

## Admission crisis at Dhaka University

*Teachers must uphold standards of excellence*

IT was a matter of the deepest shame when a group of students, all seeking admission to first year honours classes at Dhaka University, recently vandalised the office of the vice chancellor to push their demand for a relaxation of admission rules. Indeed, the incident took place in the presence of the vice chancellor himself, which was clearly a sign of the limits these admission seekers were ready to go in order to make themselves heard. Such behaviour on the part of the young, indeed on the part of anyone for that matter, calls for stringent disciplinary action. Unfortunately, though, not only has action not been taken; but now a group of teachers known as the white panel at Dhaka University have echoed the demands of these admission seekers. Something of disbelief comes with such action on the part of the teachers. It is these very teachers who were earlier involved with finalising the admission procedures. In an about turn, they have now warned the vice chancellor that unless the rules are relaxed, they will have nothing to do with the admission process this year. There is certain whiff of an attempt to politicise matters here. If that is the case, it will be most unhealthy.

It all raises the question of how such action, on the part of students and teachers, undermines the quality of education we would like to be promoted and upheld at Dhaka University. There can be little argument that when a number of departments, among which are English, Bengali, International Relations, Mass Communication and Journalism and Women and Gender Studies, decided that those seeking admission to them must have obtained high marks in English and Bengali at HSC, the focus was on quality. The teachers of DU, including the eleven deans, agreed. Now nine of the deans (and they belong to the white panel) have reversed themselves along with a number of other teachers to demand a watering down of the rules. If the university acquiesces to such a demand, it will be most unfortunate. In fact, we are flabbergasted that such a demand has been made at all. We along with the rest of the country have always believed that education is much more than coming by a certificate. It is preparing a young man or woman for life, to enable him or her to develop a worldview. That being the case, we condemn the pressure now being applied over the DU admission process.

Education must never be discriminatory. But where such discrimination is suspected there are procedures to handle the issue. The bigger worry, though, is whether in order to accommodate a few individuals in the classroom universities must bend the rules. If that comes to pass, all that we can look forward to in university education is mediocrity and worse. We hope the teachers of Dhaka University will realise the risks involved with their demands. A show of force in an institution of higher learning is always counter-productive. Let our teachers rise to the occasion through reaching a fruitful solution to the crisis, without in any way compromising the high standards of teaching and learning Dhaka University has always set store by.