

# Private universities' association says it's conflicting with law

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The government's recent approval of a study centre of a foreign university is conflicting with the Private University Act 2010 and the policy of non-profit higher education, said Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) yesterday.

APUB Chairman Sheikh Kabir Hossain, in a statement, demanded suspension of the approval and effective steps to formulate a rule to approve a branch or study centre of a foreign university in line with the act.



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The education ministry in February approved Monash College (Australia) Study Center, Bangladesh operated by Eduko Bangladesh Limited of (STS Group), in line with a rule for operating branches and study centres of foreign universities framed in 2014.

"The approval to operate a branch campus/study centre of a foreign university as a for-profit institution has caused great concern and anxiety in the country's growing higher education sector," said Kabir.

According to the Private University Act, private universities in Bangladesh run as non-profit higher education institutions under the Trusts Act, 1882.

"But the study centre was approved as a for-profit institution under the Companies Act (Bangladesh), 1994. And it is a conflict with the Private University Act 2010," Kabir noted.

According to the Private University Act 2010, general funds of any private university cannot be spent for any purpose other than the necessary expenses of that university.

"But it has been mentioned that the surplus funds of a study centre will be distributed proportionately among the entrepreneurs, local representatives and foreign universities. Entrepreneurs in private

universities will be discouraged if such a dual policy is implemented in the higher education sector," Kabir said.

Although there are various bindings for a private university including establishment of permanent campus, formation of quality assurance cell, obligation to provide quota and scholarship for students, no such bindings have been laid down for the operation of branch campus or study centre of a foreign university.

The private universities will face an uneven competition if the approval to operate profitable branch campuses of foreign universities under easy conditions is implemented, said the statement.

Many private universities have been providing quality higher education at low cost for the last three decades. At present, several private universities have been able to gain international recognition in terms of capacity and quality, and a significant number of foreign teachers and students are participating in educational activities on these campuses.

"In this case, if government cooperation is increased for the private universities of the country instead of foreign universities, Bangladesh will be able to set a shining example in the field of higher education," it added.