

## PROTESTS OVER FEE HIKE

# RU at fault

No money, no approval yet university goes for recruitment-spree

WASIM BIN HABIB, ANWAR ALI and MA SAYEED

Large-scale recruitment of teachers and employees violating rules over the last one decade has created a huge fund deficit at Rajshahi University, forcing the authorities to increase various fees and introduce evening courses to raise funds.

The RU runs under the 1973 university act that provides autonomy to the institution, but it has to rely on the government for funds.

While auditing the RU budget in March last year, the University Grants Commission (UGC) found it recruited 368 teachers and staff against 208 posts advertised in the 2012-13 academic year.

Of them, 344 -- 56 teachers and 288 other staff -- were appointed without the mandatory approval from the UGC, a statutory body to supervise and promote higher education.

The UGC did not grant Tk 5.5 crore required for salaries and allowances of the 344 while allocating fund to the RU in May last year, a top RU official told The

## RU at fault

FROM PAGE 1

and allowances of the teachers and employees appointed since 2001. Over the last 13 years, the university has appointed about 2,200 staff, 900 of them teachers, without approval from the UGC, said RU sources.

Of the 2,200, as many as 544 were recruited mainly on political consideration in 2006, whipping up widespread criticisms. All the 544 are now getting salaries and allowances, as the UGC eventually granted the money.

"The UGC knows we have to pay all the recruited staff even if we have to borrow. Yet it didn't grant the fund [for the 344 recruited in 2012-13]. This prompted the university to think about raising its own income," an official of the university said, requesting anonymity.

Asked, Prof Mohammed Nasser of statistics department said the UGC asked all the universities to cut expenditure and increase own incomes, but the RU went for increasing both.

"They [authorities] are increasing expenditures by recruiting staff for creating their political stronghold, ultimately putting the financial burden on the students and their guardians," he added.

Pro-VC Prof Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan said increasing fees and launching evening courses to raise income were nothing new.

He claimed the wholesale recruitment of teachers and other staff in 2001 had caused the fund shortage, which prompted the authorities to think of creating their own fund.

In 2007-08, the authorities increased most fees and launched evening courses for Business Studies Faculty. Similar courses at law and social science faculties were launched in

**2,200** teachers, staff recruited in the last 13 yrs

Tk **36.43** cr deficit for excessive recruitment

**344** recruited without approval in 2012-13

Tk **20** lakh income expected annually from increased fees

Daily Star.

They are among the 1,023, including 600 teachers, appointed at various departments and sections between February 2009 and February 2013. Prof Abdus Sobhan was the vice-chancellor during the period.

To arrange the salaries of these staff, the RU authorities decided to increase various fees and launch more evening courses, officials and teachers said.

This triggered a series of angry protests by the students on the campus from

the middle of last month. During one such demonstration on Sunday, police and armed Chhatra League men attacked the general students, leaving about 100 injured.

Anomalies over recruitment of teachers and other staff have also been reported in three other public universities -- Dhaka, Jahangirnagar and Chittagong -- in the last one decade. But the situation at the RU seems to be the worst.

Currently, it has a fund deficit of Tk 50 crore. Of this, Tk 36.43 crore is for salaries

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

2010, he added.

However, the university had to suspend the courses for social science faculty following protests by the students.

Prof Nasser said the teachers involved in the evening courses earn additional money. So the current pro-Awami League administration thought of making some extra bucks. Some pro-opposition teachers also supported them to gain from the fee hikes.

For every lecture in the evening course, a teacher gets Tk 1,500 to Tk 2,000 instantly, said another RU official.

The two-year evening course costs a student between Tk 1 lakh and Tk 1.10 lakh. The faculty concerned takes 75 percent of the money to share among the teachers and staff and the rest goes to the university fund, he added.

Since 2007, the RU thus raised a fund of Tk 1 crore from evening courses at the accounting, banking and finance, management, marketing and law departments. And introducing similar programmes in other departments will help the authorities further raise the fund, the official said.

He also said another Tk 20 lakh would have been added to the fund annually had the increased fees come into effect.

RU sources said the four-year honours and one-year master's programmes cost a resident student around Tk 30,000 and a non-resident student about Tk 25,000.

Contacted, RU Vice-chancellor Prof Muhammad Mizanuddin said, "We are running short of money and the decision [to increase fees] was taken to ease pressure on the budget."

তারিখ: 07 FEB 2014 ...  
পৃষ্ঠা: ৭ ...

The Daily Star

The RU budget will have a deficit of Tk 12 crore this year, as the authorities have to pay Tk 5 crore in teachers' remunerations for exam duties, due since 2010.

The VC said the fees were increased as per the recommendations of the respective committees that found these were not raised over a long time. And the evening courses were introduced following recommendations of the departments concerned, faculty's proposal and the academic council's approval.

About large-scale recruitments, he said the authorities appointed teachers since there was a shortage.

UGC Chairman Prof AK Azad Chowdhury said the recruitment of 1,023 staff was not done in line with the rules.

The UGC objected to the appointment of the 344 teachers and staff and did not allocate money for their salaries and allowances, he added.

"But we cannot cancel the recruitment as it will be interfering in the functions of an autonomous institution. It is the syndicate that makes such decisions. When the university approves the recruitments despite our objections, we cannot do anything," he told The Daily Star.

But the UGC always discourages the universities from doing such things, he added.

Contacted, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said he was not aware of the irregularities in recruitments, but he would look into the matter.

"Universities must do everything in line with the laws. We have fund shortages, and these institutions have to keep that in mind while spending the money," he added.