

More private universities?

Make the existing ones adhere to the law first

WHILE it is true that the increase in the number of private universities is in response to a never ending demand for higher education opportunities, it is more important to ensure that standards at these institutions are maintained. In Bangladesh this has been a huge challenge with only 17 out of 52 private universities shifting to their own campuses, a basic condition of the Private University Act 2010. Even the University Grants Commission is not happy with the way most private universities are run; they lack qualified teachers, proper libraries and laboratories. The Government's decision to approve six new private universities, under such circumstances, is therefore, surprising.

Four of the six new universities will be in three other districts besides Dhaka, which ideally, would be a cause for optimism given the need for opportunities for higher studies in the districts. But if these too, operate like many of the errant private institutions who have failed to provide the facilities they are obligated to do, it will only add to the misery of the students. Most private universities charge exorbitant fees to the students which can only be justified if they have satisfied the criteria stipulated by the law of the land. Such conditions must be met by these six new universities before they become fully operational.

When the government itself has castigated the private universities from time to time for their shortcomings, the new universities would mean more of the same shortcomings if they do not comply with all the rules and regulations of the said university act.