

Dhaka Univ campus must be made safe for all

THE campus of the University of Dhaka has become, as New Age reported on Thursday, a haven of culprits; and general students have, therefore, reasons to be in a fearful situation. The situation as a whole is unpalatable. While the manhandling of students by their fellows having links with the Chhatra League, the ruling Awami League's student wing, over trifling issues has become commonplace, crimes such as sexual harassment and extortion have also increased alarmingly in recent times, creating panic among general students. In the latest such incident, followers of a Chhatra League leader of the Bijoy Ekattar Hall unit on March 23 beat up two students of the rival group for not joining the party programme. They were beaten up with iron rods and hockey sticks in a room of the hall of residence. Their wrist watches and mobiles were taken away. On March 9, Chhatra League activists drove out 10 students from the hall for not joining the March 7 Awami League programme in Suhrawardy Udyan. Chhatra League activists on March 8 beat up a student as he claimed his right to hall seat in writing on the wall. Chhatra League activists on February 6 beat up a student as he sought his calculator back and he lost vision in the right eye.

The stories of such incidents, mostly involving Chhatra League activists on the wrong side, never end. While teachers and former student leaders have blamed the absence of students' unions for the situation, the university proctor says that they were trying to contain such crimes by punishing culprits through hall administration and other administrative and disciplinary committees. He further sought to say that it was almost impossible to contain the situation because of outsiders going to the campus. Explaining that the university has punished several offenders, the vice-chancellor sought to say that there was no space for culprits on the campus. Yet such incidents keep taking place off and on. It is true that the absence of students' union activities have a lot to do to improve on the situation, which calls out the authorities on arranging for elections to the university and hall unions regularly. But what is beyond logic is that why the administrations, the university and the police, are failing to contain crimes, especially by outsiders, with police stations all around the campus. Besides, it is also time that the university administration understood that the punitive measures it is taking against the offenders are not deterrent enough.

The university administration, under the circumstances, must treat crimes as crimes and deal with them with due gravity. The police also need to understand that with the presence of the police on the campus, any such crimes, however petty, taking place there are only indicative of their failure in law enforcement, at least on the campus. The ruling Awami League must also rein in Chhatra League activists so that the campus remain safe, for students, for teachers and even for outsiders.