

## Private univs must attend to education, keep off profit

WHEN proper education, particularly university education, contributes substantially to the generation and spread of knowledge in a society and, thereby, advances the society in terms of development — social, cultural and economic, it is, indeed, a matter of serious concern that the quality of education in most of the private universities of the country does not match with that of the public universities. The general quality of education of our public universities lags far behind that of many of their counterparts, even in South Asia. Under the circumstance, the fact that the country's private universities, again, are lagging behind its public universities in terms of imparting quality education is simply disastrous for a significant number of students, some 3.75 lakh in 2015, are pursuing 'higher' education in a total of 95 private universities in Bangladesh. If such a big number of students are not provided with proper education every year, society is bound to lag behind other countries in terms of quality development. It is, therefore, high time the authorities concerned addressed the problem that is posing a great threat to the quality development of our society. For that to happen, the authorities need to identify the problem.

Professor AK Azad Chowdhury, an educationist and former chairman of the University Grants Commission, believes, as New Age reported on Saturday, that of the private universities 'hardly 10-15 impart quality education'. Another educationist attributes the lack of quality education in such educational institutions to the lack in research facilities, library and laboratories and, of course, lack of skilled and qualified teachers. The lack of proper campus is another factor standing in the students' way to have proper educational environment.

The permission of setting up universities in the private sector was originally given in the context of a growing number of candidates in the country with a limited number of public universities. Those who secured permission for opening private universities promised good, if not better, quality of education. But in reality, as Professor Azad Chowdhury points out, most sponsors are busy making huge profit out of the universities, without 'interest in ensuring quality'. Notably, the education at the private university is very costly. For example, as pointed out by some UGC officials, a bachelor in business administration student needs to spend Tk 4 to Tk 5 lakh in tuition and other fees on graduation while a computer science and engineering student needs to spend Tk 5 to Tk 6 lakh on the same degree. Besides, along with the high tuition fees, the students need to spend a handsome amount on accommodation, travel and other educational purposes. This is unacceptable. The government must pay serious attention to ensuring that private universities are not primarily meant for making profit and that better education is imparted there at a reasonable cost.