

Fate of the ordinary

I am an 'ordinary' student of Dhaka University. Ordinary in the sense that I am not a brave daughter of the soil to be involved in student politics and I have not taken any oath to sacrifice my career for the future of my country. For the past one and a half years I have been going to IBA in the morning to do my classes and have been back home as soon as the lectures ended. I have seen a lot of processions, heard lots of 'jaalamoyi' speeches and often wondered if the students who involved themselves in these 'great' deeds be ever paid for such activities.

With the recent massacre that took place at the early hour of July 24, political activists in DU have called for an indefinite strike. Our exams have been postponed and the future made more uncertain. The ones who called for the strike definitely have their interests, but

punished and not only asked to resign. And where is the opposition now? What do they have to say about it?

I also suggest that the government sort out their acts. People are losing faith in them fast.

Lisa
Dhaka

The police excesses at midnight on the female students of Shamsunnahar Hall reveal what a democratic country we live in!

And, we must pity ourselves for having such a Home Minister who is still occupying the post with his 'as-if-nothing-happened' smile. From where did the police get the guts to torture the female students of the highest institution of learning? Who are they to try the students for their demand—whatever that might be?

Anik, Amit and Mamun
Lalmatia, Dhaka

ban student politics or not. We all know that where there is politics there is violence, there is power game. And the last thing we want is our students to get involved in this dirty power game.

Parimal Chandra Debnath
Gandaria, Dhaka

Whose fault is it anyway?

As the newspaper reports go, two groups of belligerent students, including some outsiders, as alleged, were facing each other to take possession of the hall, and also to keep or drive out the then Provost. The frequent incidents of violence in the Eden Girls' College Hostel, wherein lathi, boji, iron rods, knives and even pistols and revolvers were freely used, speak for the fact that our female students are no longer weak and docile as they used to be, say, 20 years ago.

discrimination in the application of the law made under it. Shedding of blood or breaking of the limbs, whether it is that of a man or of a woman, must be stopped. The law of the land does not grant any special privilege to the female students of Shamsunnahar Hall to shed one another's blood, or break one another's limbs, freely.

About the time at which the police took action, as they deemed necessary, no one can raise any question. Police can and should take preventive action anywhere to avoid rioting at any time of the day or the night.

The four most pertinent questions here are:

- Did there arise a situation at Shamsunnahar Hall in the evening of July 23, 2002 which justifiably compelled DU authority to call the police to control it?
- Did the police use force more than what was necessary to bring the situation under control?
- While doing his/her duty did any member of the police harassed any of the students or others who were present there?
- Did the whole episode take place because of teacher/student politics in DU?

Ashraf
New DOHS, Mahakhali, Dhaka

Why blame the police force for the midnight raid in Shamsunnahar Hall, it's the responsibility of the ruling party supporters— who initiated, instigated, invited and let loose the police force upon the innocent students. So the total responsibility rests on the ruling party, particularly the Shamsunnahar hall JCD leaders (who are not even the students of DU any more) backed by puppet DU VC and Proctor.

After winning in the election BNP has let loose its supporters upon AL activists and non-supporter of BNP every where. The Shamsunnahar Hall incident is just another example of it.

Mirpur, Dhaka

The silent Home Minister?

Isn't it surprising that the Home Minister did not make any comment after the brutal police attack in Shamsunnahar Hall? Where is he?

Syeda Laila Faruque
Gulshan, Dhaka

I am really surprised at the silence of the Home Minister regarding the Dhaka University incident. Why hasn't he made any comment regarding the situation? As a Home Minister, isn't it his responsibility to at least say something about it, forget about trying to restore peace on the campus.

Sonia Sharmeen
Jigatola, Dhaka

Where is the Opposition?

Hell broke loose in Dhaka University, the students were mercilessly beaten up, the general students have taken to streets and yet the main Opposition party Awami League is almost silent about it.

Instead of being by the side of the protesting students BCL— the student wing of Awami League has called for hartal on July 30! They claim that the hartal was called protesting the arrival of the Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and the recent atrocities that took place in DU. But does it really help the general students protesting the brutality of the police atrocity? Is it an act of a responsible Opposition party?

