

# Do universities add ...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

The above is by no means a comprehensive list and in fact does not include any indicators of value addition per se as this is very difficult to gauge. Some preliminary attempts have been made to devise before and after tests of analytic and communication skills to assess whether there is any improvement in university student performance between entry and graduation. A lot more work needs to be done in this area, but at the very least this issue of value addition is on the radar screen of all relevant stakeholders.

It is important to note that the validity of the above institutional quality rankings and comparisons is crucially dependent on the transparency and verification of the underlying data and its equivalent nature. Given the importance of these assessments, institutions have a huge incentive to game the system and appropriate checks and balances need to be instituted. Just to give my readers a small flavour of the difficulty in appropriate comparisons between universities, let us take the intuitively simple and seemingly unambiguous metric of number of enrolled students. This is interpreted very cre-

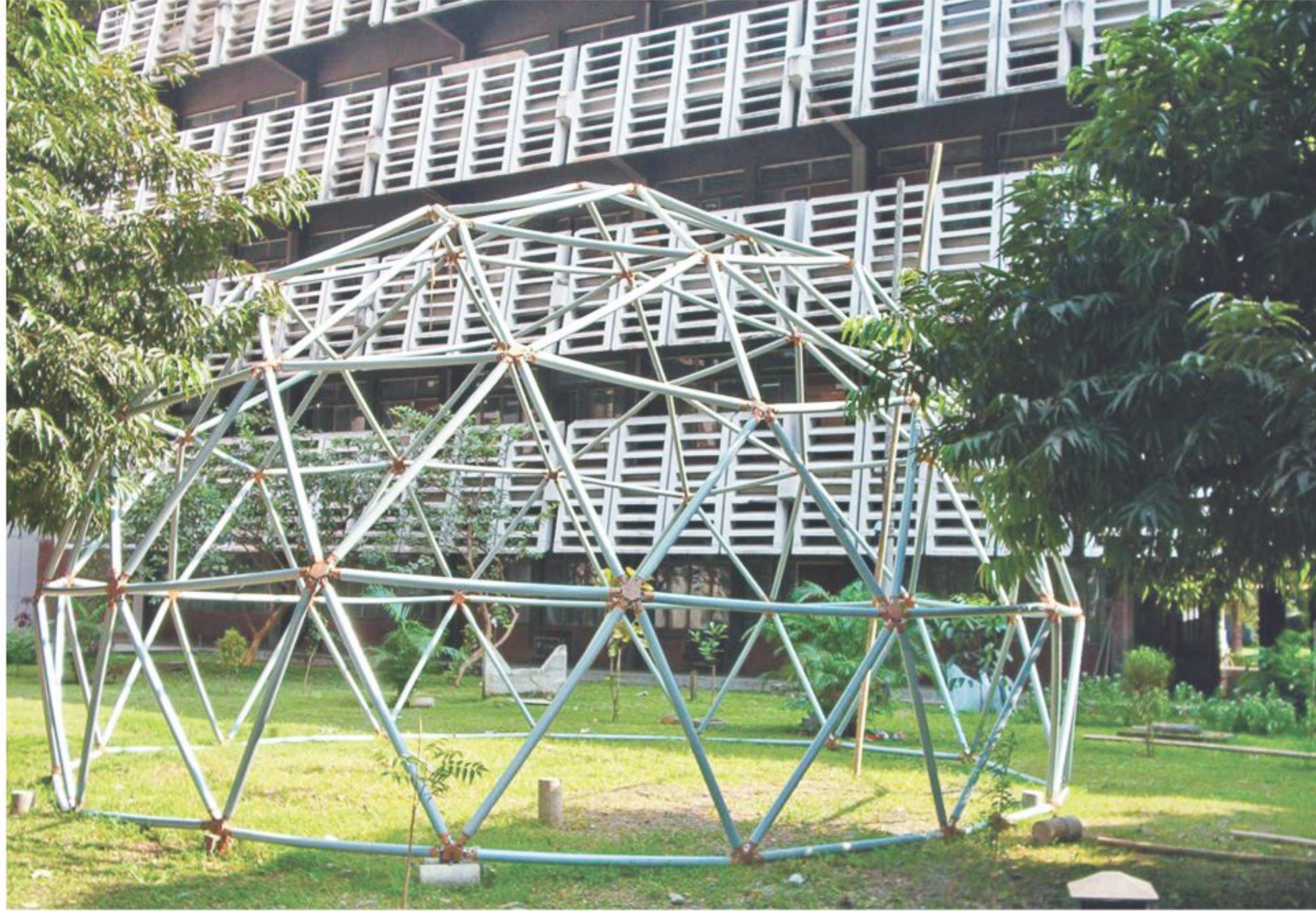


PHOTO: STAR

ational services than when they are provided for free by the state. Thus private universities which now educate the majority of students in higher education in Bangladesh (65%) are already inherently more engaged in this process of accountability than public universities.

