

Pvt universities running unauthorised outer campuses

TAWFIQUE ALI

A number of private universities based in Dhaka are running unauthorised outer campuses in and outside the city without approval from the University Grants Commission (UGC).

While the UGC authorities say that any university is required to obtain approval meeting certain preconditions to run outer campuses or any kind of centre, authorities of those private universities say they do not need any such approval.

"Any university is required to obtain approval for opening outer campus or any kind of education centre or distance learning centre," said UGC Chairman Prof M Asaduzzaman. "They must seek UGC approval for any new or extended academic programme."

America Bangladesh University (Am-Ban) is running a permanent campus in Nawabganj on the outskirts of the city and a Dhaka campus in Farmgate, according to Am-ban officials. It is going to open more campuses in Bogra, Khulna and Jessore.

It also runs an illegal campus at Sapura in Rajshahi, according to UGC records.

"The owner and vice-chancellor of Am-ban, withdrawing its activities from the city's Banani area, is carrying out various academic programmes at different places [outside the city] in illegal manner," says an investigation report of the UGC.

Founder of Southern

University, which is supposed to function in Chittagong, Sarwar Jahan said, "Our Dhaka campus has already started enrolling students. We have just received a letter from the education ministry about a UGC inspection

University in Rajshahi and Khulna, Ahsanullah Science and Technology University in Rajshahi, and Santa Mariam University in Rajshahi and Gaibandha.

Of them, Southeast, Southern, Santa Mariam and Am-Ban did

University Prof Mohammad Ali.

"As the UGC neither turned down nor accepted our proposal, we opened outer campuses and we are within the legal framework," Prof Mohammad Ali said. When asked, a UGC source said the application was turned down.

When Prof Ali's attention was drawn to the legal provision of the Private University Act, he said, "None of the universities will be able to run their programmes going by this provision. Practically, it is not possible to abide by what is provided in the law. Law keeps many provisions but it is difficult to follow them literally."

Section 10 of the Private University Act (Amendment) 1998 requires any private university to obtain approval from UGC for opening academic programmes, plan, curriculum, faculty or standard of education.

Education ministry in a circular in December 2001 said that a university has to meet certain preconditions to open outer campus.

Vice-chancellor of Asian University of Bangladesh Prof Abul Hasan M Sadeq said, "Neither the Private University Act of 1992 nor the amended act of 1998 requires to have approval for outer campus."

Asian University has approval to function in Dhaka but it runs outer campuses in Rajshahi and Khulna.

"We discussed with the UGC and wrote to the education ministry at the time of opening outer campuses," said Prof Sadeq. "State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Haq inaugurated our Khulna campus, which means it has approval."

When asked, the UGC chairman said: "Approval for outer campus of a university is a matter of administrative process. Mere presence of the state minister as a guest at the inauguration does not necessarily mean approval."

Vice-chancellor of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology Dr M H Khan said, "Private University Act does not make it mandatory to seek prior approval for running outer campuses. The law only obliges to inform the authorities concerned to open outer campus."

"The UGC has the authority to cancel an outer campus if found unsatisfactory and we can improve if there is anything lacking," Dr Khan said.

An aspiring university has to first inform the education ministry, which forwards the proposal to the UGC for an assessment on whether or not the university is in a position to open outer campuses. "How can a university opens outer campus before a team of the UGC and ministry ascertains its compliance with the preconditions," the UGC chairman said.

Section 10 of the Private University Act (Amendment) 1998 requires any private university to obtain approval from UGC for opening academic programmes, plan, curriculum, faculty or standard of education. Education ministry in a circular in December 2001 said that a university has to meet certain preconditions to open outer campus.

of the campus."

"We opened outer campuses in Jessore and Rangpur," Jahan said.

Though the following private universities are approved to function in the capital, they run unauthorised outer campuses at other places.

Asian University of Bangladesh runs outer campuses in Rajshahi and Khulna, Southeast University in Rajshahi and Jessore, Northern

not even seek approval for running outer campuses, according to UGC sources. The other universities sought approval but the UGC declined to give them permission.

