

Sunday, March 18, 2018



## UGC needs a shot in the arm for better higher education

Updated at 12:40am on March 18, 2018

THE decline in the standard of higher education, both in public and private universities, is, to a large extent, if not entirely, due to the toothlessness that the University Grants Commission has been left with for years. Almost all major recommendations that the commission has made over years for the improvement in the quality of higher education have been left ignored by the government. The commission has recommended itself being converted to a higher education commission with more power. It has recommended a unified admission process for all universities, an increased investment in research, introduction of demonstration classes for teacher recruitment and appointment of more full-time teachers in private universities. All of this has so far gone unheeded. As the recommendations have so far been left only on paper, which kept harming the quality of higher education, none of the universities of Bangladesh could earn a place among top 700 universities, as New Age reported on Saturday, of the world in 2014–2017. In the absence of adequate investment in research, the universities keep failing to develop ideas, products and applications. The budget of the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh's premier university, passed in June 2017 for 2018, for an example, had only 2.1 per cent of the total outlay for research.

The commission has also failed to make private universities, despite repeated attempts, comply with the provisions that they need to. Twenty-nine of the private universities had, as the latest data show, no vice-chancellor, 68 have no pro-vice-chancellor and 48 have no treasurer until this January. But people in these positions play an essential role in the smooth functioning, academic and administrative, of universities. The commission also put out repeated calls for the universities to appoint more full-time teachers that could improve teaching, yet this has not effectively happened. The commission has also recommended the introduction of double shift to make access to higher education available for more students. It has also recommended introduction of class demonstration for teacher recruitment, along with written and oral tests, so that better qualified people could be appointed for better teaching. All these recommendations have been made, as a former commission chairman said, to bring in qualitative changes in higher education. But the authorities concerned have hardly felt the need for the implementation of the recommendations, causing a decline in the quality of higher education and stopping the commission from effectively using its control on the universities.

With a commission being armed up more, many of the recommendations could be easily implemented and the oversight could be effectively carried out. The government seeks to say that it is sincere about implementing the commission recommendations and to say that these cannot be done overnight. But the commission has been recommending its conversion to a higher education commission since 2008; a decade has already passed, but nothing has happened. The government, under the circumstances, must not make further delay in turning the University Grants Commission into a higher education commission with more power so that it can take care of the issues on its own.



Editor: **Nurul Kabir**, Published by the Chairman, Editorial Board ASM Shahidullah Khan on behalf of Media New Age Ltd. 30 Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208  
Phone: 880-2-8170450-56 (PABX), Fax: 880-2-8170457

© 2018 Media New Age Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved.