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Student unrest threatens unveiling new frontiers of knowledge

Times Report

Prof. Muhammad Shamsul Huq, a former Foreign Minister and a former Acting Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University last week emphasised the need for full cooperation between the university and the influential political parties for helping solve the problems facing the varsity.

Addressing the inaugural function of the fifth 'Dhaka University Day' on April 1 as the chief guest, Prof. Huq also underscored the need for active role of all concerned to preserve the sanctity and the autonomy of the university.

The 'University Day' is being observed in Dhaka University since 1983. On such day academic and other facilities and institutions are kept open for all categories of visitors directly or indirectly connected with the university. It is also a substitute of 'Rag Day'.

Such day was observed in Dhaka University on January

8, 1983, February 4, 1984 February 8, 1985 and February 5, 1987. This year, however, the observance of the 'Dhaka University Day' was marred by a number of ugly incidents.

Prof. Shamsul Huq who is also a former Vice-Chancellor of Rajshahi University said that the recent student unrest in the universities of the country was a cause of concern for the nation. The higher education objectives—continuous learning, nurture of free and creative thinking and unveiling of new frontiers of knowledge and technology through research—were now threatened.

Under such circumstances the quality of instructions was being affected while the path of innovations and discoveries for national development through the flourishing of creative talents was also being blocked. This might have an adverse effect in the future, he cautioned.

Dwelling on the problems

facing the university, he said that some of those were connected with the internal situation of the university and some others rooted outside. The problems should be viewed in totality and not in an isolated fashion he said.

He said that Dhaka University which was established as a fully teaching and residential university in 1921, lost its character after 1947 when it was assigned also the affiliating function. This change had its adverse effect at all levels of the university life he said.

Prof. Shamsul Huq mentioned about the required number of university colleges in a hurried fashion without the required number of teachers and necessary facilities, and said this had further complicated the problems in the higher education sector. Gradually pressure on the university mounted and the academic atmosphere

deteriorated, he said. Calling for analysing the problems of the university from such an historical perspective Prof. Huq expressed his optimism that solution of these problems were possible provided all concerned lent their hands of cooperation.

The present Vice-Chancellor of the university Prof. Abdul Mannan in his address said that the university was a national property. It was based on a set of values. Its fate was linked with the fate of Bangladesh. The university authorities looked forward to a peaceful co-existence of different shades of opinion and an atmosphere of tolerance in the campus.

It may be mentioned here that Dhaka University which had started its journey with 877 students and 60 teachers now has a total of 17 thousand students and over a thousand teachers. It now has 180 affiliated and 22 constituent colleges, 36 departments and seven institutes.

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