

# Govt okays 6 more pvt universities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has approved six new private universities despite allegations of irregularities against many existing institutions and questions raised over the standards of education there.

Of those approved, two will be set up in Dhaka city and one each in Chittagong, Khulna, Kushtia and Manikganj, raising the number of private universities to 89. More than half of the existing ones are located in the capital.

"To help expand higher education in the country, the government approved the universities. It is a regular process," said a high official of the education ministry, wishing not to be named.

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Another official of the ministry, preferring anonymity, said the sponsors and initiators of some of the proposed universities had political links.

The approval came at a time when a number of private universities are reportedly functioning without meeting the basic criteria.

Many universities have disputes among their trustee board members, do not have enough qualified teachers and properly equipped libraries and laboratories, do not publish research journals and have no campus of their own.

Prof Abdul Mannan, chairman of University Grants Commission, the statutory apex body for higher education, himself at a meeting in August last year expressed disappointment over the institutions' non-compliance with the Private University Act-2010.

Despite the issuing of repeated deadlines, only 17 out of 52 universities functioning for seven years have so far shifted to their own campuses, a basic condition stipulated in the act.

Educationists on several occasions requested the government not to approve of any more private university in Dhaka, citing lack of space as one of

the main reasons.

The new universities are named as International University of Scholars in Dhaka; Canadian University of Bangladesh in Dhaka; University of Creative Technology in Chittagong; Northern University of Business and Technology in Khulna; NPI University of Bangladesh in Manikganj; and Rabindra Moitree University in Kushtia.

Initiators of NPI University are former Chhatra League leaders Ishaq Ali Khan Panna and Md Shamsur Rahman.

Jamil Habib sought permission for opening up University of Scholars and Chowdhury Nasir Sharafat to set up Canadian University of Bangladesh.

Islami University Dean Jahirul Islam has been named as initiator of Rabindra Moitree University and Md Osman as initiator of University of Creative Technology.

More than 100 applications seeking permission for new universities are still pending with the education ministry now.

Currently, more than 3.30 lakh students are studying at private universities countrywide.