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Govt should practise rather than preach on univ issues

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THE remark of the prime minister, Tarique Rahman, of May 12 that the University of Dhaka fails to appear in international rankings as teacher appointment has for long been influenced by political considerations rather than merit is a welcome observation. The prime minister made the remark in an

interactive session at the social science faculty of the university after he had attended a workshop on sustainable excellence in higher education that the University Grants Commission organised on the university campus earlier in the day. The prime minister has said there that universities of Bangladesh have not yet reached the expected global standards in education, research and academic excellence, especially in internationally recognised rankings. Later, in the interactive session, the prime minister has said that the appointment of teachers in the University of Dhaka has been problematic, with political bias often taking precedence over qualifications and merit. The issue of political consideration in teacher appointment has for long been often discussed and education experts say that political considerations should not come into play in teacher recruitment.

But when the appointment of vice-chancellors, not only in the University of Dhaka but in almost all public universities, is made on political considerations, it is only natural that political considerations will come at play in the appointment of teachers or teachers' placement in administrative affairs. The government on March 16 appointed vice-chancellors to seven public universities. Whilst one of them is reported to have been the Bangladesh Nationalist Party's education affairs secretary, as New Age reported in the middle of March, others are either former or current leaders of the white panel of teachers that is leaning towards the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. The vice-chancellor appointed to the Jashore University of Science and Technology on April 13 is also a leader of University of Dhaka's white panel. The appointment of vice-chancellors to public universities, sidestepping the relevant legislation, has, thus, continued to erode the reputation of the institutions and degrade the quality of education and research. Whilst the aberration, which has happened for ages, often stops merit, academic excellence and administrative competence from being at play, resulting in the degradation of the institutions of higher education, this also brings in corruption and favouritism, leading to irregularities in teacher appointment, promotion and staff appointment.



The education minister has earlier said that political engagement is no disqualification. This is true, but the consideration of political engagement in the appointment of vice-chancellors is degrading. The government should, therefore, keep its partisan political hands off the process for the appointment of vice-chancellors in the interest of academic freedom, autonomy, fair administration and academic excellence. The government should focus on practice rather than preaching.

Tags [#Tarique Rahman](#) [#University of Dhaka](#) [#international rankings](#)
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