The freeing of DU teachers and students

Drop torching case and review verdicts in good spirit

THE freeing of eight Dhaka University students on Wednesday, together with the earlier release of four academics from detention, has certainly led to an easing of tension not only on the campus but across the country as well. The joy and sense of relief with which the freed teachers and students were welcomed back at Dhaka University speak of the respect and empathy that people have felt for all these individuals. The campus will now hopefully return to a pursuit of normal activities.

The need now is to build on the new spirit that has come into the national scene through the release of the academics and students. By responding to growing popular demands for positive action on the issue of the arrests, the government has demonstrated a degree of sagacity. Such action will undoubtedly lead to a return of normal conditions on the campus and already there are indications of classes and stalled examinations getting back on track. The freed teachers, in their comments after their release, have sounded a positive note on what now needs to be done. They have drawn attention to the noble and high traditions that Dhaka University has historically upheld. One would like the government to be sensitive to the general sentiments at a time when the country prepares for a return to democratic governance through general elections later this year. A truly good gesture in this regard can be made through dropping the case of the vehicle torching incident by the authorities. Let things begin with a clean slate.

There is one other point which the government, in a proper spirit of reconciliation, should be making note of. A number of legal experts have suggested that the convictions handed to three of the four teachers were based on 'poor' evidence. That being the case, a review be undertaken of the convictions and these be set aside.

Let the authorities reflect on the issue and come forth with a constructive approach to it.