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# "Uncertain future dampens seriousness of students"

Dr. Amirul Islam, three times Dean, Faculty of Biological Science, Dhaka University said, "Problems are everywhere, because without the existence of problems there would have been no concepts of development. But I guess when we are talking about the problems in the highest citadel of learning and research—the Dhaka University—we of course, are sensing multidimensional aspects of those problems."

Dr Islam talking to the New Nation on DU's various problems said, "Firstly, a good number of the students who come to the University do not have proper and adequate background needed for higher education. To make the situation difficult, many of them lack in proficiency in the second language i.e. English. Textbooks for Honours and M.Sc courses in Bengali are rarely available for Biological Science subjects specially in Biochemistry, Microbiology, Pharmacy and Soil Science. Those books available in other subjects in Science and Biological Science are also not adequate to meet the demands. In addition, the students need to read reference books. These are written in English."

In reply to a question Prof Islam pointed out that solution to this problem lies partly with the government and partly with us. It is accepted everywhere that mother tongue should be medium of instruction at all stages of education. The government should take initiative for imparting standard education in schools and colleges and ensure proficiency in English. We, on our part, must produce good texts books in Bengali without any more delay.

While his attention was drawn to a problem relating to students, he said, "the majority of the students, because of certain future, are not quite serious in their studies. After completion of M.Sc in Soil Science or Botany, a student, if is lucky, may end up with job in a bank. Vast majority of the students do not find any job. Therefore, study the University is of use to him. He is, thus, concerned for a degree only not interested in learning. However, this is not wholly true. There are some students who are as good if not better than those in the past. They pursue their studies seriously and finish their studies with brilliant record. Solution to the problem in the creation of job opportunities in one's respective field of study".

In reply to another question, scientist Islam categorically said, "The number of students admitted in the University have increased mani-



sold. Class rooms and laboratories, built in the sixties with a capacity to accommodate a maximum of 40 students now has to accommodate 60 to 75 students. Same is true with books and journals in the library and equipments in the laboratory. Besides adequate facilities for green house and field experiments are not available for the Department of Biological Science Faculty. Even the faculty has no office of its own. Moreover, students, failing to find accommodation in the residential halls, look for alternatives accommodation as doubling (with permission of the authority) in a hall or lodging off campus.

#### POLITICS

In reply to a question on politics Dr. Islam said, "This is now-a-days really a tough question to be answered by anyone. But I can reply it in a straight way. If politics means making chaos, creating the conditions for the sudden closure of the centres of learning, making uncertain the future of our students, then of course I am not in favour of that kind of politics. But if politics means "positive politics" which is guided by consciousness and directed towards making a better environment for education i.e. the process of politics is subordinated to the process of learning, then I am in favour of that.

While answering another question on the same subject he affirmatively said, "we should not forget that we are teachers as well as guardians of our students. So I always say no to 'politics for politics' and yes for 'politics for better human relations and prosperous life'.

#### STANDARD OF PRESENT EDUCATION

When the internationally renowned Soil Scientist Dr. Islam's view was sought on the present standard of education, he said, "This is a very difficult question to answer precisely. There are two sides of the standard of education, the supply side and the demand side. From the supply side, as compared with earlier, we have now more qualified and internationally reputed teachers. We have more sophisticated

equipments (though number is limited), more books in the libraries. We are producing M.Phil and Ph.D.s regularly. So from the supplier's sides, I can definitely argue that the standard has improved. There are problems with the supply sides also. For example—problem of smallness of salary problem of housing of the teachers, etc these problems of course act as major obstacles behind not ensuring total utilization of the capacity of the suppliers. But the major problem, in my opinion, is lying with the demand side i.e. receivers, side."

He further said, "Most of the students are frustrated for not getting proper job after completion of their university education. Moreover, because of their lack of proficiency in English they cannot follow the subject matter properly. These students are not serious about their studies. But the top say for example the top 25 percent is, of course, far better than the comparable proportions in the 1960's.

#### SHIFTING OF ARTS FACULTY

When he was asked whether it is necessary to shift Arts Faculty or any other Faculty to a suitable place for avoiding students' unrest or clashes, he opined, 'I do not think that the location of a faculty building is the cause behind such clashes or unrest. If this is not the cause then why should we go for shifting the location? So I do not think it to be a sensible proposition. On contrary to that I think that in this age of scientific and technological progress more interactions among the students of different disciplines inevitably result in broadening their areas of knowledge. So, in order to make our students more knowledgeable and qualified for the competitive job markets, we have to think about the way and means for ensuring more effective interactions, among students of different faculties and disciplines."

In reply to a question regarding his contest in the next VC election, the consecutive three times Senate member with the highest votes Dr. M. Islam affirmatively said, "I think time will decide. Because, in our group (blue panel) we practice democracy and when time comes teachers of our group will decide the individuals qualified to contest for the VC election.

#### TEACHERS POLITICS

About the teachers grouping or politics Dr. Islam emphatically said, "I do not think it has any effect on education or it hampers education in the university. The group-

ing among the teachers are based on issues and problems in the university. In reality, groups are not linked to and guided by any distinct political ideology. The university election is a democratic process under University Order of 1973. Once the election is over, the groupings are forgotten and we all work for the betterment of the students, teachers and the employees of the university."

#### DU ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY

When his attention was drawn to the fact that DU administrative machinery does not handle file properly and takes much time in doing so. Prof Aminul said, "One must recognize that by any sensible definition the size of our university is very large. We have about 18000 students, 1000 teachers and approximately 300 officials (including class III and IV employee) in Dhaka University. As the decisions are to be taken centrally and the volume of work is very large, I am afraid, the whole process is slow."

However, his suggestion to improve the system is that administration should be decentralized. There must be a clearly defined division of labour in the upper hierarchy of the administration. Final decisions, depending on the content and significance of the matter may be taken at Pro-VC, Treasurer, Dean or Provost levels, he added.

In this regard he further said "Even with very routine matters files may be disposed of by the Register and Controller of Examination. Holding of meetings of Academic Council and Board of Advanced Studies once in every month and Syndicate (other than emergency) twice a month regularly will improve this situation considerably."

#### AMENDMENT OF VARSITY ORDER '73

When he was asked to comment on whether University Order 1973 needs any amendment or not, the senior scientist and professor of the university who joined DU in 1955 as lecturer said, "Dhaka University Order, 1973 is a democratic order passed by the parliament, the highest authority for making and amending acts and regulations. With my long-run experience with the order 1973, I think there are scopes for such amendments which in turn will improve the overall situation of our university. But as a believer in democratic principles, I always stress that this should be done not in a hurry but in consultation with the Teachers Association.

(Interviewed by Mahmood Alam)