candidates who sat for admission tests in CU, in 2006 it was around 70,000 and this year it's more than 1,11,000. It implies that the standard of education at CU is not deteriorating rather more and more students are becoming interested to pursue their higher studies at CU. This is because CU is becoming more advanced both academically and systematically. The overall education system is improving day by day. The unnecessary holidays are not there anymore. And we are regularly revising the existing syllabuses, introducing newer subjects and departments to impart better higher education. In line with that this year we have introduced Institute of Modern Languages under the Faculty of Arts where we have certificate courses on French, German, and Arabic etc.

SC: It's an open secret that some influential teachers give more emphasis on taking high-pay classes at private universities during their scheduled class hours at CU which is also another reason for session jam. What's your opinion about this?

VC: Actually not only the influential teachers, it is true that now-a-days most of the teachers of the public universities are becoming more and more interested to join private universities and most importantly, the private universities became even more interested to appoint the talented faculty members of public universities. But it's not the teachers' or the private universities' fault at all. It's happening because the pay scales of the faculties of the public universities are unbelievably low. I raised this issue several times in the VCs' meetings at the University Grant Commission (UGC). The pay scales of the public university teachers in Bangladesh are surprisingly low in comparison with that of the other South Asian countries, let alone other developed countries. Public university teachers should have separate pay scale in accordance with time. Government should come forward to stop brain drain from the public universities.

SC: Another thing that weakened CU's image in cultural arena as well as among other universities is that CU's cultural organizations mostly face strong obstacles from some "political powerhouses" because of which any dance or drama festivals or band shows even for a good cause hardly takes place at campus. What's your administration doing to stop this situation?

VC: I don't really agree on this point. Because without cultural activities a society cannot be developed and that's why I always support culture based education. This year we celebrated "Nazrul Jayanti", "Pahela Boishakh" as well as other cultural functions of different cultural organizations at CU. Our cultural organizations have prominence around the country for their performances, quality and high standard. I'm trying to establish a culture sensitive education system. In fact we have a plan to organize "Cultural Week" in early next year where there will be dramas, dances, recitation, music etc as well as competitions in these fields.

SC: Thank you sir for your time and for sharing your ideas with us.

VC: My pleasure. I would also like to thank Star Campus and its readers and wish them all the very best. I really appreciate the policies of Star Campus which encourages young, upcoming writers and give them a platform to share their thoughts. I would appreciate more stories in SC which will bring out the real problems in different educational institutions those subsist. I think SC can take up an initiative through which academics, students as well as other professionals can discuss various problems, especially those related to academic institutions. It can introduce a new section where these people can debate about different issues to come up with a better solution to make Bangladesh a better place to live in. And I believe that this type of initiatives will bridge the gaps between the teachers, students and government.

(Interview taken by Tabassum Mokhduma)

Chittagong University at a glance...

- University of Chittagong was first established in the mid-sixties.
- It is located at Fatehpur, 22 km. away from the Chittagong city and about one kilometre away to the west from Chittagong-Nazirhat highway.
- University of Chittagong offers undergraduate, graduate & post-graduate education and research facilities in different disciplines.
- CU has four research centres: Research Centre for Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Nazrul Research Centre, Bureau of Business Research and Social Science Research Institute
- Since inception of this University in 1966, about 2,43,585 students have completed their undergraduate, masters and higher-degree programmes
- The campus is stretched over 1300 acres of land decked with hills and dales' lakes and ponds and stunningly green tall trees.
- More than seventeen thousand full-time students are enrolled in the University. Of these, three thousand five hundred students reside in nine student halls and one hostel.
- Dormitories for female students can cater to most of the female students' accommodation needs.