

Make campuses free from terrorism

After the deadly clash between two rival factions of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal on Thursday, the Dhaka University campus turned once again into a battle ground on Saturday. In fact, the gun fire on the procession brought out by a faction on Saturday was a sequel to Thursday's fighting. The first outbreak of hostility claimed a JCD leader's life and on the second occasion of violence 18 got injured, one critically.

Following the tragic death of a student leader on Thursday, the university authority promptly expelled five JCD activists. The point that must not be missed is that the measure could not stop the recurrence of violence. Firearms were freely used and there is no guarantee those will stop spitting fire now and that is despite the arrest of two other JCD leaders.

In a no-win situation both for the student and politics in general, unfortunately it is the students—the young and the promising—who get killed. Used as political pawns, the students—all students, irrespective of any kind of political allegiance to a party or not—have long been paying a heavy price. Their study suffers, academic years prolonged and the overall quality of education deteriorates. The campus air is fraught with the premonition of terrorism and violence and that is far from an ideal environment for pursuing higher education. University campuses have long turned into fearsome centres of violence rather than the seats of learning. And the image such institutions project can never be particularly sobering and encouraging for the rest of the country.

Now the key question is whether we want an end to this situation or not. Our political leadership has laid blames on each other's doorsteps. That it has not helped is a proven fact. The BNP leadership has launched a concerted campaign that the government is after its party cadres and many of them have been arrested for no fault of their own. After all these happenings, what do they have to say? Will they discover government's hand in its student front's internecine feuds. We urge both the ruling party and the opposition to reach an agreement not to use—or should we say abuse?—students for politics and then come to an agreement in consultation with the university authorities on the government's measures for eliminating terrorism from campuses once for all. Such a move is all the more necessary for consolidating democracy and nurturing our young talents to take up challenges of the future in an increasingly competitive world.