

## DU — The New VC's Task

The new Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University has promised to rise above narrow party interests in discharging his responsibilities. That statement of intent is quite encouraging in view of what has been happening over the past many years at the premier institution of learning in Bangladesh. It is a story that needs hardly any retelling, for the simple reason that our students, our teachers, indeed our overall education system have gone through a long period of trauma owing to the destruction wrought over the years. At this point, if Professor Abul Kalam Azad Chowdhury is in a position to reassure the nation about the manner in which he will perform his job, we will certainly be happy. But that does not mean that pious wishes should be all. And Professor Chowdhury has a particularly difficult act to follow in view of the fact that he is a member of the advisory council of the ruling party. By itself, that ought not to be a factor impeding the way a Vice Chancellor should be functioning. It is the right, often the privilege, of an individual to entertain ideas of the kind of society he would like to see established in a country. One has no questions on this score; and Professor Chowdhury has given everyone to understand that his politics will not come in the way of his professional responsibilities. Even so, one would like to recall that the last Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University came into a good deal of controversy owing to his involvement with an organisation linked to a major political party. That kind of controversy, let everyone note, ought not to be repeated.

By far the one quality that distinguishes the new Vice Chancellor is the commitment he has always brought to his job. His scholastic achievements make him one of the more respectable of men in academia. Add to that the fact that in his expression of views he has always been a person of conviction. Be it politics or education, Azad Chowdhury has always held his own ground. That should be considered something of an encouragement as he prepares to deal with the multifarious ills that afflict the environment of Dhaka University. But let it be said that while firmness of conviction is forever a matter of pride, such conviction comes up with the best of results once it throws up achievements of a positive kind. The new Vice Chancellor knows as well as anyone else that for Dhaka University, and for those who are responsible for running its affairs, one achievement keenly looked forward to is a restoration of peace and order on the campus. That task will surely call for the most diligent of efforts on the part of Professor Chowdhury and his administration because of the legacy that has come down to him. The new man will need to approach the overall issue of student trouble from a wholly new angle, seeing that earlier approaches have failed to yield results. Professor Chowdhury will be expected to do two things if he means to leave a lasting impact on the university. In the first place, he will have to go for a systematic approach to order, which again means that he will need to crack down hard on all forms of lawlessness and bring to book all offenders, no matter what their party affiliations are. In the second, it will be the Vice Chancellor's job to make it clear to the politicians, in power as well as outside it, that their interference in the work of the university does not help, especially where a recovery of arms and a restoration of peace on the campus are concerned. The one cue Professor Chowdhury can take from the activities of the law and order authorities on the campus in the past couple of months is the one pertaining to the nabbing of both pro-government and anti-government trouble-makers. Once he is able to do that, he will have done the country positive good.

Professor Chowdhury has told the country that during the tenure of his administration, all appointments will be made on the basis of individual merit. That is certainly how things should be; and one will be only too happy wishing the new Vice Chancellor the best in his quest for quality. He needs the support of all good men. And all good men expect him to do a lot of good at Dhaka University.