



Students of seven colleges affiliated with DU blocked the Nilkhet intersection to press home their five point demands. PHOTO: STAR

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The current administration of NU has sought to reduce the session jam by taking exams regularly, which, ironically, had an adverse impact on students' result. Students of NU now have to sit for exams despite not being able to attend any classes for that course. Abu Bakar, a student of Dhaka College and coordinator of the platform of students of the seven colleges, says, "The academic quality of NU is even worse than many coaching centres. Coaching centres at least teach students in exchange of money. NU does not teach students, but takes money and just gives out certificates. This is why we want to remain affiliated with DU instead, but in a more effective way."

DU, however, could not perform any better than NU. Already burdened with more than 30,000 students and a faculty member deficit, DU has been struggling to run these institutions from the very beginning. Professor Dr Akhteruzzaman, current vice chancellor of Dhaka University, blames former vice chancellor Professor Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique and says, "These seven colleges were affiliated without any prior plan and in an 'unscientific' manner. This impulsive decision has created a deadlock situation in the university and also in the colleges."

Immediately after the affiliation, not a single class was held in these seven colleges for nine months at a stretch. Most of the students are now in more than a year-long session jam. As a result, students of seven colleges have been demonstrating with five demands. The university must: publish errorless result within 90 days of an exam, re-examine the copies and clarify why such large number of students failed in the recent exams, establish a separate academic building to run the seven colleges, have the college teachers prepare question papers according to the syllabus, and form an academic calendar to eliminate the session jam.

These demonstrations by students of the seven colleges met with other similar protests staged by DU students, but with

the opposite demand. These other DU students want to cancel the affiliation with the seven colleges. Shaila Sultana, a student of DU's sociology department, says, "Our regular classes are getting hampered because our teachers remain occupied with these seven colleges. They visit those colleges for inspection and viva exams, and stay busy checking copies while postponing our regular classes. We are forced to sit for exams without attending enough classes. Our results are not published on time. Also, we have to wait for weeks and

students of DU, and, during the recent demonstration, DU's academic activities remain stalled for four days as the protesters locked all academic and administrative buildings of the university. They demanded immediate cancellation of affiliation with the seven colleges. Nurul Huq Nur, vice president of DUCSU, says, "We shall continue our movement to cancel the affiliation. Our movement will benefit both the students of the seven colleges and the students of DU. Our university is not prepared to take the responsibility of these colleges. Due to shortage of teachers and officials, it cannot even run its own departments properly. This affiliation will further deteriorate the academic environment."

On the other hand, on August 7, 2019, students of the seven colleges organised a press conference where Abu Bakar states, "If the affiliation is cancelled, we shall block the entire city from Sadarghat to Mohakhali. We want reformation not cancellation. Due to cancellation of classes and frequent postponement of exams, we are now far behind NU. If the affiliation is cancelled, we will not be able to cope with NU students as well."

More than 300,000 students of Dhaka University and seven renowned colleges of the city have become engaged in an existential crisis due to a hectic, unworkable decision taken by the authorities. Professor Dr Akhteruzzaman says, "We want a positive and credible solution. Our students are our first priority. We have formed committees to look into this matter. And we have asked for two weeks to reach a solution."

Two weeks from the day when the vice chancellor made this promise, DU will be closed for more than three weeks due to Eid holidays. Such strategy to buy

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Students put up a poster on the locked door of a building which read, "what is our administration doing? Only eating and sleeping?" PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

months to complete a simple task at the registrar's building, such as getting certificates or grade sheets."

An officer of DU's registrar's building supports this claim and says anonymously, "We are in severe dearth of manpower. There are several sections which oversee the academic processes of those seven colleges but those officials also have to work for DU's academic activities simultaneously. In this way, the colleges and the university are both suffering losses."

Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) supported the agitated

time will only increase tension among students; their academic performance and future careers will become more uncertain. At present, the fate of more than 300,000 students who live and study in Dhaka city is hanging in the balance. If a pragmatic and prudent step is not taken immediately to ensure quality education for the students of the seven colleges and DU, Bangladesh should await another student agitation in the future.

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