

Incidents of kidnapping at DU

I'm really frustrated: VC

By Staff Correspondent

Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof. A K Azad Chowdhury has expressed frustration over the recent incidents of kidnapping on the campus.

"I am really frustrated about the recent incidents. The reports of kidnapping have severely affected the image of my university," Prof. Chowdhury said while talking to The Daily Star on Sunday. "This is unfortunate, especially because the incidents took place when law and order on the campus was improving."

Prof. Chowdhury talked on many issues including campus violence, performance of police deployed on the campus, academic atmosphere, unauthorised consultancy by some teachers and election of student bodies.

Talking about the performance of some 200 policemen deployed on the campus for last several years, he said, "I know I cannot avoid responsibilities for incidents like kidnapping in the vicinity of the university. But at the same time, I am not satisfied over the performance of police in this regard."

The VC is convinced that police have certain inherent limitations. "I will discuss the is-



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sues with the Home Minister very soon."

Criminals kidnapped seven persons in the vicinity of the Dhaka University from October 1 to November 4. They released the victims after taking ransom from their families.

Prof. Chowdhury believes that no student was directly involved in the incidents. "But certain criminals might have indirect links with a few students."

Replying to a question, he said criminals kidnapped a couple of persons to Mohsin Hall and tortured them in two rooms for money. "Although the criminals entered the rooms which were under lock and key, and a probe body did not find any direct link between the kidnappers and the resident students concerned, I will not spare the students."

Asked whether the kidnappers, or other criminals, enjoy blessings of political organisations dominating the campus these days, the VC, who is proud of being a follower of Bangabandhu, answered in the negative.

Asked whether it is possible for criminals from outside to roam about on the campus without political shelter, the VC said, "Theoretically impossible, but practically possible. Money can do many things."

On the academic atmosphere at the university, the VC claimed that the situation has improved a lot over the last few years. "There is no violence over tenders floated for the university's development work, no gunfight between rival student organisations, and on top of all, there was no killing in the re-

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VC: I'm frustrated

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cent past. Even the student organisations of ruling Awami League and opposition BNP brought out peaceful processions on the campus yesterday."

Asked to explain reasons behind taking examinations on the day certain students' organisations had called strike on the campus recently, the VC said, "Otherwise, the university will once again be exposed to serious session jam."

He however said arrangements will be made for those who could not sit for the examinations due to the strike.

Asked what is the use of antagonising certain student organisations if arrangements are to be made for the same examinations once again, Prof. Chowdhury said, "Well, the student bodies are now considering that they would keep examinations out of the purview of their strike. They recently told me so. This is, I think, the result of my decision to take examinations on those days."

Referring to a recent report in which the Dhaka University was ranked 37th among universities in the Asia-Oceania region, he said: "I am not complacent about it. But it is a very big news for us, especially when the country unfortunately has a much lower status across the globe."

In this connection he said that his administration had taken a lot of measures to improve academic atmosphere for both the teachers and the students. The measures include opening of certain new departments, increased allocation for research, computerisation of certain departments, linking the university library with world famous ones through internet.

Asked about the result of his more-than-one-year-old move to stop unauthorised consultancy by teachers, Prof. Chowdhury said, some 10 per cent of about 1000 teachers are still involved in unauthorised consultancy. "But the situation improved recently. In last two-three months, many teachers secured prior permission of the authorities concerned for doing consultancy."

He however admitted that a large number of heads of departments and institutes failed to submit lists of teachers involved in unauthorised consultancy. "We will soon institu-

tionalise the monitoring system."

The VC said he was planning to hold election of the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) 'as soon as possible'.

There has been no election of DUCSU since 1990, and the one elected that year was dissolved in 1997.

He was asked to comment on the allegation that the ruling party backed Bangladesh Chhatra League did not allow its political opponents to carry out their programmes on the campus and systematically harassed them in the dormitories. The VC said he was not aware of such incidents. "If it so happens, I will definitely take action."

Turning to the issue of DUCSU election again, the VC said he will definitely try to hold the polls. "But I will not announce elections until and unless rights of all student groups are equally established on the campus and in the dormitories."