



Holiday VIEWPOINT

Every week in this column, VIEWPOINT, we print opinions of our readers on subjects which we feel are of popular interest and concern. The opinions, however, do not always coincide with those of HOLIDAY's

Dhaka Varsity on a road to disaster

By KAZI ZAKER HUSAIN

I address the following few words to anyone who is someone in the hierarchy of our helm of affairs.

Problem : I have spent nearly 33 years, first as a student and then as a teacher so far on the Dhaka University Campus. It hurts me to say that things are very very bad on the Campus. Pistols and other firearms are everywhere, in the streets, in the halls, inside the class and inside the examination hall.

Hijacking, snatching, robbery, bomb throwing, etc., are the order of the day. But this is nothing new, in fact this kind of wind started blowing some years ago. And it must be remembered that the D.U. Campus is not an isolated place, it is a part of the country, and is therefore not better or worse than the rest. But for obvious reasons, events of this Campus appear more conspicuous than those of the rest of the country.

Reasons : The D.U. campus and the campuses of the halls and departments within the Campus are most insecure, and totally exposed and unprotected. Any miscreant can come to the campus anytime, do any mischief he likes and escape unchallenged. It is a 'duty free zone' for all the 'mastans' (hooligans) of the city.

Now the episode of only one day. On the 18th January this year my daughter was returning home from the Curzon Hall area after attending her classes. As her rickshaw took right turn towards the British Council, two men rushed towards her and got hold of her rickshaw. It was 11-45 a.m. One of them pointed a sharp screw-driver at her throat and started removing her handles. It was hurting her, so she took them off herself and handed over to them.

The miscreants then ran to a cream colored car parked in front of the BUET School, got in and drove away. Many people were in the street and saw the whole

drama taking place but did nothing to stop them. Half an hour earlier, the same day, a cream-coloured car was hijacked from in front of the D.U. Registrar's Office, and the same noon the rickshaw of a lady and her daughter was stopped in another place inside the campus and all their ornaments were snatched away.

When my terrified daughter reached home she was all in tears. One of her friends from a neighbouring house came to see and console her. That girl went out the same evening. When she was returning home at about 10 p.m. with her husband, her rickshaw was stopped by three men riding a motor cycle in front of the British Council and took away everything they had, while the two uniformed guards of the British Council were watching the whole operation from their hiding standing like a pair of banana trees, and they did nothing to help them.

The second and the third incidents mentioned above were reported in the press but not the other ones. According to the opinion of the victims, none of these miscreants appeared to be students. In fact most of the miscreants involved in antisocial activities on the campus are outsiders. Yet all the blames go to the campus. It is not unlikely that these miscreants do have some agents within the campus itself.

Nobody would believe that the law enforcing agencies do not know these miscreants; they simply do not or cannot catch them, presumably because of the fear of something or someone or some people! What kind of a civilised nation it is whose tax-paying citizens do not get protection of the law enforcing agencies against the anti-social elements!

Solution : The D.U. campus must be walled off immediately, leaving a few gates at selected points. The

gates would be guarded, not by illiterate or half literate 'darwans' as is done today, but by well-educated and well-trained personnel, in such a way that no one could get in or out without their knowledge.

The same arrangements should be made for the halls and departments as well. Nowhere in the rest of the world would you find an educational institute where one can enter without permission. Every institute is a kind of family unit, it has its own privacy of a kind and it must be protected.

Problem : Dhaka University has been facing tremendous difficulties because of academic and administrative complications..

Reason : At present, Dhaka University is sailing on 'two boats'. It is neither residential nor affiliating. Nowhere in the rest of the world would you find such a funny and unrealistic situation.

Till 1947, it was a residential university, in the model of Oxford (hence the 'Oxford of the East'), and confined to 'Dhaka town' which was just a district headquarter. As we know, a residential university is only a residential university, where the teachers, students and other employees live together in or around the campus.

Thus there exists some kind of social contacts between them throughout the day and throughout the year. An affiliating university has no such botheration, it prepares syllabi, holds examinations and offers degrees.

Lately, everybody who is somebody— (or even nobody) is commenting on the state of affairs of the D.U. campus, and none fails to mention the phrase 'Oxford of the East'. That is why I have ventured to add a few words about the nature of a residential university.

Moreover, it so happened that I was a student of the 'Oxford of the West' (i.e.

the OXFORD) as well as the 'Oxford of the East' (i.e. the pseudo-Oxford) and therefore I can claim to know a little bit of the both. It is strange-almost disgusting-that everybody regrets that the 'Oxford of the East' is no more what it was, but nobody cares to find out the reasons.

As already mentioned, Dhaka University was what it was till 1947. Then suddenly something happened. In 1947, the heavy Goliath-like burden of all the colleges of Bangladesh (then 'East Pakistan') fell on the tiny shoulder of the David-like Dhaka University.

Dhaka University had neither the capability nor the experience of such a burden. But at that time there were only a dozen or so colleges offering degree pass courses, and so the burden was not as heavy as it is now. With the passing of time more and more colleges were established, more and more colleges started degree pass courses, and finally some colleges started honours and master courses (and always without the prior permission of the university authority although it was always a 'must').

As a result the conflict between the residential and affiliating images of the university became more and more sharp. And the climax seems to have reached recently when all the honours graduates of the colleges demanded that they have a 'right' to study for master's degree in the university proper, whether or not provisions are there in their colleges and whether or not the university has the capacity to absorb them.

Well, they have won their right. What kind of 'right' is this and how they have achieved this has been witnessed by the insiders of the campus, the outsiders should wait (but not for long) to see the consequences.

(To be continued)