Although the UGC annual reports provide a very useful basis of comparison across private universities, this self-reported information is of somewhat questionable quality and more over is not widely available to students, parents, faculty members and the general public. In addition, there is no attempt to rank institutions or departments/disciplines within institutions. Although ranking systems are fraught with pitfalls and never completely satisfactory to all stake holders, I feel very strongly that they serve a very important function of focusing attention on quality and the underlying heterogeneity in quality across institutions and across disciplines/departments within institutions. Furthermore rankings provide a powerful incentive and signal for institutions to improve their performance.

In conclusion, I would like to make a plea for an independent media institution in Bangladesh to invest in and implement and publicise a credible, fact based, transparent ranking system of all universities/medical and engineering colleges in Bangladesh (similar to those provided internationally by the US WORLD NEWS, and THE TIMES). This would focus a much needed spotlight on the wide heterogeneity in university educational quality (both public and private) in Bangladesh and be of huge benefit to students, guardians and the public at large.

The writer is Vice Chancellor, Independent University, Bangladesh and Adjunct Professor, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

It is important to note that the validity of the above institutional quality rankings and comparisons is crucially dependent on the transparency and verification of the underlying data and its equivalent nature.

actively and differently by various institutions. Some report number of currently enrolled students in a particular semester taking a set minimum number of credits (e.g. nine credits). Others include all ever enrolled students both part and full time whether they are currently present or not. The latter of course will give you an artificially significantly inflated head count and concomitant bragging rights.

In the past year, the Bangladesh government has made an impressive commitment to assessing and monitoring quality in higher education by

promoting the setting up of Internal Quality Assessment Cells in Universities which will report on a regular basis a variety of key quality indicators to the university management and the University Grants Commission. The UGC also publishes an annual compendium of data on various quality indicators for private universities. I applaud and commend these initiatives by the education ministry and the UGC. While the initial efforts are focused on private universities I fervently hope that public universities will also be brought into this

orbit of quality monitoring as currently there is no objective source of information about quality and accountability in public universities. While there is an anecdotal but widely acknowledged notion (at least in the media) that there is significant heterogeneity in quality amongst private universities this issue is never addressed with regard to Public Universities. In this context it is worth noting that from an economic point of view, consumers (i.e. students and their parents) are much more aware of these issues when they are paying out of pocket for edu-

## The Daily Star

এর বর্ষপূর্তিতে উপলক্ষে

আশিয়ান পরিবারের এর পক্ষ থেকে  
প্রাণঢালা শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন...

## আশিয়ান সিটি

আপনার অভিজাত ঠিকানা

## আশিয়ান শীতলছায়া

আপনার কাঙ্ক্ষিত ঠিকানা

দৈনিক  
আমাদের ভাষা গণমানুষের  
**মানবকণ্ঠ**  
www.manobkantha.com

২৪ ঘণ্টা জরুরী বিভাগ

আই সি ইউ সমন্বিত এ্যাম্বুলেন্স সার্ভিস

২৪ ঘণ্টা ফার্মেসী

সার্বক্ষণিক যোগাযোগের জন্য  
০১৮৪১-১৩৩৫০১

সর্বাধুনিক  
চিকিৎসা  
সেবার প্রত্যয়ে

# আশিয়ান মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতাল

www.ashiyangroup.com



কর্পোরেট অফিস : ইউনিকর্ন প্লাজা, ৪০/২ নর্থ এভিনিউ, গুলশান-২, ঢাকা-১২১২

ফোন : ৮৮৩২৮৫২-৫ ৮৮৩১২০৪, ৮৮৩১২০৭-৮, ৮৮৩১২৬৫, ফ্যাক্স : ৯৮৮১০২৩