

Sunday, July 22, 2018



Giving unified university admission test a chance

Published at 12:05am on July 22, 2018

THE unified admission test, which the authorities call 'cluster admission test', for public universities has been in discussion for eight years since 2010 when the education ministry in principle decided on its introduction to reduce the number of admission tests that students take, to cut down the cost of holding examinations and to reduce the financial burden on students. This has not so far happened and this is not taking place even this time. Under the current system, 40 public universities hold the admission tests separately, with this year's test in 31 public universities being tentatively scheduled between September 14 and November 5. The education minister and the University Grants Commission chair are both reported to have said that there would be no unified admission test in public universities this year as the people concerned are working on it. The decision suggests about 8,58,000 students who passed the Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalent examinations this year would need to shuttle from one university to another to take the admission tests in 40 public universities. The 2010 decision could not get off the ground, as New Age reported on Saturday, because of opposition by some reputed universities.

The universities opposing the move say that if a unified admission test is introduced, they will not then be able to choose which of the students they will allow admission. The argument has some weight though, the University Grants Commission in several of its annual reports said that the current admission system was 'questionable and expensive' and recommended reforms. A commission study in May 2013 found that admission-seekers on an average needed to spend Tk 43,100 on coaching and other related expenditure which includes travel cost. One rationale for the introduction of the unified admission test is to stop the spending on coaching as the commission study found that 93 per cent of the admission-seekers attend coaching classes for admission to public universities. Although there is debate whether the introduction of the unified admission system would at all stop the spending on coaching, this might save the admission seekers hassle and the money they need to spend on admission to different universities. An estimate suggests that many universities make between Tk 60 and Tk 80 million and the major portion of the amount goes to the teachers, which is why some universities are opposed to the move for the unified admission test. Admission to public and private medical colleges is now centrally held.

As any decision made now can be changed in the future if the decision does produce the desired results, it is time that all public universities gave the unified admission test a chance. The authorities concerned, the education ministry and the University Grants Commission, should make a decision, taking into account all merits and demerits of such a system, to introduce unified admission test so that the universities need to spend less on holding tests, students could avoid spending money unnecessarily and the hassle of travelling from one university to another in a short span of time.



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