

## University politicisation has already taken its toll

EXTRAORDINARY politicisation of university, of both the teaching and the administrative staff, has reared its ugly head in teacher recruitment, plagued with nepotism and irregularities, at the University of Dhaka, specifically during the tenure of the incumbent vice-chancellor. The recruitment of most of the teachers in the past eight years and a half — since the ruling Awami League-backed blue panel leader AAMS Arefin Siddique assumed office — as New Age reported on Saturday quoting senior teachers and syndicate members, thus, come to be known as a process to recruit more of voters, based on political connection, regionalism and lobbying, rather than teachers, based on merit and quality, for partisan use in elections to teachers' association, deans, senate and special senate for the three-member panel meant for the appointment of the vice-chancellor. In January 2009, when Arefin Siddique assumed office, the university had 1,200 teachers, with the number now growing to 1,992 in about nine years. Many of about 750 of the new teachers, who account for 38 per cent of the total in the university, were recruited in breach of the university rules and regulations. Many had qualifications below the requirement, some had no master's degree and many were recruited beyond the positions advertised.

It has for long become typical of Bangladesh that a change in government brings about a change in university administrations, not just in the University of Dhaka but also in other public universities, making recruitment and promotion of teachers more political. In the process, the quality of teachers has always mostly been compromised, letting the quality of education slide down. The politicisation of the university teaching staff has also brought about teachers being recruited without advertisement or teachers more than the number of positions advertised. There is even an instance of May 2014, when nine lecturers in chemistry were appointed against one advertised position. With the university failing to set aside any significant amount of money for research, such irregularities have definitely proved costly, for the university, the research that it is supposed to conduct and students. The University of Dhaka in its budget for the 2018 financial year passed on June 17, could allocate only Tk 140 million out of the total outlay of about Tk 6.64 billion, or 2.1 per cent, for research. In such a situation, the recruitment of more teachers than what is required is a complete drain on the university money.

The proximity of politics has degraded the university education system over the years beyond the public eye. When the seats of higher education lose their moral because of toeing the partisan line, they lose the academic strength and, thus, display a growing tendency to shrink the space for dissenting and liberal voice, for fears that the dissent and liberalism could expose the authorities and parties in power to threat and stop promoting what education truly means. Education managers, the government that is, in such a situation, must wake up to the reality and stop the political culture of having more voters, under the fold in the name of teacher recruitment.

কর্মসূচীর নাম	
তারিখ	
স্বাক্ষর	
জি.এ.সি.সি.সি.সি.	
সিস্টেম প্রশাসক	
সিস্টেম ম্যানেজার	
প্রশাসনিক কর্মকর্তা	
পি.এ.	
কার্যার্থে/জ্ঞাতার্থে	

স্বাক্ষর

*(Handwritten mark)*