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if one particular university is lacking on this count, the UGC should right away announce its name to the public so the guardians are careful while selecting institutions for their children's higher education. A few perpetrators should not be allowed to blemish the image of the entire sector.

Though late, one commendable decision taken in the last meeting was on setting up an independent Accreditation Council. However, this Council should do the job of accreditation (quality assurance) for all the universities together, both public and private. This will surely enhance competition for excellence in the higher education sector.

The history of private universities in this country is hardly a decade and a half old. Presently, about 47 percent of all university students go to private universities. With a 24 percent growth rate within the next five years, they are expected to overtake the public universities in student enrolment. In this short period of time, some have performed quite well, while others are trying their best to catch up. For a country like Bangladesh, it will not be possible to put all the responsibility of providing higher education entirely on the government. Higher education anywhere is expensive, and for any meaningful progress to be made, private initiative in this sector must be encouraged.

Bangladesh has been ranked 88th among the "best" 100 countries in the world recently by the international news magazine *Newsweek*. The ranking is based on such indicators as education, health, quality of life, economic competitiveness and political environment. Two other countries in the region have done better than us, Sri Lanka (66th) and India (78th). This may not be a very big achievement for Bangladesh, but it is not mean either, considering the size and population of the country, its multifaceted problems, and the fact that it has been ruled by military and pseudo military rulers for half the period of its existence as a free nation. To improve its performance, we must collectively take care of our education, both in the public and private sectors; the other indicators will take care of themselves.

The world is shifting. We cannot live with archaic ideas and outdated thinking. With 160 million people living in Bangladesh, there is an opportunity for "demographic dividend." We just need to be a bit realistic and make appropriate roadmaps to bridge the talent gap by making our higher education system and its administration more useful. To begin with, we should stop unnecessary sabre-rattling and start implementing the Act with rationality and logic and without prejudice of any sort. Let the good and promising ones thrive and gross perpetrators be punished.

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