

Dhaka University deserves an elected VC

Quality, not affiliation, should guide public university appointments

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It is unfortunate that Dhaka University is once again poised to get another unelected vice chancellor for the third consecutive term, bypassing the electoral process required by the DU Order, 1973. With the resignation of Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan, who was appointed under a temporary provision, the government is now likely to invoke Clause 11(2) once again to appoint a new VC. What was intended as an emergency measure is now gradually becoming the default method of appointment, which is concerning.

Over the past decade, DU has seen repeated appointments under the temporary clause, often without any genuine emergency. Such practices have fostered a dangerous culture where rules are often bent for political considerations. As one DU professor has noted, this has become a long-standing habit of successive governments. Reportedly, under Clause 11(1) of the 1973 Order, the VC is to be appointed by the chancellor from a panel of three persons nominated by the Senate. If such a panel does not exist, the sitting VC is required to call a Senate session to elect one. However, DU has not seen a Senate session for over a year, despite the ordinance mandating at least one annually. Worryingly, five categories of Senate membership, comprising 60 of its 104 members, remain vacant currently, creating an institutional vacuum.



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Yet another unelected VC set to take DU helm

The consequences of politically influenced appointments are already evident: erosion of institutional autonomy, compromised recruitment processes, and an atmosphere in which academic priorities are often overshadowed by partisan calculations. Although the interim administration pledged merit-based appointments and cleaner governance, criticisms have persisted. Allegations of irregularities in appointments and promotions have emerged at DU and several other universities. A recent report by Transparency International Bangladesh even claimed that following the uprising, major political actors divided VC and pro-VC appointments among themselves, while recruitment and postings were influenced by public pressure.

This cannot continue. There is no alternative to appointing well-qualified and honest educationists without political affiliations as VCs if the credibility of our universities is to be restored. The new government must move away from the old practice of politically motivated reshuffling of VCs and other educational administrators. Any appointments must strictly follow proper procedures, and these should be part of a wider reform agenda, one that ensures improved academic governance, transparency, and genuine autonomy for universities. Since the appointments are yet to be finalised, it is crucial that the broader goal of merit, integrity and institutional stability remain the primary considerations.