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I got the confirmation from the organisers the night before the event, at around 10pm. I had to leave for the seminar at 7am the next day. I figured

I would probably be unable to reach DU before 9.30pm that night, and I couldn't obtain a late permit the previous day. So, I called the house tutor to let her know that I might be late. She said that I had to be there in person with an application to get her signature. Of course, that was impossible at the time. I clearly explained my situation and asked her to consider giving me a permit via phone or e-mail, but she didn't budge. Finally, I had to stay at a relative's place that night because I couldn't reach on time."

Sabita Rezwana Rahman, the provost of Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall, says that if the girls can't enter by 10, they should just stay at their local guardian's house. But if it were that easy for everyone to stay

on dates. We were once students too, we never stayed out this late!" Sharmin was told by the office staff, "You're going to spend the night with a boy, so why don't you just sleep over there? Why do you need a late permit at all?" What the girls choose to do on their free time, should not be the staff, or the teachers' business.

General students face these problems on a regular basis, but they have all noticed that students with political affiliations are allowed to enter late without having to go through extensive questioning. Whereas even taking out late permits too often creates a bad impression for general students, according to Mani, a former student of DU who lived in Ruqayyah Hall: "They think that girls who frequently stay out late are 'bad girls.' But at one point you'll feel too embarrassed to constantly ask your friends if you can sleep over at their house, and getting late permits will make you socially unacceptable, so you'll just have to sacrifice certain things

not. There is a registry book that girls have to fill out when leaving and entering the hall, but it's not really maintained. Most don't fill it up, and even if they do, it serves no purpose.

Dhaka city is unsafe for women no matter which time of the day it is, and if safety is the DU authorities' top priority, then why don't they keep track of whether or not every girl has returned to the hall every night?

The way things are right now, female students cannot attend weddings, concerts, workshops, or do tuitions and part-time jobs. Sharmin mentions that she even has trouble keeping doctors' appointments because most chambers open in the evening, and unless she gets an early token, she has to cancel the visit completely. The provosts say that most students are able to manage their time and return by 9.30pm, so they don't think there's a big enough issue there. What they don't know is how much these girls are having to miss out on just because of a curfew, in a city that is notorious for heavy traffic.

There is no curfew at boys' halls though. Anyone is free to enter or exit at any time, regardless of their affiliation with the hall. A few days ago, the girls had taken to social media to write about their problems with the curfew, explaining why they need an extension. This brought out the many colours of misogyny and sexism among the majority of male students, one of whom equated girls with chickens and boys with foxes, saying that foxes want chickens to stay out late so that they can attack. Even some of the girls themselves had harsh words to say about those who want a curfew extension, saying girls who stay out late "misuse their freedom." None of these "wise" commentators seems to think that this early curfew is interfering with women's personal freedom, because women aren't supposed to have freedom in the first place. Nobody blames Dhaka University's broken infrastructure or our society's deep-rooted patriarchal values for not being able to ensure women's safety. Rather, it is the women's fault that they want to participate in events, attend weddings, do part-time jobs, or even see a doctor.

The provosts say that they cannot do anything about this, because this curfew is a syndicated decision that has to take infrastructure, politics, social norms, and other things into consideration. But they seem to either be unaware of, or just uninterested in knowing what the girls want. Dhaka University is supposed to host the country's best and brightest, but can this famous institution really claim to be the best in the country while a huge number of its students are being denied their rightful freedom and opportunities?

**Names have been changed to maintain the students' privacy.*

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PHOTO: MD. RAHAT KABIR

at relatives' houses every time they needed to, would they be living in a dorm in the first place? Sharmin, currently a resident of Nawab Faizunnessa Chowdhurani Chhatrinibash is getting a postgraduate degree at DU. She used to live in Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall during her undergraduate years. In this time, she has seen multiple cases where the house tutors verbally insulted girls for coming late, saying things like, "You spend the entire day with your boyfriends, don't you? No time for studying, you just go

and get back by 9.30." All of the interviewees said that the curfew should at least be extended up to 11pm.

The provost of Ruqayyah Hall says that she knows that a number of students have valid reasons for which they have to enter late, but she thinks that the curfew is necessary for keeping the girls safe, and some girls agree. However, if someone chooses to not return to the hall, she doesn't have to notify the house tutors at all. No one from the hall calls her to check why she didn't return, and whether she is safe or