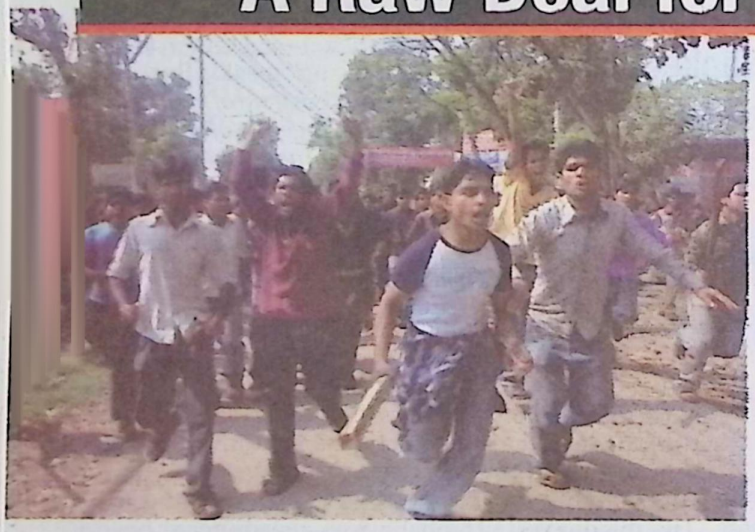
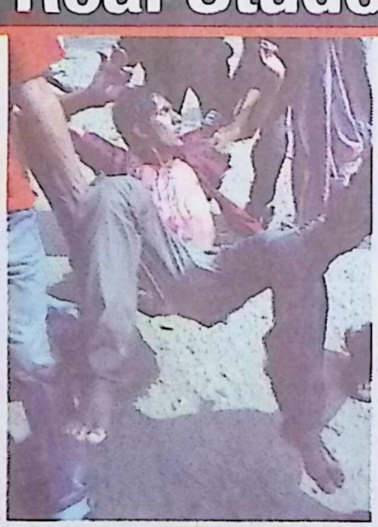
A Raw Deal for Real Students







The curse of violence on campus has started all over again. Last week at least 40 students were injured when clashes broke out between activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at a dormitory of Polytechnic Institute. The so-called 'activists' damaged over 10 classrooms and at least 50 dorm rooms and male students were asked to leave the hostels by 5:00 pm. The fighting erupted over a trivial event: a first year student who happened to be a Shibir supporter sat on a particular chair that was meant for second year students at the dining room, Chhatra League members got angry and beat him up. This of course led to repercussions from the other side, Shibir men beat up a Chhatra league leader, the Chhatra League goons retaliated and so on and so forth. After a short lull at night, the fighting broke out again in the morning, becoming more and more violent until the police came and controlled the situation.

The report in *The Daily Star* further said : *Early in the morning around 400 workers of BCL gathered in front of Latif Hostel. They brought out procession on the campus, vandalised vehicles plying the Tongi Diversion Road. They also blockaded the road in front of the institute for over half an hour.*

Brandishing knives, machetes, and hockey sticks, Shibir and BCL men chased and counter-chased each other for hours. In presence of law enforcers, they beat up their rivals and damaged their rooms.

Later after the institute was asked by the government to find out what happened it was revealed that the students who had been involved in the violence were actually outsiders. No surprise there.

This bizarre culture of members of student wings of various parties, whether it is Chhatra League, Chhatra Dal or Shibir, occupying halls, depriving honest, sincere and real students of a place to stay, has been a part of all the public educational institutes with residential facilities. The hall rights of course go to those 'students' who belong to the student wing of the party in power. Thus during BNP-Jamaat rule, it was the Chhatra Dal and Shibir gangs who had the privilege of taking over certain halls, driving out the rival party, in this case Chhatra League. When the AL was in power the same thing happened but in reverse, with the Chhatra Leaguers driving out their rivals. Mind you, this is inside the dormitories of educational institutes. Prestigious public universities such as DU, CU, RU etc. have all been plagued by such political thuggery through which many non-students (or undeserving ones) have enjoyed unbelievable benefits, all under the nose of the institute's authorities, all with the knowledge of the government in power.

This kind of gangsterism on campus had been kept on hold during the emergency and now it has started. Does this mean that during normal circumstances, we will have to again witness such ugly scenes of violence and the helplessness of ordinary students being displaced from their dormitories and having to bear with the consequences of delayed exams and disrupted classes? That would be a tragedy.