

Campus chaos

The University of Dhaka is now producing more "martyrs" of national repute than scholars of international standard. The sanctity of the university has been destroyed by some of the leading student organizations which have abused its (university) autonomous status to establish an arms depot within the campus.

The violent student activists appear to believe that their status grants them legal immunity, and that the prime job of the Vice-Chancellor is to bail them out of the police station. They are directly aided and abetted by their sponsor organisations the major national political parties.

The occasional but brutal forays of the police into the campus merely add fuel to the already lit fire. Yet it is pertinent to note that since 1971 more students have been killed in factional violence than in student-police clashes within the Dhaka University campus.

Autonomy is not a licence for anarchy. The irregular police entry into the campus may spread fear among the innocent majority of students but the daily bomb explosions compel them to

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live in constant terror; the Dhaka University Teachers Association condemns the former but effectively condones the latter by normally remaining silent.

It is clear to all that the University Administration has totally failed to cleanse the campus of arms and so the "sanctity" it repeatedly claims to defend belongs to the realm of mythology. Moreover it persistently refuses to permit the police to remove the weapons and bombs from the campus. Then who is responsible for cleaning up the campus? It seems that the university authority has a firm belief in a Catch-22 solution.

Shootings and bombings are matters of crime, and as such, according to the general norms of civilized society, should be dealt with by the law-enforcing agencies. The problem of campus violence cannot be solved by wishful thinking as some ivory tower professors seem to believe.

Some of the major universities in the liberal democra-

tic United States maintain their own uniformed and armed campus police to uphold law and order and they have their own jails to punish any excessively unruly student. If a group of students resorted to sten-guns and hand grenades to promote their brand of "politics", the U.S. Government would no doubt send in the Special Weapons Action Team (S.W.A.T) a paramilitary anti-terrorist unit. It may be noted that in other developing countries such as South Korea Indonesia and Turkey, the national Army is utilized to quell student violence.

This of course raises the issue of the legitimacy of the Government that is exercising state force. Today in Bangladesh the majority of the leading national political parties have recognized the legitimacy of the ruling party by participating in the current parliament. Thus any violence committed by student activists is an act of extremism that is out of step with mainstream national politics.

The Dhaka University Tea

chers Association (D.U.T.A.), constituting the best brains in the land, have been discussing and debating the law and order situation on the campus for more than one decade without any positive and concrete results. One has to admire the perseverance of the D.U.T.A., but as it has failed to establish a stable and healthy academic atmosphere at Dhaka University, one wonders if it is capable of producing a formula for national political stability and economic development.

The net result is that the former "Oxford of the East" has been transformed into a den of anti-social activities.

Public opinion condemns the Dracula-psychology that is producing constant bloodshed. Political ideals cannot be established by criminal means. The majority of us are excessively preoccupied with our rights while not observing our responsibilities towards one another. Outdated rhetoric cannot

solve the practical problems of our society.
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