

Space problems at DU halls

Students' welfare should be a matter of priority

MORE than a thousand students of Dhaka University have a hard time finding accommodation, or sleeping space, in their residential halls. And more than five hundred of these students are forced to make do with sleeping on the floors of mosques and corridors. That, briefly, is a hint of the predicament that the young engaged in academic pursuits at the nation's most significant institution of higher learning go through on a daily basis. Indeed, the situation appears to have worsened progressively over the past few years. While one reason is the increasingly higher number of students getting admitted to the university annually, another and a more worrying one is the allegation that a good number of former students continue to occupy residential seats they ought to have vacated a long time ago.

It all brings us round to the issue of what is or is not being done in the matter of student welfare. If we are to begin at the beginning, by referring to the extremely paltry number of shuttle trains, as in the case of Chittagong University, to be used by university students, we get an idea of how neglected the young are. Where seats in the residential halls are concerned, it is not only Dhaka University but other universities as well where students have shared space that not only results in physical discomfort but may also negatively affect the academic atmosphere for them. A sign of this can be had from the front-page photograph carried by this newspaper yesterday of students asleep on the floor of a mosque. Obviously, it is a reality which should put us all to shame. If this is the way we treat the young who will bear the burden of leadership in various fields of activity in the future, we certainly do not have much to be proud of. Add to these accommodation problems some other issues, such as cracked pillars in a residential hall of Dhaka University, that have been coming up. Back in the 1980s, the collapse of a part of Jagannath Hall and the resultant death of a large number of students brought home to us the need for strong measures toward ensuring student welfare.

It appears that the time has come once again to go extensively into the job of handling the welfare-related problems our public university students face. These problems, among which must be included the rather poor, bland quality of the food served in the residential halls, call for a swift, deft handling by the university administration. A happy student is an image of a positive future. That being the point, why must the students of Dhaka University or for that matter any other university struggle for a place to sleep and for healthy food to nourish themselves?