

Students protesting evening courses at DU

They have a point, but the manner of articulation is improper

EVERY now and then we are left dumbfounded at the degree of insensitivity that even an educated segment of society tend to demonstrate to concerns of public or civic interest of daily compelling nature. The latest case in point is the human chain laid across the Doyel Chattar of Dhaka University by students of Computer Science and Engineering obstructing traffic for two hours. That was their way of demonstrating introduction of evening master's degree programme in their faculty to force it to postpone the decision which it did.

Obviously, it has highlighted the students' streak of deviant behaviour in taking the wrath on the general public who had nothing to do with the grievance they were supposed to be airing. At the same time, however, the episode has thrown up some very legitimate lessons for all concerned to pay heed to in order that vital student affairs admittedly subjected to a degree of indifference over time were better managed.

The underlying reasons for the student outburst appear to be quite convincing and, to that extent valid; although one may have serious reservations over the manner of their articulation. The students are apt to complain that even day-shifts are not properly run, given the part-time involvement of teachers, apart from a general shortage of teaching staff resulting from over-stays abroad and unfilled vacancies. Besides, there is dearth of educational aids, constraints in terms of library facilities and access to other logistics. In such a context, the students cannot be faulted for being apprehensive of how properly and effectively the evening courses, when introduced, would get to be run.

Overall, there is no denying the rationale for operating more than one shift particularly in the high-profile departments to be able to cope with the pressure of enrollment on them. But won't it be self-defeating and counterproductive if we ran evening programmes without making sure that all necessary teaching staff, classroom spaces and access to library and computer facilities are in place?

This brings up the issue of funding and allocations to the DU which not merely need to be increased but also rationalised depending upon the priorities of different branches of higher education.