

## Allocations for higher edn on the decline

By Gobinda Bar

Allocations for higher education came down to 7.8 per cent of the education budget in fiscal 1997-98 from 10.5 per cent in fiscal '85-86, according to the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Out of the total budget of Tk 600 crore for the education sector, Tk 63 crore was allocated for higher education in fiscal 1985-86. The national budget for the financial year was Tk 3926 crore.

In the year 1997-98 the national budget rose to Tk 15,999.91 crore while the allocation for university education was Tk 183.70 crore against a total of Tk 2,342.83 crore for the education sector.

During the last 13 years beginning from 1985-86, education budget increased four times but that for university education increased only 2.9 times, according to the UGC.

The percentage of allocation from the national development budget for university development programmes also declined over the years.

The allocation for university development programmes fell to 0.81 per cent from 1.25 per cent between 1986-87 and 1997-98.

A total of Tk 17.65 crore was allocated for university development programmes in 1986-87, which rose to Tk 103.66 crore in 1997-98. During this

period, the national development budget rose nine times but the development budget for universities increased by 5.8 times and the development budget for education and religion was up by 21 times.

When contacted, Education Secretary Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed said, "Though the net allocation for higher education has increased but it has proportionately fallen as the government has been putting more thrust on primary education, non-formal education and adult education."

Government disburses funds for education according to priority in its different sub-sectors with the highest thrust on primary education, he said. More funds could be allocated for higher education after foreign assistance is available following formulation of a Vision Plan on Higher Education, he added.

Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Prof Iajuddin Ahmed said the standard of higher education is gradually falling due to shortage of funds for supporting research programmes, teachers' training and improvement of libraries. He also underscored the need of making the universities "centres of excellence to cope with the global competitions."