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BCL's disquieting show of strength

Just rein them in

HOT on the heels of reported dislodging of students belonging to the BNP student wing JCD from residential halls of Dhaka University, came the factional fight within the BCL at the Zia Hall and BCL's purge of Shibir activists from the dormitories of Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (Ruet) on Thursday night. Several students were injured in both incidents. The academic atmosphere has been thrown out of gear.

The flare-up in BCL at the Zia Hall in DU centered around two JCD students joining one of the BCL groups. Six BCL students were rounded up by the police together with an outsider.

A sigh of resignation over these incidents being typical of the syndrome that follows any change of government has to be scrupulously avoided by all those whose responsibility it is to call a screeching halt to BCL's wave of excesses. To say that this is a retaliatory replay of the JCD's hall capture swipes following the victory of the BNP in 2001 elections is a vain attempt to whitewash the failure to come out of the tit-for-tat behaviourism that students as the most educated and conscientious segment of the society must learn to shun from the core of their being.

Actually, we need to go deeper into the heart of the matter seeing it in a historical context. Our insights into history tell us that with either of the two major political party scoring electoral victory over the other, its student wing invariably feels powered to the point of infinity, so to speak, as its leaders of all denominations throw their weight around university, college, residential hall and hostel authorities in a muscular bid to procure admission for students and seats in the dormitories by way of strengthening their support base in breach of set criteria. At the same time, they would engage in tender business, rent-seeking and variegated extortionist forays. They had not stopped short of lobbying with ministers, MPs and high government functionaries in the past to gain favour or to act as commission agents. It is no overstatement to say that such behavioural aberrations turned money-making into a covetous goal relegating education to a secondary status. It is time all this is rolled back.

The people have voted the AL to power on a mandate for change which per force should include reining in the student wing in time before it crosses the critical threshold eventually affecting governance.