

51

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PM's visit to DU campus

Sir, The recent visits of the Prime Minister to the Dhaka University on March 7 and March 16 to unveil a sculpture entitled "Swadhinatar Sangram" and to institute the "Bangabandhu Chair" in the History Department of Dhaka University respectively led to suspension of all classes by a university notification from 10 till 12 noon on these days. Such visits to the campus by the head of the government for not so significant events of national history create huge security problems, and that is perhaps the reason as to why the university authorities had to suspend all classes at these stipulated hours.

Since the PM's visit also lead to protests by the opposition student activists, the general student populace, apprehending trouble and breakdown of law and order abstain from coming to the university to attend classes. In other words, the PM's visit to the campus leads to stoppage of all academic activities of the university as well as partial disruption of administrative activities of the institute.

Now, what is the cost of such high profile visits? At least ten students, including six female students, were injured on March 7, 1999. On March 16, newspaper reports say that at least six buses of the university were allegedly damaged at various points in the city, and at least four persons, including a female student, were injured. The violence of 16th took place to enforce a strike called by the opposition JCD against the PM's visit which earlier led to physical injuries. Besides violence and unrest, the PM's visit leads to enforced work stoppages, leading to further session jams which is already sagging the morale of the students.

From another angle, her visits are also perhaps not in the happiest of moments. The DUCSU and hall union elections are reported to be in the wings. In a constituency where students are politically so conscious of their rights, interpretations put to her visits can be quite misleading and unpalatable. It may even lead to further conflagration of the already tense DU political arena.

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