

Partisanship, merit devaluation cripple univs

Speakers tell conference

Universities in Bangladesh are on the brink of paralysis due to partisan faculty politics, irregularities in teacher recruitment, and power struggles disguised as student politics, said Education Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud yesterday.

"Due to partisanship and criminalisation, there is no conducive environment for higher education in public universities. We are actively working to address these challenges," he said.



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"That is why we are appointing qualified individuals to key positions, including vice-chancellors. Additionally, efforts are underway to bring back talented teachers and researchers who have left the country," said the adviser at the "Bangladesh Higher Education Conference 2024", held at a hotel in the capital.

The conference was organised by Daily Bonik Barta with the theme "Global Standards in Higher Education: What Bangladesh Needs to Do".

Attending as chief guest, Wahiduddin Mahmud highlighted the disparity in quality between public and private universities.

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— DU VC Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan

"One major concern is that many students opt to study abroad for higher education if they can afford it. Even after completing higher education locally, graduates remain unemployed, and this number is growing alarmingly," he said.

To align higher education with global standards, collaborations with internationally renowned universities are essential, he said, adding, "We can work to enhance the quality of education by involving Bangladeshis who are part of these institutions."

He also said partisan politics among teachers is one side of the coin, while the devaluation of merit is the other.

Teachers must also possess administrative skills, as VCs provide both academic and administrative leadership, he added.

Speaking as a special guest, UGC Chairman Prof SMA Faiz said universities must reduce dependency on the government.

Both the government and UGC must support research.

At the programme, DU VC Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan said higher education suffers from inadequate infrastructure and a lack of conducive research environments.

The country's partisan and violent politics have harmed institutions, particularly higher education ones, he said.

He also said if the goal of higher education is to truly shape students into human beings, then there is no difference between public and private institutions.

Daffodil International University VC M Lutfar Rahman pointed out that many teachers fail to conduct classes properly, which must be addressed.

Prof Abdur Rob, VC of International University of Business Agriculture and Technology, said insufficient funding and lack of interest among teachers hinder research.

For world-class research, teachers need adequate time, training, and financial support, he added.

United International University VC Abul Kashem Mia said strengthening primary and secondary education is crucial for improving higher education quality.

PhD and postgraduate opportunities should depend on a university's quality rather than its public or private status, he said.

North South University VC Prof Abdul Hannan Chowdhury noted that government control over both public and private institutions has stagnated educational culture.

UGC research funding should be awarded based on merit, regardless of a university's status, he added.

The panel included JU VC Prof Mohammad Kamrul Ahsan, UGC member Prof Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, Umama Fatema, spokesperson of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement,

and Ishtiaq Abedin, secretary general of the Bangladesh Private University Association, among others.