

DHAKA UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION

Mismanagement creates disorder

Students jostle their way for invitation cards with the last date drawing close

DURDANA GHAS

Gross mismanagement gripped the invitation card distribution for the 43rd Convocation of Dhaka University, forcing the students to seek for their cards desperately on Thursday morning when the last date was drawing close.

Many of around 7,500 students, who applied for attending the convocation and did not get their invitation cards 'mailed' to their home addresses, gathered in front of room 207 of the Registrar Building.

The disorder arose when the students arrived together. At about 9:45am, they were filling in forms and stapling passport size photos hastily, which they were asked to do by the officials to get the duplicate invitation cards.

Those who came at 8:00am and started filling in forms were still pushing and shoving in the crowd until 10:30am. There were five to six tables in the room but the students were yet to know which table was dealing with which department.

When asked about the pandemonium due to undelivered cards, Muniruzzaman, deputy

registrar and one of the officials in charge of the card distribution, admitted the chaotic situation and said: "There was pressure in the morning but now [Thursday afternoon] the pressure has eased".

He claimed that many students came to take duplicate cards even though they got the card at home.

Misguided students were meandering from one table to another and milling about the room making the situation more chaotic. Without arranging a system for queues the officials forced the students out of the room.

Then the students stood crammed in front of the room while the officials shouted the names of the students on top of their voice standing on chairs. One student was also helping them voluntarily by shouting the names.

One 'Saifur Rahman' was called 'finance minister' and one 'Shamim Ara Nipa' was called 'danseuse', which created a humorous air. But most of the names called by the officials were not present there so the pressure of the crowd was yet to subside.

"What kind of joke is this?"

Many of around 7,500 students, who applied for attending the convocation and did not get their invitation cards 'mailed' to their home addresses, gathered in front of room 207 of the Registrar Building. The disorder arose when the students arrived together. At about 9:45am, they were filling in forms and stapling passport size photos hastily, which they were asked to do by the officials to get the duplicate invitation cards

We were supposed to get the invitation card at home but instead we are jostling in the crowd like cattle," said a student.

"I came here bunking my office because I did not want to take one day leave for collecting the invitation. This invitation should have reached me at home. Did I pay Tk 800 to get pushed and shoved in the pack?" said Rajib, a finance student, belonging to the same crowd.

When angry students asked an official why they did not receive the card at their home addresses, he said with vehemence: "What can we do if the cards do not reach your

home?"

Despite repeated requests from students to call those who submitted forms that morning, the officials kept calling those who had submitted the day before.

Officials of Sundarban Courier Service, appointed by DU to deliver the cards, said that they got around 6,000 cards to deliver of which less than 100 remained undelivered. Most invitations were delivered in the city. Around 1,500 cards were delivered to the residential halls and the university area by the university authorities.

The officials said they had time constraint. They got the

cards on December 17 and had only two days, December 18 and 19, in hand to prepare the cards as December 14, 15 and 16 were weekend and public holidays.

The last date to deliver duplicate cards was Friday, December 22, which was also the rehearsal day of the convocation. But after the convocation was postponed on Thursday night the officials said they would give duplicate cards on the next day of rehearsal.

The university authorities are yet to announce a fresh schedule for the convocation.



Students crowd in front of Room 207 in the Registrar Building while officials shout names standing on chairs.

Shortsighted plans, negligence and consequences

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

A group of people has embarked on constructing shops on the newly built footpath in West

Kafrul and is blaming Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) for grabbing private land illegally.

The DCC has recently completed construction of 110 kilometers of footpaths in the

city under the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) and is still widening road spaces in the city.

At the Taltola bus stoppage point on Rokeya Sarani under

West Kafrul area, the corporation has constructed about two feet wide narrow footpaths on private land without acquiring the land properly from the landowners.

Hasan Uddin Ahmed, owners of the plot 238/D at West Kafrul and one member of the group who is blaming the DCC for grabbing their land, showed up-to-date documents over the land ownership.

Sultan Mahmood, who looks after Hasan Uddin's business and property, said: "In the past the government had acquired land from us for constructing roads and airport. We now have very little amount of land. If that land is needed the government could acquire by giving us compensation, but the city corporation has just grabbed our land illegally."

Hasan is now constructing a market at the place just beside the footpath.

From Bijoy Sarani to Taltola, the land between the National Parade Ground and 100 feet wide Rokeya Sarani was maintained for beautification and footpath, a planning official of DCC told Star City.

Now for constructing footpath and widening the road, the authorities have built a narrow footpath on private land.

Asked about the illegal land occupying, DUTP chief Faruq Aziz said DCC got the land from other government organisations and during construction of footpath DUTP realised that there was no space for footpath.

"We could acquire the land but it would take long time for processing and could ruin the project. DUTP is a World Bank-funded project and there was a

chance of losing the fund if DCC failed to complete the work in time."

He admitted that DUTP had to continue the development work despite the fact that the land ownership of Hasan is genuine.

As non-disbursement of funds would have created uncertainty for the construction of footpath in the area, the authorities continued the development work for greater public interest, he said.

He hoped that in future government would acquire land from the owners.

Another DCC source said DUTP was a Tk 1200 crore project but the budget was trimmed down to Tk 800 crore after half of the scheduled time had elapsed to complete only 16 percent of the work.

The source said DUTP could acquire the land in the early stage of the project at Rokeya Sarani but they did not do that. As a result, the footpath has become uncomfortably narrow, the DCC become illegally occupier.

"Acquiring of such public spaces will be more costly for DCC in future because the owners are developing the spaces with permanent structures which will increase the amount of compensation."

All this happened for shortsighted plans and negligence that also caused loss of a huge amount of public money, the source told Star City.

Like Taltola point, DCC has constructed tiny footpaths near Saarc Fountain point, near Bijoy Sarani, Farmgate and many other places in the city which are causing public sufferings, the official said.

10x3

13x3

Child labourers

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These children are deprived of basic rights. Due to the lack of a strong workers union child workers cannot ensure their rights. During peak season they have to work 12 to 14 hours a day. Food provided for them is poor and cooked in a very unhygienic condition. They have no separate sleeping quarters. They eat and sleep right where they work. Working conditions are extremely shabby. They have to work without proper lighting, which increases the risk for those working in the cutting section.

Most boys suffer from malnutrition and skin disease. They do not receive any medical care during times in need. "If I am sick I have to go to the doctor on my own. I have to pay the doctor's fee", said Alamin, a boy of 13.

Workers are usually laid off at the age of 19 to 20. Factory owners look for fresh faces. Bookbinding is the only skill they have, which all of a sudden becomes useless. While millions of children all around the country go to school and pursue education, the lack of a useful skill cements these young children in poverty.