatives from student unions all across the country convened at the Engineers' Institute for a day-long programme on how best the elected students could serve the cause of democracy. Needless to say, despite very significant contributions by the student community in the interest of our liberty, language and national prestige, a handful among them have always managed to tarnish their image through mindless mercenary activities.

Almost every other day violence and terrorism grip campus life. Though only a few of the so-called students, patronised by one political party or the other, are responsible, the entire student community, indeed the whole nation, has to pay heavy penalties. Session jams, poor academic performance, criminal waste of time and money are the mark of our colleges and universities and nowhere are our graduates now given the respect they would get only two decades ago.

It is heartening that the saner sections of the students have finally decided to act and save the academic institutions from hopeless atrophy. The day-long students' convention, organised by the Dhaka University Central Students Union, recently, decided to observe an anti-terrorism week from May 31 to mobilize support against trouble-mongers.

The crusade would continue till the canker is cauterised, so to say, for "democracy and terrorism cannot co-exist", as Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said in a message to the DUCSU Convention. She called for launching a movement against violence which she said is "a national problem". The cooperation of all would be needed to successfully uproot anarchy which vested groups encourage in the name of politics.

Begum Zia deplored the fact that her conference in December last year, with major political parties on the issue of campus violence, did not yield the results expected from the resolutions then adopted. Obviously the affliction is much too deep to be cured by mere good intentions. The glamour of gun-toting reckless youth dies hard specially under circumstances where the boredom level is so high and most youth have no healthy role models to emulate. How many of their elders can command the respect and following that impressionable youth seek? Have not the politics of plunder and disregard for law and order been systematically taught so that muscle power and nuisance-value can win over words and wits?

It is high time this ignominious state of affairs came to a close so that this fledgling democracy gets a chance to grow. The students convention came up with quite a few commendable resolutions. It called for special resistance committees against terrorism to be formed by the student unions and organisations of all educational institutions; demanded arrest and punishment of outsiders and terrorists masquerading as students, no matter to which political party they belong; suggested that talented students should be given more scholarships while others should be provided opportunities for part-time employment.

The latter recommendation deserves serious consideration not only from the economic point of view but also as a healthy way of avoiding boredom. "An idle brain is the devil's workshop" is an adage that applies for all times and places. Let us heal ourselves through wholesome activities — students and guardians alike.

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