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Editorial

## Unregistered universities

*Why sit on their aberrant status?*

**F**OLLOWING publication of the HSC exam results there has been a noticeable rush of students seeking admission to various unregistered private universities, including a number of branches of foreign universities, located outside the capital city. The University Grants Commission (UGC) had earlier identified these institutions as operating without due registration, and therefore illegally.

Obviously, the UGC did not act on the so-called blacklisted universities by way of either phasing them out or allowing them to regularise themselves by meeting certain criteria. Instead, they have reportedly sent a list of such institutions to law enforcing agencies and are now pleading with the parents, guardians and students not to approach such institutions for admission.

The UGC is giving mixed signals. On the one hand, it is apparently acting against such institutions, but on the other, it has distributed forms to their owners to fill these in furnishing details of their eligibility or otherwise. In other words, if the goals and programmes of the institutions are deemed satisfactory they could be allowed to operate. Only that this is a belated step. Furthermore, it is stated that some such setups could function as study or resource centres; but the question is whether they should be allowed to confer degrees. Branches of a few foreign universities are functioning "effectively to a degree", according to the UGC.

The government must have a clear-cut policy with regard to operation of private universities. Subject to fulfillment of the criteria consisting of staffing pattern and its quality, equipment and infrastructural base and suitability or otherwise of academic atmosphere, educational enterprises like private universities, of both local or foreign signboards, must be either approved or disapproved by a competent authority. Let's not forget that in view of the limited intake capacity of the public universities, the private ones are increasingly playing a vital role offering opportunities for higher education to large number of students. While the bad apples must be jettisoned from the basket, the good ones must be recognised for what they are worth.