

Fixing private universities tuition fees on govt cards

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A DRAFT bill is under preparation seeking to amend the Private University Act 2010 to empower the government to fix private universities' tuition fees.

The bill would allow the government to nominate its representatives in private universities trustee boards.

The new provision would allow government's supervision on the boards of the private universities, said education ministry as well as University Grants Commission officials.

A separate draft bill is under preparation, they said, seeking to enact the country's first ever Education Act.

They said that the proposed new law would require the private as well as the public universities to seek approval from the government while fixing tuition and other fees.

The new law would stipulate appointment of a regulatory committee empowered to rationally fix all the fees, said the officials.

Since 1992, private universities enjoyed free hand in fixing their tuition and other fees.

Parents complained that the private universities raise their tuition and other fees

every year at their sweet will.

Conflicts between trustees over ownership of some of the private universities had to be resolved at times by the UGC, said its officials.

The issues of high tuition fees and the occasional conflicts over ownership prompted the education ministry to take the move to amend the Private University Act 2010, said officials.

Besides, they said, that the amendment was recommended by parliamentary standing committee on education ministry in January, to incorporate a provision that would allow the government to fix tuition and other fees of the private universities.

Amendment of the law became necessary as it provides no limit for the private universities to raise their tuition and other fees, said standing committee chairman Afsarul Amin.

The amendment should empower the government to regulate tuition fees, he said.

Professor emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said that government should fix the tuition fees for all the private universities, schools and colleges.

He said, compelled to pay high fees charged by

private universities, colleges and schools, the parents feel quite helpless.

An education ministry committee is drafting the bill seeking to amend the Private University Act 2010, said additional secretary and committee member secretary Mohammad Helaluddin.

The proposed amendment would, he said, would incorporate many new provisions including on fixing tuition fees.

UGC officials said, currently, a private university student of BBA spends between Tk 2,50,000 and 5,50,000.

A B Sc student of computer science and engineering has to pay between Tk 2,50,000 and Tk 6,30,000 to a private university.

An MBA student has to pay up to Tk 3,30,000 to a private university, said the UGC officials. Though the private universities were opened as non-profit institutions, there are allegations that the owners turned some of these universities into commercial organizations taking no interest to provide of quality education to their pupils.

UGC officials said that some of the private universities suffer from endemic

ownership conflicts, notably Atish Dipankar University of Science and Technology, Darul Ihsan University, Dhaka International University, the Prime University, the IBAIS University and the Asian University of Bangladesh.

About 3.5 lakh students now study in the country's 92 private universities.

The amended law would allow the government to nominate three trustees in each private university board.

The amendment would also allow the government to decide the number of students each private university would enroll in each semester.

UGC chairman Abdul Mannan, also member of the committee for drafting the amendment said that the drafting exercise was at the final stage.

The amendment would end the use private universities as money making enterprises, he said.

Association of Non-Government Universities of Bangladesh president, Sheikh Kabir Hossain said he would offer no comments on the issues of tuition fees or the government nominating trustees because none discussed the issues with him.