Sahia Salma
Dhaka University

DU attack

All day I've been trying to figure out what made the government order such a vile attack on these harmless students.

Then it struck me. Read the article in *The Daily Star* again. A great deal of it sounds like it is from erotica like the "Story of O" or from some of those violent Bangla movies with lots of rape and

domination. Women were pulled out of bathrooms by their hair screaming while riot police stamped on them with their boots and beat them with batons. Scarves and clothes were torn and women abused verbally.

Sadism is defined as: "The experience of sexual or pleasurable sensations produced by acts of cruelty and as bodily punishment. It may also consist of innate desire to humiliate, hurt, wound, or even destroy others." To sadists, emotional terror and successful deception are as important as the infliction of bodily harm.

MA
Dhaka

Ban student politics

Our students played a laudable role in 1952, during the 60's and 70's in launching movement against the then Pakistani occupation forces and achieving independence respectively.

Given these, that the student politics in Bangladesh became indisputable is quite usual. The leading idea in this respect was that the student leaders will provide students with important services such as information on admission and fees, scholarships and funding to travel, assistance in dealing with institutional regulations, a stimulating and supportive environment, cultural development etc. But to our utter dismay, we see the student leaders engaging themselves in establishing supremacy over halls and campus. They are seen to possess arms and use those in criminal activities. They hire miscreants and terrorists in intra-party clashes or in clashes between different parties. They have become extortionists and snatchers of tender boxes in and around the campus.

To destroy a nation, it is enough to paralyse its educational institutions and that is exactly what has happened in our country.

It is high time to set aside petty political interests and work concertedly to restore congenial atmosphere in our educational institutions and freeing the campus from terrorists and miscreants. To achieve this goal, the best solution is to ban student politics.

Md. Abdur Rab
University of Alberta, Canada

The government is thinking of banning student politics. It will be one of the best decisions to protect our children from getting killed like Sony every now and then.

I like to congratulate Prime Minister Khleda Zia to take the issue seriously although I do disagree with government's other policies. This is a hot issue to be resolved soon or else the leaders will be blamed for using the student wings to achieve their political interest.

I do admit that student politics has glorious background but with the passage of time it has lost its credibility. I do believe that the opposition political force will not oppose the attempt of the present government. I hope the student politics ban issue will not be in limbo like other pro-people movements.

Farid Ahmed
ASA, Bangladesh

There has been much debate going on about 'student politics'. I believe under the present socio-political condition there is no other option left but to ban student politics.

I have read comments like "The solution to head-ache can not be cutting off your head". But I wonder if politics hold the same significance in the student's life as head holds as part of a human body. I believe the main function of a student is to study not to do any sort of "Tenderbaji". Politics can be good but when it causes session-jams, chaos and life loss then it takes the shape of an infected organ, which if not removed will soon effect the functioning parts of our body. I highly appreciate the decision of BUET and I hope the same will be implemented on rest of the educational institutions in Bangladesh.

Student politics is something that helps students to become aware of and knowledgeable with the hope

The midnight mishap



A violent education

While condemning the action of the government, I do not want to go researching the background to the recent situation developing in the DU campus vis-à-vis Shamsunnahar Hall. It is all there in the print media. But I feel it is the creation of the present administration towards a mission to remove and replace everyone not subscribing to the BNP views.

Now the question is what prompted the law enforcing agencies unleash such a high degree of force on the female students at dead of night— were they so dangerous to face in broad daylight! And how could a Vice Chancellor justify this act? It seems that his chair is more precious for him than the sanctity of his campus and students' dormitory protecting personal security and modesty of female students, which falls within his responsibility too.

Now what so suddenly happened at the Shamsunnahar Hall in an otherwise peaceful campus? The administration as expected has already pointed finger to the AL elements, but are they so strong or influential at the moment? This is not at all tenable to the guardians of the students as well as to the citizens of Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the VC did have the power to change/replace the provost at will.

The government would have endorsed it gladly since this will be viewed as pro-establishment. Questions remain, what were the ex-JCD students doing in the Hall after their tenure of study. If the Provost had asked them to leave their rooms in the Hall that was in conformity with the existing rule of a residential hall. But what we have learnt, they have been seen having meeting with the VC and using university vehicle (re: DS report).

The government is advocating ban on students' politics. We all know the so-called big

post of VC is 'managed' politically in the universities of Bangladesh. These people are long using the students in politics and polluting the campus environment. Before banning student politics the government should get rid of appointing VC in the present manner and ban teachers' involvement in politics as well as politicians using them to serve their interest. The very process of appointment of VCs directly sponsored by the party in power is one of the root causes of campus unrest in Bangladesh.

ME
Dhaka

Dhaka University is an autonomous body and none but the DU authority is responsible for the Shamsunnahar Hall midnight mishap. The VC, the Proctor and his assistants are to blame for this incident. They instigated the police to enter and club the female students of the Hall. The police department of the government is the secondary force here. Such irreverence to the nation's highest student community, especially to the women, is intolerable. Shame on the DU authority, shame on the government.

Formation of probe committee is a regular step, as you have pointed out in your editorial, but we want speedy action taken against the culprits. Some one, whose dear one got groped and dragged by hair by the policemen, would know how much plagued I am regarding the incident.

We want justice. Let free and fair educational atmosphere prevail in DU.

Mohd. Belal Hossain
Khilgaon, Dhaka

The VC is to blame

If VC Anwarullah Chowdhury thinks he can get away with anything because he is backed by BNP, he is wrong! And if the government continues to back him in spite of the way he has been using or rather 'abusing' his power, the results will be disastrous.

The majority of the students of DU are not involved in politics. They don't have weapons or godfathers. But that does not mean they will quietly endure the oppression and terrorism of the brutal police force, non-student JCD cadres and a dishonest and shameless VC. From the very beginning, this government has made it very clear that the welfare of the general public is not their priority. But how long do they expect us to submit ourselves to this 'reign of terror'? To shut down the University to evade the student's movement and to drive the students out of their dorms is an act of cowardice, injustice and failure.

It's really ironic that this government pretends to care about the educational institutions of the country and speaks of banning student politics. Now we know what they mean by that. They will ban all kinds of political activity only to make sure that no one can protest against the misdeeds of JCD. Majority of the students will then become even more helpless and more vulnerable. We can't let this happen.

The university campus belongs to us, to the students who really care for the institution and want to study here. We must fight the evil powers threatening us and our precious DU. We are living in an independent country and we are not going to spend the prime of our life under the claws of terrorism.

A frustrated student
Dhaka University

With great sorrow and distrust we have witnessed the atrocities committed by the police in the dead of the night on the female students of Shamsunnahar Hall of Dhaka University. The Ministry and the University authority are coming up with many explanations of the incident. But with more comments and explanation, the government is exposing its hollowness of its thoughts and actions.

But whom to blame most for this brutality? Though many may be responsible but it is the VC whose short-sightedness, lack of respect to the rules, lack of willingness to show honour to a fellow colleague, over-partisanship and lack



Images of protest

of ability to manage the situation aggravate the crisis to such a degree. The government would do good if the VC is removed. It will not only calm the situation but also restore faith of the students and general people in the ability and intention of the government in running our educational institutions and the country.

BD
Chittagong

No one but the VC is to be blamed for the unrest in Dhaka University. It was his nonchalant and partisan attitude that has instigated the unrest. Instead of protecting and looking after the students he allowed the police to torture them! What right he has to remain the VC of one of the highest seat of education in the country?

If he were genuinely concerned about the students, he would have resigned immediately protesting the police atrocities on the female students. Instead of resigning he is trying to justify the raid! In order to improve the situation the government has no choice but to ask Prof Anwarullah Chowdhury to resign.

Chumki Khondokar
Banani, Dhaka

what happens to ordinary students like us? All our courses were finished and we were waiting for the semester to end with the exams. A semester filled with all the toil of submitting term papers and preparing for finals.

Why do we, the politically neutral, have to bear with this nuisance? Not only our careers, but our life is at stake too. Just like Sony in BUET, I could be the next victim. Thank God student politics has been banned in BUET, but that to be exercised in Dhaka University is perhaps too good to be true. Although at IBA none of us are involved in student politics, we still have to suffer. Earlier last year, our semester started late because of call of indefinite strike in the campus by political activists. Those activists, who probably do not even touch their textbooks (do they have the time?) or are least bothered about their careers. After all they are the great sons of the soil.

