

for Editorial

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Campuses of foreign universities

They need a set of rules to operate

IT is disconcerting to know that a number of local branches of foreign universities have been running courses and offering degrees without due authorisation, according to the University Grants Commission (UGC). The UGC published a notice in the media containing names of 56 foreign university campuses in the month of May declaring these as illegal, emphasising that according to the Private University Act 1992 and Amendment Act 1998 no such educational institute can operate in Bangladesh in any form without specific permission from the government.

Despite having no valid approval, these 56 branches of foreign institutes ran courses charging students, 25 thousand strong, around Tk. 75 crore annually in tuition fees. It therefore leaves us wondering as to how this could happen when UGC watchdogs were supposed to be monitoring the activities of such institutes. It appears that the administration woke up quite late when already these institutes had opened branches in Dhaka and some other cities releasing catchy advertisements in the media.

These allegations pertaining to opening of campuses of foreign universities without obtaining permission from designated authorities need to be further gone into by way of separating the chaff from the grain. There are also allegations that some fake institutes have fleeced students in exorbitant sums and we strongly recommend that these should be made to pay back the money and brought under the law without further delay.

But it also remains to be said that there is a huge void in the higher education sector that needs to be filled through collaboration with reputable foreign universities apart from establishing fully-fledged private universities. We understand some of them are already doing well by offering MBA and other degrees at one fourth or one fifth of the tuition fees required in the country of origin. Such institutes having expatriate and local qualified faculties need specific rules and regulations to operate smoothly.

We hope the UGC and the Ministry of Education would look into the matter and take pragmatic decisions on the basis of ground reality and national interest within a specific framework of rules.