

# Unceremonial burial for DU's proctorial rules?

By Mahbub Zaman

Believe it or not, a male student of Dhaka University has to seek prior permission of the dean concerned even to discuss an academic issue with his female mate. If the boy makes any attempt to talk to a girl without permission, he has to pay a fine.

Again, a student is not allowed to play a musical instrument during university hours, if she or he has not secured prior permission to do that.

Right to call a strike or joining it called by others?

Simply out of question. Those who call the strike would be expelled from the university and those who would join the strike abstaining from classes would just lose their scholarships or stipends.

Well, the said provisions are still there in the Dhaka University's Proctorial System framed 78 years back. So what if the world has changed beyond recognition since then, some of these rules have not been amended since 1973.

The good news for the young students of the day is that the rules concerned had never been applied. The question remains, what is the use of keeping them in the rules book. Why not update them before a new millennium begins in less than a year?

"Students are not even familiar with rules that may still have some relevance to maintaining discipline on the campus. These rules are seldom applied even though there is an office for just that purpose", said a senior teacher while talking to The Daily Star.

Most of the students and teachers of the university do not even know the contents of the proctorial rules, which are a part of the Dhaka University Calendar Part II.

Section (5) rule-1V of the of the "Proctorial System" says "No clubs or societies or student organisations other than recognised unions or associations shall be allowed to be formed."

"No parties or entertainment shall be held within the premises of the university nor shall a student play musical instrument or use a loud speaker

in the university premises during the university hours without the previous permission of the proctor.

A breach of this rule will be treated as breach of discipline."

The reality is far from the rules.

There are at least 12 student organisations active on the DU campus. Processions and rallies are an integral part of the day-to-day affair of the DU. A group of 10 to 15 students even brought out a procession recently demanding release of notorious movie mogulul Aziz Mohammad Bhai.

Section 6 of the Rule prohibits students from calling or joining strikes. But strikes called by student organisations and sometimes by ordinary students are also a common feature of the university. No body bothers to attend classes when a strike is called, because somebody is always putting the main gates under lock and key.

Needless to say, nobody has ever been punished for enforcing a strike in the university.

Section-7 of the Rules bans any meeting other than those organised by the university or by different departments of the university or by the students unions recognised by the university, without prior permission of the proctor.

Failure to obey this rule could also lead to expulsion. But nobody has ever been expelled for this, although meetings and processions are the order of the day all over the campus.

Section-5/ rule-(V) is supposed to deter vandalism. The proctor is supposed to take "suitable action against any student who wilfully damages, disfigures or destroys university properties or garden or does not observe the rules for facilitating movement within the university and for keeping the university neat and clean and for proper parking of cycles and vehicles."

But it seems proctors have never seen any student doing any such thing, even though university property including classroom furniture, windows etc., are regularly smashed. Not so long ago, burning of cars and

other vehicles passing through the campus was not such an uncommon occurrence.

The Proctorial System section 2, Rule (I) says that the proctor is responsible for discipline and conduct of students within the university campus outside the halls. According to Section-5 (II) the proctor has the power to impose a fine up to Tk 25 at a time for a breach of discipline or misconduct in the university outside the halls.

According to the same section if the proctor is of opinion that a fine of Tk 25 is not sufficient he has the power to expel a student from the university for a period not exceeding six months to be counted from the date of the order.

If, however, the proctor thinks the case requires expulsion for more than six months, then would refer the case to the VC for action.

Belatedly, the Dhaka University authorities have taken an initiative to change the nearly obsolete proctorial rules.

The university authorities have formed a six-member committee in an emergency syndicate meeting to suggest possible reforms in the rules.

Headed by Prof. Abdul Momin Chowdhury, the other members of the committee are Prof. Kazi Shahidullah, Prof. A.FM Yusuf Haider, Prof. AKM Nur-Un-Nabi, Dr. Shahid Akhter Hussain and Dr. Mahmuda Islam.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof. Monwar Uddin Ahmed of Economics department said that some sections of the existing proctorial regulations were really ridiculous and there was no positive spirit in the rules.

"The regulations should be rewritten to suit the needs of students, the psychology and opinion of general students," he said, "only then will it be possible to have a congenial educational atmosphere on the campus".

He suggested that the rules would be more effective if all the teachers were concerned with the proctorial system. "We have to change our attitude rather than change laws", he said.