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NEWAGE

Minister's remark on university education misleading, cursory

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The logo for 'NEWAGE THE OUTSPOKEN DAILY' is centered on a dark grey background. The word 'NEWAGE' is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. 'NEW' is in black, and 'AGE' is in white. The entire word 'NEWAGE' is enclosed within a red rounded rectangular border. Below 'NEWAGE', the words 'THE OUTSPOKEN DAILY' are written in a smaller, white, all-caps sans-serif font.

FOR years, national education policies have suffered from the absence of a coherent, long-term vision. The education minister's recent comments indicate that the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led government is more inclined to go with the wind than to undertake the policy shift needed to address the sector's structural challenges. While addressing a workshop on the current status of education organised by UNICEF in Dhaka on June 14, he said that the government has a plan to establish a university in every constituency. This statement, however, appears to miss the point that the

crisis in university education is not one of access, but of quality, particularly the weak standards of teaching and research and the inability of universities to generate new knowledge. It is worrying that the minister appears to have collapsed the distinctions between primary, technical and university education. Primary education provides foundational literacy, while university education is dedicated to advanced knowledge production and testing of ideas through research. Ensuring primary education, basic health care and other civic amenities is not equivalent to defining the purpose of a university, a distinction the minister appears to overlook.

The minister remark on the status of university education also appears misleading and cursory. He said that the universities in Bangladesh so far have been doing well. Successive governments in the past, particularly during the tenure of the fallen Awami League regime, saw public universities become increasingly partisan, violence-prone and corrupt. Appointments to teaching and administrative positions were often driven more by the imperative of securing partisan control than by academic merit or teaching credentials. A 2016 report by Transparency International Bangladesh documented allegations of unauthorised financial transactions in eight public universities and identified political patronage, favouritism, regionalism and religious identity as major drivers of corruption in recruitment across 13 institutions. In 2019, the High Court also observed that the problem of ragging is deeply linked to the impunity enjoyed by student organisations affiliated to the ruling Awami League on college and university campuses. In the past, the ruling party's bid to maintain control over campuses through its student wing left the academic environment marked by fear and violence. When the education minister was expected to proactively initiate an academic audit to identify

gaps in tertiary education, his casual endorsement of the past legacy indicates an interest in maintaining the status quo rather than breaking the cycle of violence and partisan control.



Education is a building block of nation-building, yet it has long suffered from a lack of visionary policy. The education ministry, and the minister for that matter, must take time to acknowledge the depth of the crisis, initiate academic audits to identify structural gaps and then propose a forward-looking direction, rather than resorting to piecemeal, unrealistic, and infrastructure-heavy plans.

Tags [#university education](#) [#national education policies](#) [#Bangladesh Nationalist Party](#)
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