

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

'Troubled' univs provide a third of all degrees

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NEARLY a third of all students with Bachelors and Masters from private universities receive their degrees from institutions that have been flagged by the government for breaking different rules, including running outer campuses and being mired in ownership conflict.

Some 16,602 students out of a total 54,160 private

university students in 2013 graduated from nine universities the government later 'cautioned' students and teachers from enrolling.

The universities in question also appear to hand out a disproportionate number of degrees, since they made up about a seventh of the total number of private universities at 68 in 2013. Two of the universities in question actually provide the highest

number of degrees among private universities.

Leading academicians said many of the degrees were 'questionable.'

In 2012, the same universities provided degrees to 12,780 students out of 49,180 from 60 universities. In 2011, they gave graduate and post-graduate degrees to 9,962 students out of a total 40,725 graduates from 52 universities.

The universities in question - International Islami University, BGC Trust, Southern University of Bangladesh, operate outer campuses - made illegal in 2007 - while Atish Dipankar University of Science and Technology, Prime University, Darul Ihsan University, Asian University, Dhaka International University and IBAIS University are plagued by conflict

among its board of trustees.

In September 8, 2014, UGC cautioned students against enrolment at these private universities who were operating illegal outer campuses, or tangled in dispute over ownership, beside three others universities mired in other problems.

According to the UGC report in 2013, Atish Dipankar University of Science and

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Technology provided the highest number of private university degrees at 4,543. International Islami University, Chittagong, second highest at 4,179, and Asian University of Bangladesh at fifth with 2,410 degrees.

Besides, Prime University provided 1,756 degrees, Dhaka International University provided 1,546 degrees, Darul Ihsan University provided 802 degrees, IBAIS University provided 558 degrees, Southern University 522 degrees and BGC Trust University provided 256 degrees.

UGC members, a former UGC chairman and academics said many private universities were essentially 'certifi-

cate-selling' institutions.

A UGC report sent to the parliamentary standing committee on education ministry on June 26, 2014 said that the education provided by some private universities were low in quality while some of them were simply selling certificates. And a Transparency International Bangladesh study on private universities in June 2014, claimed certificates were illegally traded at Tk 50,000 to Tk 3 lakh.

BUET professor Mohammad Kaykobad said some of the universities are engaged in irregularities and termed their degrees 'questionable'.

'The questionable activities of some private univer-

sities are putting us in an embarrassing situation. The government should take necessary action to control them,' said Association of Non-Government Universities of Bangladesh president, Sheikh Kabir Hossain.

Acting UGC chairman Mohammad Mohabbat Khan admitted the activities of some private universities were problematic but said 'UGC had limitations. It does not have policing authority.'

The first private university was established in 1992 and currently there are 83 universities in Bangladesh.

'The quality of education at 10 to 12 is at a satisfactory level while the rest are providing poor quality educa-

tion,' said one UGC member.

'From the start, there were some universities that look only for profit. They are not interested in providing quality education. Some institutions are now engaged in the providing degrees in return for money, which is unfortunate. These universities do not have adequate facilities,' said former UGC chairman Professor Nazrul Islam.

Nazrul, Kabir and Kaykobad all said that UGC should strongly monitor the activities of these universities and take action against them.

'A strong, higher education commission is necessary for proper monitoring and remedial action,' said the acting UGC chairman.