

UGC ON PVT UNIVERSITIES

Conditions, rules flouted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A good number of private universities are flouting many conditions and rules set by the Private University Act-2010.

Many of them are still running unauthorised outer campuses and disobeying the rules regarding syndicate meetings. Despite extending deadlines three times, only 17 universities have so far moved to their own campuses.

Many still have disputes within their trustee boards and do not have enough qualified teachers, properly equipped libraries and laboratories, and any publication of research journals.

This appalling picture was portrayed by none other than the chairman of University Grants Commission (UGC), the statutory apex body for higher education, at a views-exchange meeting with the authorities of private universities yesterday.

UGC convened the meeting to discuss the overall picture of the private universities at its auditorium in the capital's Agargaon. Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, and vice chancellors and chairmen of the board of trustees of 76 private universities attended the meeting.

According to the act, private universities have to relocate to their own campuses

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within seven years of their launch. Currently there are 83 private universities in the country but only 52 of them have passed seven years since their launch.

UGC Chairman Prof Abdul Mannan said that of these 52, only 17 have shifted to their own campuses while seven are operating on the land owned by their foundations, nine partially on their own building and 17 are building campuses on their own land.

"Though academic activities and research activities of some universities are satisfactory, yet there are questions over the standard of education in most of the universities," he said.

The UGC boss also said the authorities of most of the universities are reportedly holding syndicate meetings without the members nominated by the government and the UGC.

Speaking at the meeting, the minister asked all of the 52 private universities to report by September 30 on the progress of shifting to their own campuses.

"The universities which have not moved to their own campuses will have to submit a progress report showing their current status by September 30," he said.

Based on the report submitted by the universities, the government will have "one to one" meeting with them to take further decision on the matter, Nahid said.

On January 26 last year, the education ministry set September 15 the deadline for universities to relocate to their own campuses, a condition set out in the Private University Act-2010, as many universities had failed to comply with it.

In the event of their non-compliance

with campus relocation, the ministry warned them of cancelling the temporary approval they got from the government and directed them to stop admitting new students.

Speaking on the issue, VCs and chairmen of trustee boards of different private universities admitted that some of them did not follow the private university act properly, and urged the government to take action against those violating the rules.

They, however, requested the minister to withdraw the 7.5 percent VAT imposed on them in the budget.

They also criticised the UGC decision to collect Tk 1 lakh from every university for monitoring the universities. They demanded review of the decision.

Prof Dr Perween Hasan, VC of Central Women's University, said, "Since the UGC is monitoring the activities of the private universities, then why is a separate cell required for monitoring?"

University of Development Alternatives VC Prof Emajuddin Ahmed suggested the government allocate land for the universities which have yet to manage any.

Mohammed Farashuddin, trustee board chairman of East West University, suggested the need for increasing the UGC's financial and legal powers to better supervise private universities.

Private University Owner's Association President Sheikh Kabir Hossain urged the education minister to withdraw the recently imposed VAT saying all the students will have to bear the brunt of it.

In reply, Nahid said he would speak to the prime minister and the finance minister about withdrawing the VAT.