

Unelected VC in office for 4 years at DU

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AN UNELECTED vice-chancellor of Dhaka University for the first time completes four years in office, which amounts to a full term for an elected vice-chancellor, today without holding elections to vice-chancellor's panel in breach of the Dhaka University Order 1973.

The incumbent vice-chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique, who is the 27th assumed office on January 17, 2009 after his temporary

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appointment the day before until a vice-chancellor is appointed from a panel of three nominated by the senate after elections.

The current vice-chancellor after being appointed temporarily has not taken any initiative to hold elections to the vice-chancellor's panel for the nomination of a panel of three to be sent to the president for selection.

The High Court on May 14, 2012 asked university authorities to explain in two weeks why the vice-chancellor should not be directed to call a senate session immediately to select a panel for the appointment of a regular vice-chancellor, teachers said.

Former Dhaka University vice-chancellors and teachers told New Age that a vice-chancellor completing four years in office without holding the vice-chancellor's panel elections had so far been an 'unprecedented event' and a 'deviation from the university tradition.' They also demanded an immediate elections to the vice-chancellors' panel.

Arefin, a mass communication and journalism professor, however, said that the university was being run in keeping with the university order.

In Dhaka University, elections to the vice-chancellor's panel have not been held for about nine years, with the latest being held in 2004.

Education research professor Wahiduzzaman, also a former general secretary of the Dhaka University Teachers' Association, told New Age, 'The president [of the time] appointed Arefin Siddique as vice-chancellor temporarily to run academic and administrative tasks.'

But the vice-chancellor has not called the senate to session for electing the vice-chancellor's panel till date, he added.

Thirty senate members on April 25, 2012 sent a letter to Arefin, requesting him to call the senate to session for the vice-chancellor's panel elections.

Wahiduzzaman on May 13, 2012 filed a writ petition with the High Court saying that 'Arefin Siddique was appointed DU VC on January 16, 2009 to temporarily conduct its academic and administrative tasks.'

'Arefin was given the charge, under Section 11 (2) of the Dhaka University Order 1973 until a VC is appointed from a panel of three selected by the university senate,' he said in the writ.

In reply, the High Court on May 14 asked authorities to explain in two weeks why the university vice-chancellor should not be directed to call the senate to session immediately to select a panel for the appointment of a regular vice-chancellor.

Asked about whether the authorities had replied to the High Court directives,

the university's legal adviser Abdul Halim Chakladar told New Age that he could not give details about the case instantly.

Section 11 (1) of the university order says: 'The vice-chancellor shall be appointed by the chancellor for a period of four years from a panel of three persons to be nominated by the senate on such terms and conditions as may be determined by the chancellor, and shall be eligible for re-appointment for a further period of four years.'

Section 11 (2) reads: 'Where any temporary vacancy in the office of the vice-chancellor occurs by reason of leave, illness, resignation or any other cause, the chancellor shall make such arrangements for carrying on duties of the office of the vice-chancellor as he may think fit.'

'There has been more hearing since then,' Wahiduzzaman said.

Former Dhaka University vice-chancellor SMA Faiz told New Age, 'He [Arefin] deviated from the university tradition by not holding the vice-chancellor's panel elections in four years. It is not good for the university.'

'This has so far been unprecedented in the university history that an unelected vice-chancellor has been in office for four years without holding panel elections,' the DUTA general secretary, Mamun Ahmed, said.

'We want that the vice-chancellor should be elect-

ed by the senate in the spirit of the university order,' he added.

The DUTA president, Fariduddin Chowdhury, declined comments on the matter. He said that Arefin should be asked about the vice-chancellor's panel elections and issues.

Arefin said that he had been appointed in accordance with the order. 'Elections to the panel could not be held in four years because of various issues. We are concerned about that.'

He declined further comments terming the matter sub judice. 'Some people are trying to create confusion by saying that I was temporarily appointed.'

The University Grants Commission chair, AK Azad Chowdhury, also a former vice-chancellor of the university, also declined comments on the matter saying, 'It is a delicate matter.'

The education minister, Nurul Islam Nahid, could not be reached for comments. He had been in Sylhet and his mobile was found to be switched off.

The education secretary, Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, was also not available for comments as he was aboard.

The acting education secretary SM Golam Faruk declined comments.

No elections to the vice-chancellor's panel in Chittagong University has also been held for 21 years and in Rajshahi University for 12 years.