

Accreditation body for pvt univs nearing launch

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ESTABLISHMENT of an autonomous accreditation council to ensure quality and standard of education offered by the country's private universities is at its final stage, despite serious opposition faced from some university owners.

All the 71 private universities of Bangladesh will have to be members of the Accreditation Council for

Private Universities of Bangladesh' proposed by the University Grants Commission.

In response to a written question of ruling Awami League lawmaker ABM Ashraf Uddin Nizan, education minister Nurul Islam Nahid on February 5 confirmed in parliament that the process of installing the ACPUB was at its end stage.

According to the draft terms of reference of

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ACPUB, the oversight body will motivate all the private universities to undertake self-assessment and critical review of their academic programmes from time to time.

The immediate past BNP-led alliance government initiated the process for establishing the accreditation council in early 2003 but it has been slowed down in the face of strong opposition raised by a section of private university owners.

Finally in 2010, the AL-led government formulated the Private University Act 2010, said UGC chairman

Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, adding that 'Now the ACPUB is going to be instituted in line with the law'.

According to the draft TOR of the council prepared by the UGC, private universities would be required to have their academic programmes evaluated by a peer review team formed by the ACPUB. The status of different universities will then be published for students, guardians, and employers.

The ACPUB will have a general council, an executive committee, and a number of programme committees and peer review teams. The 21-member general

council will have a chairperson appointed by the chancellor of private universities for a 2-year period.

The proposed ACPUB will have a Tk 50 crore initial endowment fund. It may strike agreements with other recognised national, regional or international accreditation bodies for mutual recognition of accreditation of specific degree programmes.

The association of private university owners was strongly opposed to institution of ACPUB as once it starts operations the best and the worst performing institutions will get identified

and exposed, an education ministry high official told New Age last week.

For example, Abul Qasem Haider, one of the owners of Eastern University and vice-president of the university owners' association said, 'Private universities, while fighting myriad problems, have still been managing to grow up and it's not a time to establish an accreditation council for them.'

The education ministry official more specifically said, 'Some owners don't want the council as the quality of education provided by most of the universities is not up to the mark.'