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No Enhanced Fees For University Education

Students of all groups on D.U. Campus Monday protested the reported fee-hike announced by Dhaka University and submitted a memorandum to the V.C. demanding withdrawal of the Senate decision to impose the increased rate of fees. The protesters threatened a continued strike of classes in case the university failed to comply with their demand. The V.C. assured them of a 45 per cent cut prior to the Senate meeting, on July 24th.

The Senate's decision to raise fees unilaterally has come as a surprise not only to students, but generally to all. The country's need, as far as its education is concerned, is mainly two: a) free-primary education, b) better and cheaper higher education for all regardless of rich or poor. Bringing higher education within reach of the lower, lower-middle-income class students has long been due.

Around three-fourths of the students now in university are hard put to bear the cost of education, availing themselves either of residential facilities or depending on private arrangements. Many adopt different means of earning ranging from private tuition to other odd jobs such as those with business firms et al.

Rural guardians with their wards in the university whose income is mainly from agriculture have been hard hit this year from prices of farm produce falling drastically due to a bumper crop. And the urban class of guardians are equally handicapped because about 90% of them belong to middle or lower-middle income groups. For them even a small rise in their monthly spending budget can be a big blow. All these are far too well-known to need repeating in any detail.

The need therefore is never to increase financial liabilities on account of education, but reducing them substantially to boost education generally, and higher education in particular. Quality education—even at lower levels—provided say, by cadet colleges or schools or standard recognised institutions, is also prohibitively expensive except for a few. Higher education has been recognisedly so.

The need, indeed, (because of such an unequal distribution of opportunities) is subsidised higher education in this country. Money needed should come, among other means, from cutting down on unproductive or cosmetic spending, to be deployed in education development. For sure we could save a lot that way and most productively re-invest it.

We would therefore ask the university authorities to rethink the whole situation in the interest of this struggling nation. If the university is really that cash-strapped, it could place its demand before the government. The latter has to find the funds needed if it means seriously its pledged goal of expanding and stabilizing higher education in the country.