Can Professor Anwarullah Chowdhury or anyone else anyone answer me?

A Siddiqi
IBA, Dhaka University

Shamsunnahar Hall incident

When I saw the photographs of the Shamsunnahar Hall incident I was absolutely baffled. It seemed so unreal that the police were attacking helpless female students. Attacking a female dormitory late night? It is absolutely outrageous.

As I read the story "Hell broke loose" I felt horrified at the same time sympathetic for those students. I am shocked and furious to learn about the involvement of the university authorities in this brutal incident. They have claimed that this was an action taken against the outsiders and the unruly students. But how is it possible for the police to differentiate between those the so-called outsiders and unruly students and who are the genuine ones?

I am also shocked to read a few letters where the writers have said that they are not sorry for the victims? I don't have any words to criticise them.

If the VC and the Proctor had a hand in this then they must be

The way the police force carried out its atrocities on the female students of the Shamsunnahar Hall has shocked the entire nation. What prompted the police force and the DU authorities to go for such a heinous act and that too at midnight is beyond one's imagination. No one expected such type of brutalities under a democratically elected government.

The government must not take it lightly and try the culprits to restore faith of the general students. At the same time I request the Prime Minister to ban student politics as well as teacher's politics in all the educational institutions of the country without much delay.

Iqbal Ahmed
Dhaka

How dare police touch our female students? Don't they have wives, sisters and mothers?

How could the VC be unaware of the police action? Isn't it his responsibility to look after the safety of female students, irrespective of which party they support?

The general students protested JCD's bid to change their provost, is this such an unpardonable crime that they should be beat up?

The government must ban student politics as well as teacher's politics to restore congenial atmosphere in our educational institutions.

Reaz Mohiuddin
Notre Dame College, Dhaka

I have no words to condemn the barbaric act of police in Shamsunnahar Hall. I'm astonished the way VC clarified the whole matter. How could he permit the police to enter a female dormitory late at night? It is the VC who should be held responsible for this heinous incident. And he should resign immediately.

I must, however, thank the Prime Minister and the way she has reacted to the incident. It's a good decision to form a judicial enquiry committee. The committee must carry out their task promptly and neutrally and submit the report as early as possible. The University authority should make sure that such incident never occurs again.

I must urge all the concerned to think seriously whether we should

DU protest

I am extremely happy to see that July 27 protests were peaceful. It is also a great compliment to the genuine students of DU that JCD thugs couldn't intimidate them into silence. I'm also glad the BCL terrorists couldn't hijack the peaceful protests to their own nefarious ends.

Speaking of BCL, the hartal on Tuesday was totally uncalled for. Genuine students are doing an excellent job. Citing Musharraf's visit to Dhaka is not a cause for calling a hartal either. On the contrary, Musharraf is an officer and a gentleman; he should be greeted as a respected friend. He will certainly show due respect to the martyrs of '71 unlike Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Calling a hartal on July 30 is an insult to the students of DU fighting against injustice and state sponsored terror and an affront to the hospitality of our country.

Joynto
Dhaka

We live abroad and always worry about our country as well as our friends and relatives back home. Recently police stormed into a female residential hall of Dhaka University (DU) and brutally beat up hundreds of students. And the worst thing is most of the victims were the non-political general students. The entire general students protested this by bringing out processions and police again charged on them with tear gas and rubber bullet.

Those who make troubles are only a handful, but they gamble with the life of general students. Because of some culprits we suffer all.

Education is a basic right of the people and it is some kind of investment for the nation. Holding differing political ideologies is very natural. But it should not become an issue in educational



Justice blinded?

institutions.
From students and other Bangladeshis in Dresden, Germany, we are protesting this attack. Though it is not enough to change a situation but it is our moral duty to protest such an incident.

We protest the worst police attack on women hostel and on general students.

We protest the Vice Chancellor's role regarding the incident.

We protest all type of negative student politics as well as teacher's politics.

The students and other Bangladeshi people
Dresden, Germany