

Umbrella Act goes against autonomy of universities

Teachers tell view exchange meet

DU CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of different public universities yesterday alleged that the government is trying to impose institutional control over the public universities by implementing the Umbrella Act, prepared by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Saying that the act is against the autonomy of the public universities, they added that several sections of the act would permit the UGC to interfere in the academic, administrative and financial matters of the universities.

Noted educationist Prof Ajoy Roy presided over the meeting while Prof Akmal Hossain, Assistant Professor Tansimuddin Khan of DU, Prof Mainul Islam of Chittagong University, Prof Shahidul Islam of Rajshahi University, Prof Amin Hossen and Prof Anwarullah Bhuiyan of Jahangirnagar University, Prof Rezaul Karim Khandakar of Shahjalal Science and Technology University and AM Rashida Begum, editor of magazine Shikkha Bichitra, spoke at the view exchange meeting organised by the Shikkha Andolan Mancha at the Senate Building of Dhaka University (DU).

The teachers stressed the need for amending few sections of the existing ordinance of 1973 that presently runs four universities in the country.

Prof Mainul Islam said, "From the year 1981-02, there is no example that a single vice chancellor was appointed in the university without lobbying or on political consideration."

On the current scenario of Chittagong University (CU), he said, "Between 2001 and 2006, a total of 164 teachers were appointed at the university. Of them, 117 are Shibir cadres."

"The 1973 act can be amended. The teachers' community has

to decide whether they want amendment in the existing ordinance or would accept the imposed decision of the government courtesy of the Umbrella Act," said Prof Akmal Hossain.

He stressed on self-criticism of the university teachers and said: "There are allegations against us that we do not take classes regularly. Rather we are fond of taking classes in private universities and less interested in research works and publication. We have to take these allegations seriously and should think whether we are giving chances to a vested quarter to set such laws that go against public interest," he added.

He said teachers have to be

united to let the government know that they do not want the proposed Umbrella Act.

Prof Ajoy Roy said the act of 1973 was a result of a long-run movement. Teachers had to face many repressions while the universities were run by the ordinance of 1961, made by the then Pakistani government.

He added, "We criticise the role of the government and the politicians, but we never evaluate our role in the university. We have responsibilities to uphold the autonomy of the university."

The teachers at the meeting called for an all-out movement to press home their demand.