

## BCL demands college seats

*What is political quota?*

**T**HE present day version of student politics is proving to be too recalcitrant and intrusive to serve the cause of academic atmosphere in the educational institutions across the country. The latest example is Eden College where the BCL has reportedly demanded 300 seats in the first year honours courses under political quota! The demand is no doubt something unheard of, and it does indicate that strident student politics is spreading its pernicious tentacles in every direction. The BCL's resolve to press it home has brought the whole admission process to a standstill at the premier women's college in the city.

Now, there is perhaps more than one way to interpret the negative developments associated with student politics in its present form. But nothing can alter the truth that it is no longer the same thing as it was in the distant past when students were in the forefront of all progressive movements. What we have observed in recent years is indeed disgraceful. Some young men, masquerading as students and working under the tutelage of this or that political party, dominate the show. They try to control and grab everything as innocent general students are reduced to being helpless bystanders. Muscle gets the better of merit.

The question is how long will this continue? The ruling party leaders, the prime minister to be precise, have to take stock of the situation. It is not morally or legally tenable that the BCL cadres will be allowed to take their turn after being subjected to all kinds of harassment under the previous regime, since one wrong cannot justify another. And the tit-for-tat policy will only further deepen the crisis. Finally, such a policy is bound to be self-defeating in the long run.

Here is an opportunity for the prime minister to rein in the unruly BCL elements, who have already done enough to be termed so, and do a great service to the nation. It may not be possible to regain the lost glory of student politics overnight, but even if they can restore a semblance of it, it will no doubt be a major achievement.

What we cannot ignore is that vicious student politics negates all that is decent in the academic arena. Since merit is its first victim, it cannot have any place in higher seats of learning. The decision makers have to act before more damage is done to our system of education by the unrestrained student activists of the parties.