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তারিখ ...14 APR 2016...
পৃষ্ঠা ...2... কলাম ...2...

Political jobs at univs harm education

Educationists say teachers should be recruited based on merit

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RECRUITMENT on political consideration in top positions of public universities is hampering academic activities, putting at risk the academic life of students, educationists observed.

The position of vice-chancellor has become a political affair and vice-chancellors appointed on political considerations cannot made decisions independently.

They rather need to make decision based on what the political party that has appointed him wants and this creates problems for the university, the educationists said when they were asked about teachers at least in three universities rallying for the resignation of vice-chancellors.

Dhaka University professor emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury termed the political recruitment very harmful for universities.

Former University Grants Commission chair Nazrul Islam also said that recruitment of teachers in universities should be on the basis of merit.

Conflicts between the teachers and vice-chancellors in some public universities have disrupted academic life, raising concerns for students that they might need to face long session jam.

The educationists said that there should be a search committee for the appointment of vice-chancellor and

Continued on page 4 Col. 1

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Continued from page 1

that should be done based on merit and independent of any government intervention.

For such institutions such as Dhaka University, Chittagong University, Rajshahi University and Jahangirnagar University that are run under the University Order 1973, the senate is supposed to nominate a panel of three members to the chancellor for appointment of one of them as vice-chancellor. But the university authorities are not doing so.

Teachers in Jahanginagar University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and Chittagong University are now holding protests demanding resignation of the vice-chancellor alleging irregularities in the university administration or political recruitment of teachers by the vice-chancellor.

Students of the universities feared that they might be caught in long session jam because of the protests of teachers.

Academic activities have already come to a halt in Jahangirnagar University as a large number of teachers teamed up as Shikkhak Samaj have for about three months and half been rallying demanding resignation of the vice-chancellor because of 'the political appointment and irregularities' he is responsible for.

Teachers said that they would continue with their protests until the vice-chancellor resigned. The teachers of the university on Thursday locked up the office of the vice-chancellor Shariff Enamul Kabir for two hours to press the demand.

Teachers began their agitation in December 2011. In the initial stage, the protest was against the political recruitment by the vice-chancellor. A new dimension was added to the teachers' movement after the killing of Zubair Ahmed on the campus.

Zubair, a fourth-year student of English, was tortured by the Chhatra League activists on January 8 and he died from his injuries in United Hospital early January 9.

The activists are known to be members of a Chhatra League faction said to be loyal to the vice-chancellor.

Teachers of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology also continued with their strike since April 7 as negotiations the education minister, Nurul Islam Nahid, held with the teachers on Thursday failed.

The teachers have not been taking classes since April 7 to press for the resignation the vice-chancellor, SM Nazrul Islam, and the pro-vice-chancellor, Habibur Rahman over some alleged irregularities.

A group of teachers in Chittagong University on April 8 sat in on the campus to protest at the recruitment of teachers allegedly on political grounds.

Serajul Islam termed the political recruitment very harmful for institutions of higher education. He said that people should mobilise public opinions against the trend.

Nazrul Islam said that recruitment of teachers in universities should be on the basis of merit and not on anything else.

'But it is not the case in Bangladesh. Teachers who are the loyal to the ruling party are often recruited as vice-chancellors and pro-vice-chancellors. If teachers are recruited on political grounds, it will, in the long run, harm university education,' he said.

He said that the recruitment of teachers on political considerations was not a trend even in neighboring countries.

Former Jahangirnagar University vice-chancellor Kazi Saleh Ahmed said, 'The trend of political recruitment in the top positions of public universities should be stopped to save institutions offering higher education.'

He said that when a vice-chancellor was recruited because of the political identity, it would become impossible for students and teachers believing in other political ideology to obey him.

'A vice-chancellor or a pro-vice-chancellor recruited on political consideration cannot make decision independently and is always guided by political party,' he added.

He said that there should be a search committee for the appointment of vice-chancellors at public universities and the appointment should be free of any government intervention.

About for disruption in academic activities, the University Grants Commission chairman, AK Azad Chowdhury, said that some universities are autonomous and they are free to take decide their own course of action.

'We can only say that everyone should be concerned so that the academic life of students should not get disrupted,' he said.