

20 VCs under ACC probe

Allegations include financial irregularities, misuse of power, nepotism, recruitment business

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The Anti-Corruption Commission is carrying out inquiries or investigations into allegations of corruption against at least 20 former vice-chancellors of public universities who served under Awami League regimes.

The former VCs have been accused of resorting to graft and illegal activities in recruitments of teachers and staff, misuse of power, embezzling funds, and nepotism.

After the fall of the AL government amid a student-led mass uprising on August 5, 2024, the ACC has launched inquiries into allegations of various corruptions against the former VCs.

Professor Siddiqur Rahman, former director of the Institute of Education and Research at the University of Dhaka on Friday said, ‘If university vice-chancellors or teachers — who are supposed to guide the nation — engage in corruption, it is very shameful for society as well as the nation.’

He, however, said that instead of making sweeping corruption allegations against all VCs under the previous government for political reasons, the ACC should transparently conduct probe into the allegations to ascertain if they were really involved in corruption.

Siddiqur also said that during the previous government's tenure, many disqualified individuals were appointed as VCs based on their political affiliation, which led some to become involved in corruption.

Appointments should be made based on merit and competence rather than political affiliation to curb corruption at universities, he added.

The ACC on Wednesday filed a case against five people, including two former VCs Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah and AKM Nur-un-Nabi of Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur on charges of embezzling Tk 4 crore from a development project through corruption.

On June 16, Jashore University of Science and Technology's former VC Professor Abdus Sattar was sent to jail in a corruption case filed over alleged illegal recruitment and embezzlement of government funds.

Besides, former Rajshahi University VC Professor Abdus Sobhan is facing corruption charges. Sobhan, on his last working day in 2021, reportedly appointed 141 individuals in violation of rules and regulations.

The ACC has recently launched an inquiry into allegations against former VC of Chittagong University Professor Shireen Akhter of corruption, including bribery, illegal appointment, and embezzling public money.

The ACC has also launched an inquiry into allegations of corruption over establishing a data lab, which cost Tk 5.9 crore, against Professor Munaz Ahmed Noor, the first VC of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Digital University.

Former Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University VC Dr Sharfuddin Ahmed is facing an ACC probe over allegations of receiving about Tk 100 crore in bribe through illegal appointments.

The ACC in September, 2024 launched an inquiry into allegations of amassing illegal wealth through abuse of power, illegal recruitment, and embezzling money against former Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University VC Soumitra Sekhar Dey.

Haji Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University's former VCs M Kamruzzaman and Md Abul Kashem are under ACC scanner over allegations of corruption in recruiting officers and employees, admission process, and misappropriation of public money.

Besides, Jessore University of Science and Technology's former VCs Abdus Sattar and Anwar Hossain, Islamic University's former VC Sheikh Abdus Salam, Khulna Agricultural University's former VC Md Shahidur Rahman Khan, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology's former VC Rafikul Islam Sheikh, Sylhet Medical University's former VC Morshed Ahmed Chowdhury, Khulna University's former VCs Professor Fayekuzzaman and Professor Mahmud Hossain, Bangladesh Agricultural University's former VC Lutful Hasan Mantu, Gopalganj Science and Technology University's former VC Professor Khandaker Nasiruddin are also facing various corruption allegations.

An ACC official who asked not to be named told New Age on Friday that the commission was scrutinising allegations of corruption against dozens of other former VCs of public universities who served under the AL regime.

Noting that allegations of corruption against VCs are a widely discussed issue, Transparency International Bangladesh's executive director Iftekharuzzaman said that the involvement of VCs in graft is unacceptable.

He said, 'The previous government politicised the country's universities — like many other institutions — and the authoritarian government also provided protection to those involved in graft instead of penalizing them.'

Iftekharuzzaman also said that those who were accused of corruption and those who gave protection to the corrupt must be held accountable.

Asked, ACC director general (prevention) Md Akhtar Hossain said that the commission was conducting inquiries into graft allegations against numerous former VCs of public universities.

'We will take legal actions against them based on the inquiry reports,' he added.