

Who will resist BCL?

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RECENT attack by BCL activists on RU students reminds one of a Bengali adage "I do not want alms, just restrain your dog." The students urged the university administration to rethink their decision of fee hike and introduction of commercially run evening courses. In response, the university administration let loose BCL cadres upon general students, restrained police from taking action against attackers and, worst of all, filed cases against the agitating students! It seems people at the helm of university administration preferred gun to pen and run the extra mile to show their loyalty to ruling party.

What is the merit of students' demand is a different discussion. To say the least, one has to consider that demands of keeping educational expenses at a minimum level and restraining commercialisation of education are parts of our glorious history of student movements for democratisation of education; these demands have nothing to do with asking for tender or free ride on university facilities.

The university administration acquiesced to the students' demands. BCL even brought out a procession in support of those demands. Then why did they resort to violent assault on general students?

In Bangladesh, it has become a tradition that soon after a party comes to power it starts grabbing control of existing democratic spaces by dint of muscle, money and majority. In the case of universities, student wing of the new ruling party resorts to force to assert their hegemony. They do not care for students' opinion. Nor do they care for the university administration as people in the administration become equally partisan, if not more. Ruling party student cadres opt for control of dining, seat allotment, exam schedule, result, playing field, cultural programmes and so on. But who gives them the authority to do so? Are they elected representatives of the students? Universities, the highest echelon of imparting education and values, have become the least democratic space to live in.

So what's the solution? Seeking help from the PM will be of little use when she herself defends the act of BCL saying that they had protested against attack on them, and that not all those who were carrying arms were BCL activists! It seems BCL is a brazen manifestation of arrogance of their parent party.

It is an irony that since the re-advent of democracy in 1991, elections of students' forums like DUCSU, RUCSU, CUCSU have been kept on hold. There remains very little scope for students to vent their grievances or raise any demand. Lack of student forum has also weakened leadership building capacity of universities, for which the country is suffering most.

Democracy is the best way to resist whims and repression of any autocratic system. So our demands should be immediate resumption of elections of student forums. Let our students be brought up in a democratic environment and fight for democratic values.

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