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TRANSPARENCY International Bangladesh (TIB) in its report revealed allegations of unauthorised financial transactions in eight public universities and political patronage, nepotism, regionalism and religious identity as dominant drivers of corruption in the recruitment process at 13 public universities. In reaction, major stakeholders including the University of Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh and the Federation of Bangladesh University Teacher's Association in their public statement have termed the report as biased, baseless, conspiratorial, imaginary and self-contradictory, etc. In fact, similar reactions on TIB's report were noticed in the past, but refusal of corruption allegations is not a sensible response; rather, it is a strategy of neglecting the problem. These practices often dishearten the messenger and inspire wrongdoers to continue their corrupt practices.

As human beings, we cannot expect 'zero corruption' or 'no corruption' in personal, private or public spheres. Incidence of corruption is a crux reality. The key concern is whether corruption is predominant or hinders public interest and wellbeing or not. Prevalence of corruption also matters by context or culture. If we look at the legal, institutional and operational framework of public institutions like public universities, we could easily observe that there are certain red-flags, i.e., integrity concerns; those create ground for corruption in the recruitment of lecturers in public universities. The

red-flags in recruitment of teachers are deep-rooted.

Unchecked autonomy
 Public universities in Bangladesh are autonomous. There is no regulatory entity to regulate or oversee their operations. Universities decide and revise recruitment rules with approval from the syndicates as they desire. The Ministry of Education (MoED) and UGC also have enforcing authority even in case of proven allegation of corruption against the high officials of public universities. The MoED requests UGC for inquiry into the allegations and UGC follows accordingly, and finally, MoED recommends the government to take actions.

Public universities are run by public money, but in reality, these are not under the vigilance of any entity. This unchecked autonomy has created frontiers of opportunities to misuse public money through recruiting hundreds of excess teachers over the years.

Dubious recruitment process of Vice Chancellor (VC)
 There is no transparent and credible procedure for appointment of VC in public universities. There is fierce competition for this position. The appointment of VC is not based on professional excellence, personal competency and credibility, rather on political association and loyalty. Political appointment is not a predicament, but this becomes problematic when substandard partisan teachers get appointments, and later damage the image of the government as they abuse their position for personal gain. A section of teachers even with-

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Finally, there is no generic or taken-for-granted way for fighting corruption. Context specific controlling and corrective measures could be undertaken followed by multiple and comprehensive actions.

out any administrative experience or good track record become VCs by using their strong connections with influential political leaders belonging to the ruling party and policy makers. After holding the position, a VC has to compensate by fulfilling the requests of these people. This reflects by a recruitment committee headed by a VC in recent times. There is a good example of recruiting teachers in the recruitment of teachers along partisan lines, ignoring merit of the candidates. In recent years, there have been allegations of incompetence and corruption against a few VCs which were also looked into by UGC investigations. Therefore, the absence of a credible appointment procedure of

No regulatory power of UGC
 The UGC is expected to be the guardian and authority of public universities, but in reality, it is a 'toothless' tiger. UGC has no control over the recruitment activities of teachers in public universities. Furthermore, because of the absence of a transparent procedure for appointing the UGC Chairman and its members, it is often used as a 'dumping ground' for the tacit supporters of the ruling party.

Utility dominant over risk of loss
 A section of VCs and university teachers involved in corrupt teacher recruitment practices know that there is little chance of being caught or penalised. There is also the example of a VC with allegations of corruption against him being given an opportunity to complete his tenure. Two UGC investigation committees and concerned ministry advised the govern-

ment to take punitive measure against him, but no measure was ever taken. This incident gives a clear message that persons involved in recruitment and related corrupt practices has rare

confidence that the present govern-

ment will take effective measures to

'Corruption-friendly' recruitment procedure
 The world's leading universities have comprehensive policy documents on the whole process of recruiting teachers. Unfortunately, none of the public universities in our country have this kind of policy guideline, on how the recruitment process should be implemented. Universities have dozens of internal circulars, procedures and laws related to recruitment. Furthermore, university administration decides, determines and administers the whole recruitment. There is scope to form syndicates with the majority

applicants as it desires. These documents could be amended even if a VC desires to recruit a specific candidate(s) by using pro-ruling party dominant syndicates at universities. This gap also has created grounds for abusing the position of VC, syndicate and people involved in recruiting teachers on political ideology, kinship, regionalism, religion and ethnic identity and unauthorised financial transaction.

Finally, there is no generic or taken-for-granted way for fighting corruption. Context specific controlling and corrective measures could be undertaken followed by multiple and comprehensive actions. The foremost concern is the 'tone of top', especially when it comes to controlling corruption at permissible level both in public and private institutions. Partisan appointment in public institution is not a big concern, but problems arise when wrong people are being appointed. I have confidence that the present government will take effective measures to address the integrity concerns, adopt a comprehensive set of policies or guidelines on recruitment of teachers, and bring universities under effective oversight and accountability, and thereby, create an environment for recruiting the best candidates as teachers in public universities.