

Tuesday, May 05, 2026

NEWAGE

Public univ VCs chosen mostly on political considerations

Shahin Akhter  04 May, 2026, 23:52



Representational image.

The due procedures for appointing vice-chancellors to the country's public universities have been ignored for years as successive governments have appointed them mostly on political considerations.

The laws on the public universities stipulate that the VCs should be appointed through elected panels, but the requirement is not complied with.



As the VCs mostly came based on their partisan views, they too appoint their supporters to other major positions without considering their qualifications.

The public universities thus fail to function properly, according to experts.

Most recently, on April 13, the education ministry appointed professor Yearul Kabir as the vice-chancellor of the Jashore University of Science and Technology. He was a leader of the pro-Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami White Panel at Dhaka University.

The ministry did not take any recommendation regarding the appointment from the search committee, which the ministry reformed on April 1 this year, to appoint the new JUST VC, said committee members.

The search committee was established by the immediate past interim government on May 19, 2025, with then education adviser Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar in the chair, to make recommendations on appointing VCs to public universities of the country.

The BNP-led government appointed new VCs to eight public universities in March -- also without recommendations from the committee or selecting them from any panel.

The universities are Dhaka University, Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh Open University, Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, Jagannath University, Dhaka Central University, and Islamic Arabic University.

According to DU professor emeritus AF Serajul Islam Choudhury, those who are in the government believe that they need to put their supporters into these academic positions.

He mentioned two main reasons for this situation. One is to 'reward' their supporters, while the other is that they expect these individuals would be supportive of the government.

'It is a way to recognise, reward, and keep them as party supporters,' he said, adding, 'This is not desirable at all.'

Bangla Academy president and former DU professor Abul Quasem Fazlul Haque also said that whichever party had come to power in Bangladesh in the past had appointed their own people in the top positions of the universities.

'That trend still continues,' he said, adding that the governments and parties in power did change but their policy regarding this practice remained unchanged.'

According to a member of the search committee, who sought anonymity, said that the committee has no legal basis while it was formed as per an administrative decision.

The initiative for forming a search committee was first taken during the military-backed caretaker government in 2007-2008 while a three-member committee was formed, said the member.

During the immediate-past interim government, a new search committee was formed, headed by Secondary and Higher Education Division secretary Abdul Khaleque, with the objective to avoid political controversies in appointing the vice-chancellors.

Currently, the committee member said, sitting DU VC professor ABM Obaidul Islam and marketing department professor Md Morshed Hasan Khan and sitting Rajshahi University VC professor Md Faridul Islam are also the members of the search committee.

'In what capacity are the sitting VCs serving on this committee alongside the secretary? There should be independent experts in the committee,' said the member.

According to section 11 (1) of the Dhaka University Order 1973, 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 the re-appointment for a further period of four years.

The same procedure is stipulated in the Chittagong University Act, 1973, the Jahangirnagar University Act, 1973 and the Rajshahi University Act, 1973.

The laws on other public universities also stipulate the appointment of their VCs by the chancellor.

Immediate past chairman of the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh professor SMA Faiz said that when specific public universities did not function properly, qualified persons could be chosen as their VCs immediately.

A search committee, he pointed out, often advertises and asks those who want the position to apply.

'Those who apply for this position should first be excluded as they often have a greed for the post,' he said, adding, 'People who possess dignity would never themselves apply to be a vice-chancellor.'

According to professor Faiz, if people are greedy for the post, the universities with such people as VCs would not run properly.

'Besides, if there is a sense of respect in people for the position, they would try to run the universities properly,' he said, urging the search committee to seek out those 'who are entirely impartial and have no loyalty to any political party and nominate them.'

A search committee is formed to make recommendations for a panel of three candidates picked from the applicants for the VC of a university, and based on the committee recommendations, the chancellor of universities, the president, will appoint the VC to a university as per the circular issued in this regard.

While announcing the appointment of new VCs to seven public universities at a press conference on March 16, education minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon replying to a journalist whether the appointments were made on political considerations, remarked, 'Is it a crime for a person to engage in politics? Is it his or her disqualification? No, it's not a disqualification.'

He also said that he had checked the research works, publications, citations, academic eligibility, degrees of master of philosophy, PhD, post-doctoral work, and overall academic performance of the candidates for their appointment as vice-chancellors.

This trend is not new, said educationists.

Following the ouster of the Awami League regime in the wake of an uprising on August 5, 2024, resignations of VCs and other senior officials began as students at different universities had given them ultimatums to do so on allegations of aiding the deposed regime and the police to suppress the uprising.

Later, the interim government appointed VCs to these universities without selecting them from any panel.

On January 17, 2009, late professor AAMS Arefin Siddique assumed office as the 27th DU VC on a temporary basis and served for four years and a half without being elected during the then AL-led government.

On July 29, 2017 the senate nominated a three-member panel, including Arefin, for the appointment of a new VC – a step which was declared illegal by the High Court on October 10, 2017.

Meanwhile, on September 4, 2017, then president and chancellor of Dhaka University Abdul Hamid appointed professor Md Akhtaruzzaman as the VC on a temporary basis.

He was reappointed as the VC on November 3, 2019 after a special session of the DU senate on July 31, 2019 nominated a three-member panel, including all pro-AL Blue Panel teachers, for the position.

‘A university is an autonomous body; it needs to have freedom and the ability to run itself,’ Serajul Islam Choudhury said, adding, ‘Because no democratic system has been functioning in the country, it has also not been working at the universities that are expected to be autonomous as per the law.’

While the academic background and qualifications of the candidates should be the consideration for appointing VCs, appointments do not always work that way, and party affiliation becomes the primary factor, he said.

People, who side with the government or the ruling party, receive various benefits like appointment to different organisations and committees.

‘A search committee is more for public demand or for ensuring public satisfaction that a committee exists,’ he said, adding that what the committee recommended, or whether they recommended anyone at all, often remained unknown.

‘None of our governments believe in academic autonomy and without trust in autonomy, autonomy won’t work,’ Serajul Islam Choudhury observed.

Professor SMA Faiz said that so many sacrifices had been made during the July uprising in 2024 for merit-based rights of the people.

‘If appointments are made on a partisan basis, then it (autonomy) will not work,’ he said, adding that merit should be given top priority in teacher recruitment.

According to UGC chair professor Mamun Ahmed, the ministry appoints vice-chancellors to both public and private universities.

The commission is not involved in this matter, he further said.

Present search committee convener Abdul Khaleque declined to make any comment on the matter.

Related News

Bangladesh reforms search committee for VC appointment at public univs

Tags

[#vice-chancellor](#)

[#public universities](#)

[#political considerations](#)

NEWAGE

Editor: Nurul Kabir, Published by the Chairman, Editorial Board ASM Shahidullah Khan on behalf of Media New Age Ltd.

📍 Hamid Plaza (4th floor), 300/5/A/1, Bir Uttam CR Datta Road, Hatirpool, Dhaka-1205
PABX: +8802 41062247-50, Fax: +8802-41062245

✉ newage.editorial@gmail.com

Copyright © New Age - Media New Age Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserve.