

## More BCL infighting, and more death and destruction

YET again, leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student wing of the ruling Awami League, engaged in internecine conflict over the control of the Bangladesh Agricultural University campus in Mymensingh on Saturday. According to a New Age report on Sunday, the rival groups led by the unit president and general secretary of the organisation pounced on each other at about 1:00pm with firearms and sharp weapons leaving a 12-year boy dead and at least 25 BCL activists injured. A local madrassah student, the deceased, reportedly went to the campus to bring back his grandmother tending cattle there and was caught in crossfire. Meanwhile, angry at the killing, hundreds of people from the surrounding villages rallied on the campus and subsequently set fire to three student dormitories and vandalised two others, prompting the university authorities to close the institution for an indefinite period. Overall, other than causing loss of life and limb alongside damage to public property, the clashes eventually cast uncertainty over the academic life of several thousand students although they had nothing to do with the factional feud.

What is more unfortunate is that all this occurred when there was ample time and scope for the university authorities to take steps, including deployment of additional law enforcement personnel on the campus, to prevent at least the clashes that took place on Saturday. Reportedly, the two groups had been engaged in clashes at regular intervals since Thursday. Undoubtedly, such inability, if not unwillingness, on the part of the top brass of the university to take appropriate and timely actions against the Chhatra League troublemakers is attributable to the politicisation of the administration of the university on partisan line — a malpractice regrettably rampant in almost all sectors.

It is important to note that the Chhatra League people unleashed repeated attacks on, especially, leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal in Agricultural University like all other institutions that provide higher education across the country to drive the latter out of campus soon after the incumbents assumed office. Needless to say, those attacks intended to establish absolute BCL control over the campus soon got followed by repeated infighting within the Chhatra League, essentially over the booty gained through extortion, admission trade, rent seeking, tender manipulation, etc in and outside campus — some of the criminal acts perpetrated by the ruling party men in a pervasive manner over the last four years or so. Already, dozens of people, including BCL activists, have lost their lives and limbs in those clashes. It is also important to recall that apparently in the face of huge public criticism against such atrocities by the Chhatra League men in particular, the high-ups in the government and the ruling party, including the prime minister, pledged on several occasions that they would not spare anyone involved in any wrongdoing, of course, only to forget later.

Either way, the government will be well advised to immediately make those pledges a reality and take decisive and demonstrative actions — organisational and legal — against the troublemakers in the Chhatra League.