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Editorial

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Peace in the campuses

POLICE raided four residential halls of the Dhaka University and Rajshahi University and recovered a sizeable quantity of arms and ammunition on October 6. Sixty three persons have been taken into custody in this connection. This follows the earlier raid of six halls of Dhaka University on September 20 when a huge quantity of arms and ammunition were handed up.

While these successive raids and recovery of arms from university halls bear testimony to the rather belated alacrity on the part of the university authorities and the law enforcing agencies, a certain pessimism also creeps into the national psyche about the efficacy of such occasional raids. If such a sizeable quantity of arms and ammunition could be found from four halls two weeks after a similar raid in six other halls, a question arises as to the neutrality of the university administration, the effectiveness of such occasional raids and the curability of the malaise under the given conditions where it all looks like a game of hide and seek.

How to prevent arms clashes, continued violence and restore peace in the campuses is a question that is uppermost in the minds of all well-meaning citizens although the solution seems to be still beyond the reach

of most of them in the present state of the country's polity. Obviously, any solution of this problem is dependent on the sincere co-operation of all—students, university administrations, law enforcing agencies, political parties, guardians and society at large. But the role of guardians and general citizens is bound to be somewhat indirect while that of the students, political parties, university authorities and law enforcing agencies is direct and operational. These directly involved parties are now found blaming one another and each is passing on the buck to the other. The university authorities are putting the responsibility squarely on the law enforcing agencies while the latter are complaining quite validly that they have no freedom of action in the campuses. The political parties and their student wings are all claiming innocence for themselves while making the others the villains of the piece. In such a situation, peace in the campuses continues to be worst casualty. The situation therefore demands a fresh and serious soul searching on the part of these involved in the problem.

However, one consensus has been reached following the recent raids into the university halls and their findings, namely, that the sources of arms supply are to be identified and effectively cut off. The Inspector General of Police has reportedly said that the arms so far recovered are mostly indigenous and the armed groups are procuring these from some clandestine arms facto-

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ries. Since such factories are operating within the country the police administration must own up to its responsibility in finding these out and ensuring that such fatal secret trade is wiped out. Failure in this task would quite naturally reflect on its own efficiency.

From what has gone above, it is clear that armed violence in the campuses is not an isolated phenomenon but inseparably linked to the general atmosphere of unease and restlessness prevailing in the society today owing to the sociopolitical milieu. A meeting of the guardians held at the Public Library auditorium on Friday voiced the opinion that the political parties should disband their student wings. Some intellectuals have also echoed similar sentiments. But will the political parties oblige? And will it all wipe out violence totally from the campuses? These remain million dollar questions in the present context which only politics and political parties can answer. But one may be permitted to stake the suggestion that unless all socio-political constraints are removed and until politics comes of age a satisfactory solution to the problem is hard to achieve as campus convulsions are only symptoms of a warped and constricted socio-political psyche.