

# The Daily Star

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## No Ducsu polls in 27 years

*Students deprived of their right to have union but made to pay fees for it every year*

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The Dhaka University authorities have been collecting hefty fees from the students in the name of central students' union and hall unions although these unions have no existence for the last 27 years.

The last elections to the Dhaka University Central Students Union (Ducsu) and hall unions were held in 1990.

The authorities even raised the fees to Tk 120 from Tk 40 in the 1990s, although there have been no activities of the Ducsu or hall unions since 1992. However, no one could say exactly when the hike took effect.

The authorities do not maintain a separate account for the fees. So, the accounts section and the treasurer's office could not say how much money they realised in the last three decades.

They were also found in the dark as to where the money is spent.

The DU has about 37,000 students at the moment. This means the authorities earned an estimated Tk 44.4 lakh in Ducsu and hall union fees last year alone.

Interestingly, the DU authorities allocate separate budgets for Ducsu and hall unions every year.

In the current fiscal year, Tk 20.08 lakh was allocated for Ducsu. The amount was Tk 19.13 lakh in 2017-2018 and Tk 13.80 lakh in 2016-2017, according to the DU's annual budget book.

Treasurer Prof Kamal Uddin claimed they used the funds for the “welfare of the students” but he could not specify where and how.

"When it was functional, the Ducsu office spent the money for the university's development work. But in the absence of the Ducsu, teachers are now using it for such development projects," he said.

A large sum of the money is used to run the Ducsu cafeteria and conservatory, he claimed.

It may be mentioned that the university authorities allocate separate budget for the Ducsu cafeteria. In the current fiscal, the cafeteria got an allocation of Tk 1 crore.

Treasurer Prof Kamal also said that parts of the money are given to the hall authorities for students' welfare and development work.

But Salimullah Muslim Hall Provost Prof Mahbubul Alam Joarder and Zahurul Haq Hall Provost Prof Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star last night that they did not receive any such funds.

Ducsu came into being in 1922, a year after the DU was established, to promote common cultural activities within the university and foster a spirit of cooperation among the students of different halls.

In 1992, the university authorities dissolved the Ducsu Executive Committee of 1990-91, which was formed through the 1990 elections. No elections have been held since then despite repeated demands by various student organisations, especially the leftist ones.

Against this backdrop, the DU authorities will sit with different student bodies on the campus tomorrow to discuss the long overdue elections.

It comes just days after a contempt of court petition was filed with the High Court for the DU authorities' failure to comply with a previous HC directive to hold the election.

On January 17, the HC ordered the DU authorities to hold the Ducsu election at a suitable time, preferably within six months.

## **STUDENTS IN THE DARK**

Over the last few months, The Daily Star interviewed 100 DU students from different departments, halls and academic year who are currently paying the fees.

Nearly half of them said they were not aware that the authorities were charging them in the name of Ducsu and hall unions. However, they know that the unions remain inactive

for the last 27 years.

Sumaiya Piya, a first-year student of English department, said she had not heard about the Ducsu fees before. Dip Das of applied statistics said he did not even know the elaboration of Ducsu.

“It's illegal to collect fees from students as the Ducsu remains inactive,” said Masud Mahdi of Mass Communication and Journalism.

He also said the DU authorities should hold Ducsu elections or stop charging students in the name of the unions.

Tanjim Uddin Khan, an associate professor at the international relations department, said, “Taking fees in the name of Ducsu is totally unfair as it has been inactive for the last 27 years.

“Moreover, Ducsu election is more important than the budget for Ducsu. A university can't operate without students' union.”

The Daily Star called DU Vice-chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman several times for his comment last night, but his phone was found switched off.

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