

ADMISSION FORMS OF PUBLIC UNIVS

No uniformity in prices

Absence of guidelines to blame

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Public universities in the country are charging at will for admission forms in the absence of a uniform guideline.

Prices of the forms range from Tk 330 to Tk 1,000, with some universities charging different amounts for admission forms of different units, said admission seekers and their guardians.

After the HSC examinations, a good amount of money needs to be spent on preparations for university admission, and a major portion of it goes to purchase of forms. Besides, some universities raise the prices of forms almost every year, they added.

This year, around nine lakh students passed the Higher Secondary Certificate exams and a large number of them will sit for admission tests at the country's 37 public universities.

Given the stiff competition for admission at public universities, most of the students think it would be unwise to buy forms of only one or two universities as it lowers their chances of getting admitted to a public university.

Riasat Kabir, father of an admission seeker in the capital, said he has already spent Tk 20,000 for his son's admission preparations that include buying admission forms of five universities.

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"It's a chaotic situation. And the regrettable thing is that there is none to address this issue," he said, referring to varied prices of admission forms.

Contacted, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said public universities are fully autonomous and they fix the prices of admission forms on their own.

But such varied prices don't encourage students, rather they feel disappointed, he said.

"We often meet them [the authorities of the universities] and discuss many issues with them. We don't want to interfere in their affairs. We want the universities to run independently and set some good examples," he told The Daily Star.

"We hope they would set a reasonable price [for admission forms], considering the interest of the students," Nahid added.

The University Grants Commission (UGC), the statutory apex body for higher education, doesn't have any guidelines on setting prices of admission forms.

Asked whether it will take any step in this regard, UGC Member Prof Mohammad Yousuf Ali Mollah said the commission cannot interfere in the activities of public universities as they are run in line with their own rules.

This issue, however, warrants attention. "Our Chairman is now

abroad. I will discuss the matter with him upon his return," he told The Daily Star on Monday.

But it would not be possible to do anything this year, as many universities have already started the admission process, said the UGC member. "We will think how to address the issue next year."

DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES, DIFFERENT PRICES

The price of an admission form of any unit at Dhaka University is Tk 350, which has remained unchanged for the last several years.

The university conducts admission tests under five units for 80 departments and 11 institutes.

Though the number of departments is less than that of the DU, Chittagong University holds admission tests under 10 units for 43 departments and two institutes. Each form of the units costs Tk 475 without service charge.

Rajshahi University conducts tests under nine units for 58 departments, but the prices of admission forms of the units are different.

The price of a form under "A" unit is Tk 770 while that of one under "B" unit is Tk 330. The university charges Tk 825 for a form under "E" unit.

RU Vice Chancellor Prof Muhammad Mizanuddin said they fix prices of forms on the basis of the number of departments under a unit.

"The more departments a unit has, the pricier its forms are," he noted.

PRICES OF ADMISSION FORMS

Dhaka University	Tk 350
Chittagong University	Tk 475
Rajshahi University	Tk 330-825
Jahangirnagar University	Tk 350-550
Jagannath University	Tk 400-505
Buet	Tk 600-700
Bangladesh Agricultural University	Tk 700
Cuet	Tk 900-1000
Ruet	Tk 800-900
Kuet	Tk 800
BSMRSTU, Gopalganj	Tk 800
Bangladesh Textile University	Tk 900
Barisal University	Tk 625
PSTU	Tk 650
SUST	Tk 800-900

Prof Mizanuddin mentioned that the expenses for holding tests go up if a unit has a higher number of departments.

This is because they need to engage invigilators and print question papers as per the number of applicants. And for some units, they need to rent exam halls from other institutions, he

said.

When told that the DU also rents exam halls, he declined to comment, saying he didn't have enough admission-related information on the DU.

The situation at Jahangirnagar University is similar to that of the RU.

There are eight units at the JU. The price of each admission form of five units is Tk 550, and that of three other units is Tk 350 each.

The prices of admission forms of engineering universities are higher.

For example, students wishing to get admitted to Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet) need to pay Tk 1,000 for a form of "Kha" unit and Tk 900 for that of "Ka" unit. The university holds admission tests under the two units.

Cuet VC Prof Mohammad Rafiqul Alam said the university's admission committee has fixed the rates, considering all the aspects.

"Apart from giving honorarium to teachers, we rent apparatus and furniture such as chairs and benches for holding tests. These are the main reasons for setting such prices for admission forms," he told The Daily Star.

But Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, and Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) in Mymensingh have adopted a system a bit different from others.

The Kuet and the BAU prepare merit lists based on applicants' SSC and HSC results, and allow 10,000

and 12,000 candidates respectively to sit for admission tests.

Prof Tarapada Bhowmick, head of the Kuet admission committee, said they adopted the system as the university has seating arrangements for up to 10,000 applicants.

He replied in the negative when asked whether the admission seekers, who would fail to sit for tests, would get back their money.

Asked, UGC Member Prof Mohammad Yousuf Ali Mollah termed the practice "unethical and unacceptable".

Shahjalal University of Science and Technology recently reduced the prices of admission forms for 2016-17 academic session following a week-long agitation by students.

On October 19, the SUST authorities slashed the price of each form of "A" and "B1" units to Tk 800 from Tk 1,000 and that of "B2" unit to Tk 900 from Tk 1,200.

According to the UGC guidelines, the universities are supposed to deposit with the university funds 40 percent of the earnings from sales of admission forms, and spend the rest on conducting tests.

"IT'S UNFAIR"

Several admission seekers told this newspaper that they have to spend a substantial amount of money for buying admission forms as some universities have set high prices for those.

"Since university admission tests

see stiff competition, buying forms for only one or two universities will be very unwise ... I have bought admission forms of several universities. For that, I had to spend Tk 4,500," said Sourav Hasan, a candidate.

Noted educationist Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam finds no rationale behind setting high prices for admission forms.

"It is unfair to charge students such a big amount of money. I protest it."

He pointed out that the DU can be an example for other universities, as it has been able to keep the price of forms unchanged for years though it also rents halls from other institutions to accommodate a huge number of admission seekers.

MAJOR EARNINGS FOR UNIVERSITIES

Every year, public universities earn a huge amount of money from the sale of admission forms, and that's why they don't want to bring any change to the admission system, say education ministry officials.

Prof Hasibur Rashid, chief of online admission committee of the DU, said the university earned Tk 10.39 crore from the sale of 2.97 lakh forms this year.

Of the Tk 350 earned from the sale of each form, Tk 300 goes to the dean's office, Tk 20 to the bank involved in the admission process, and the remaining Tk 30 to the admission committee for admission-related expenses, he added.