"We wrote to the education ministry and UGC to open outer campuses, but the UGC did not make any response to our application for approval," said Vice-chancellor of Northern

METHODIST ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOL

Awaiting a peaceful solution

This top grading English medium school run by the Methodist church has been made to remain shut since early February following a fracas between guardians and the management

IMRUL HASAN

Management problems are clouding the future of Methodist English Medium School (MEMS), located at Mazar Road, Mirpur-1, presently having around 584 students.

This top grading English medium school run by the Methodist church has been made to remain shut since early February following a fracas between guardians and the management.

Expressing their sheer disappointment over the situation, the Guardians' Forum of the school blasted its authorities saying that their children have become hostage to a vested interest group.

"We want the principal to do his job undisturbed, as he is the key person in elevating the school to its present reputable condition," said Md. Selim Khan, the convener of MEMS Guardians' Forum at a press briefing recently.

The Guardians' Forum also allege that the interference of the school's managing board chairman Bishop Nibaron Das since February 12, 2006 has been disturbing its principal Richard Tapas Adhikary in doing his duties.

"The chairman is neither permitting the principal to work, nor is he accepting the position," said ABM Osman Gani, deputy convener of the forum.

"We are not here to witness the personal conflict between the chairman and the principal. We want peaceful environment for the sake of our children's future," Sharmin Rahman, a helpless guardian.

A majority of teachers gave the authorities an ultimatum stating they would abstain from working if the principal were not allowed to perform his regular duties.

The teachers said that right to appoint teachers, develop the institution, should all be taken into concern, while assuring transparency and accountability in all activities.

The 'resist view' should also be changed and turned to a neutral institution from religious aspects and differentiate its activities from the church. The institution should be controlled by a board of directors and constituted according to government rules and regulations, said the teachers.

"To maintain discipline, the chairman's residence should be



moved out of the school campus," said a teacher requesting not to be named.

On March 28, 2006, Bishop Nibaron Das complained to Dr. Charlene Wang, the head of Christian Leaders of Bangladesh against the principal. He said that although Richard Tapas Adhikary tendered his resignation on January 21, 2006, he retained the position by manipulating guardians who intend to overturn the MEMS Board and disturb the churches activities.

He said that the principal had several times tried to discredit the reputation of both the church as well as the education with a few influential guardians.

When asked, the chairman said: "For the sake of the school and its students and to keep the academic environment calm, the principal should resign from the post."

The principal denied all allegations made against him.

"The chairman has not taken any step for the development of the school, but unduly used huge amount of money from the school fund," the principal said.

But the chairman said that no money from the fund has been spent on personal affairs, but some of it is being used for the extension of the school building.

On April 4, 2006, Richard Tapas Adhikary approached Dr. Charlene Wang to make allegations against the chairman.

He said that the chairman prevented him from performing the day-to-day academic and administrative work of the school.

"The chairman says he is law, he is not accountable to any one," he said.

The chairman, said Adhikary, takes lots of money earned by school. "He stopped me from

opening the school's own bank account. He takes all money in the name of church. He has not issued appointment letters to teachers and staff," he added.

The principal recently filed a case against the chairman at a local court that issued a show cause to the chairman with a week for reply.

Sources said, the latest situation of the dispute is that both groups are quietly waiting for the court order.

The Methodist Church established the school at Mazar Road in Mirpur-1 with the financial support from SK Kim, a Methodist and a business tycoon from South Korea.

10x3

10x3

Shishu park

FROM PAGE 17 premises served this correspondent stale fuchkas and tamarind water. One shop owner said that the restaurants served non-sterilised water direct from the tap. "One kilogramme of kerosene cost Tk 36 and we cannot afford it," he said.

"Most customers bring their own water," he added.

Entrance tickets at the park cost Tk eight only, and most visitors are oblivious to safety and hygiene.

When contacted, the deputy assistant engineer of the park, Md. Zakir Hossain, said that the DCC had been informed about the generators, but refused to elaborate.

He asked this correspondent to contact the DCC.

Khondoker Shujat Ali, the DCC's superintendent engineer said they were aware of the non-availability of generators and the broken toilet amenities. "We will have the toilets repaired and look into the matter of providing generators," he said.

When asked about the restaurants serving stale food and tap water, he said that there has been no improvement despite the ongoing anti-adulteration drive and that it is up to the individual to choose what is hygienic.

"We will do our best but it is also the responsibility of the park authorities to look into such matters," he said.