

# Dhaka University: Evictions, bar on outsiders spark debate

Thu Oct 30, 2025 12:24 AM

Last update on: Thu Oct 30, 2025 10:17 AM



**Dhaka University's recent move to restrict the entry of non-students and evict hawkers from its campus has sparked debate, as a section of students and teachers fear it may gradually turn the country's premier institution into an isolated space. Meanwhile, authorities describe it as an effort to restore order and ensure students' safety.**

Concerns deepened after last year's July uprising, when DU authorities began treating outsiders "unwelcomed" and imposed a ban on their entry in December.

Although the restriction was later relaxed, Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) leaders have recently carried out fresh drives to evict hawkers and so-called "vagrants" from the campus.

Ducusu leaders said the drives, conducted alongside the administration, aimed to make the campus "drug-free" and safer for students.

DU Proctor Saifuddin Ahmed said, "Dhaka University is not a place for setting up habitats. The campus ecosystem was damaged by allowing makeshift shops and stalls. It was disrupted by vagrants who disturbed the natural environment, and we are working to restore that lost balance.

"This place belongs to the students. Why should I allow floating shops here? This is an educational institution, not a market or bus stand. It has its own character and identity."

He added that restoring that identity had long been a student demand. "For years they couldn't voice it due to various pressures, but now they are speaking up. The university is working with all stakeholders -- the government, city corporation, Department of Social Services, DMP, Metro authorities, and Department of Narcotics Control."

However, several student groups and educationists said such operations should be guided by state policy and accompanied by a rehabilitation plan for those affected.

They warned that continued evictions could erode the university's long-standing connection with surrounding communities and undermine its identity as "a people's campus".

Rasheda Rawnak Khan, associate professor at the Department of Anthropology, said, "Dhaka University is, in truth, something extraordinary in its ordinariness -- a university that has grown by nurturing the consciousness of ordinary people. From that perspective, it cannot be separated from them."

**“The emotions, political awareness, and culture of ordinary citizens are intertwined with DU. If there were no space for common people here, it would neither be accepted by them nor look right.**

— Rasheda Rawnak Khan associate professor of anthropology

**“The campus ecosystem was damaged by allowing makeshift shops and stalls. It was disrupted by vagrants who disturbed the natural environment, and we are working to restore that lost balance.**

— DU Proctor Saifuddin Ahmed

She added that the emotions, political awareness, and culture of ordinary citizens are intertwined with DU. "If there were no space for common people here, it would neither be accepted by them nor look right."

On security concerns, she said the authorities must take proactive steps to ensure safety and curb drug abuse, but not through blanket restrictions. "You [the administration] cannot impose total bans, especially when the campus sits at the heart of the capital. Nor can you shift the responsibility elsewhere when you fail to provide safety to the students. Authorising others to evict hawkers by labelling them as security threats is not a solution."

Left-leaning student coalition Gonotantrik Chhatra Jote alleged that during a drive on Saturday, several hawkers and pedestrians were assaulted.

At a press conference on Tuesday, it said Ducsú representatives vandalised vans, seized cash and goods, and harassed female hawkers, terming the drive "inhumane" and "excessive".

Muzammel Haque, president of DU Socialist Students' Front, said, "We stand in moral solidarity with the evicted hawkers and refugees. We see their struggle as a state issue. This small business community remains powerless and exploited, forced into debt and daily hardship.

"It was the state's duty to ensure they could safely operate as small entrepreneurs and be allocated proper spaces. The government has failed in that duty. As university students, we have a responsibility to look for humane and practical solutions. But in reality, we saw members of the proctorial team and Ducsú leaders beginning evictions without discussion or policy."

He called on the government to rehabilitate the evicted hawkers and ensure alternative means of livelihood.

Muzammel further claimed that during an operation, a rickshaw-puller was beaten near Shahbagh while a DU student was detained by the proctorial team, which also checked his phone. "The student later described the incident in a Facebook post."

Contacted by The Daily Star, Ducsú Welfare and Social Service Secretary AB Zubayer said the drives were conducted in coordination with the administration. "These aren't new; they're part of regular procedures. We've been assisting the administration since the new Ducsú was formed."

Denying the allegations of assault, he said hawkers were repeatedly warned to leave by the proctorial team before the eviction began. "It was the team's decision to seize their belongings."

Samina Luthfa, professor of sociology, said restricting campus access is nothing new. "These restrictions began during the Awami League's tenure, and since then we've witnessed the rise of fascism. Shrinking the public sphere is how influential political forces hold on to power -- by silencing criticism and stifling debate. We've seen it for years."

Former Ducsú general secretary Mushtuq Husain called the eviction drive "one-sided and authoritarian". "It's an unprecedented and naive move by the current Ducsú leadership... So many stakeholders are involved. They should have discussed it with student groups, alumni, and

representatives of the hawkers before acting."

Ania Fahmin, a student of social sciences, said branding hawkers as "drug dealers" is discriminatory. "There's a common perception that low-income people or slum dwellers are involved in drug dealing or harassment. But it's unexpected that DU students share such perceptions."