

## Rabid criminalisation of student politics

*Onus on major political parties to act decisively*

**T**HE armed encounters on Monday of feuding Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) groups on the Dhaka University Campus with the BCL supporting one faction have had a telling fallout badly souring academic atmosphere in the process. As many as 24 were hurt and, amidst a brandishing of lethal weapons, a strike was promptly called in a ludicrous show of self-righteousness.

Outsiders trespassed on to the campus with a pile of weapons and what their identity was nobody knew or the reports didn't indicate either. But it's a well-known fact that non-students have a way of intruding on to the varsity premises whenever some trouble had been brewing. The intrusion of outsiders, open display of arms on the campus, factious clashes, trading of gun shots -- all of these unfolded in a rapid sequence right before the eye of law enforcers who preferred to look the other way just to save their skin.

It is the BNP-nominated committee that was physically resisted by those deposed from their previous positions. There was trading of blame that 'tested and dedicated' student leaders were dropped in favour of allegedly a reformist vintage of the aged type. Basically, it's a turf war within a student body. So, there are as much inter-party rivalries which took on violent forms as there are intra-party factional fights both between and within the JCD and the BCL. Actually far removed from its ideological and principled moorings, student politics has become more of a business than espousing the causes of the students. Criminalisation of student politics has thus grown over time through a combination of factors cited above.

The way the political parties, and, especially the police behave in such situations gives rise to a suspicion that perhaps they want the students to fight. Why? Because all said and done student politics is the mirror-image of national politics, a continuation of the same only in a different form in the face of which all seem to be helpless.

There is a strong suspicion in the public mind that the leaders of major political parties while cultivating their own student following are often indulgent to them to the detriment of party discipline and credibility. Who benefits from student violence but the trouble makers themselves?

After a two-year lull this eruption of student violence has taken place. Thus, this is a matter for serious analysis by the political parties who must own up the responsibility for such student excesses and work to reverse the trend to foster congenial atmosphere in the educational institutions. And it is the government party that must lead the way.