



### Crown jewels of Bengal

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### Youth keep hockey's flicker alive

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### Martyrs and memory

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### Boats row here no more

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## VC APPOINTMENT

# No uniform policy in 53 years

### Successive govts paid no heed to repeated calls for reform

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The appointment of vice chancellor at public universities ultimately comes down to the candidates' political leanings, despite repeated calls for reforming the process.

In 1991, a task force formed by an interim government recommended changes to the appointment procedure. An education commission in 2003 and the University Grants Commission's 2006-2026 strategic plan proposed forming a search committee for VCs appointment.

The UGC in its annual reports recommended a guideline for the appointments at least twice.

After the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, the University Teachers Network, a body of public university teachers, said "scoundrels" should not be VCs.

Dhaka University Shikkhak Samaj recommended legal changes to ensure an appointment process free of "state interference".

Former Jahangirnagar University teacher Anu Muhammad said, "Governments want subservient administrations on campuses. They want administrations to do nothing when the ruling party's student activists break the law."

Only four out of 55 public universities have a uniform system for appointment of VCs even after 53 years of the country's independence.

The Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Jahangirnagar universities function under the 1973 University Ordinance, which says the university senates must elect the VCs.

At the 51 other universities, the president appoints VCs with the prime minister's consent.

#### REFORM PROPOSALS IN VAIN

After the fall of HM Ershad in 1990, the interim government set up 29 task forces headed by Prof Rehman Sobhan.

In its report, the task force that reviewed the education sector wrote: "The appointment and promotions become dependent on loyalties rather than on demonstrated academic abilities... This calls for reexamination of the statutes and regulations that govern the universities."

In 2003, an education commission headed by Professor Mohammad Moniruzzaman Miah recommended forming a committee headed by the chief justice to appoint VCs.

Other members of the committee would be three academics nominated by the chancellor (the president), one academic by the education ministry, one by the Public Service Commission chairman, and

one by the UGC.

The UGC's Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026 says the system left a lot of "room for political manoeuvring". It recommends that a national search committee should appoint VCs.

In 2007, the then caretaker government formed a search committee to appoint VCs at all the universities, except the aforementioned four.

However, the committee did not accomplish much before getting disbanded in 2009 when the Awami League assumed power.

The 2022 UGC report suggests having a pool of qualified teachers in light of the recommendations made by a commission.

At the four universities run under the ordinance, the rule of appointing VCs through senate elections is often ignored, academics say.

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## Partisan link still rules the game

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The interim government has appointed new vice-chancellors and other top officials to public universities mostly on political considerations — something that echoes the practices of successive governments.

At least 30 VCs out of 47, along with 18 Pro-VCs and treasurers from 40 appointments, have connections to pro-BNP and pro-Jamaat teachers' organisations.

"It is apparent that the government made these appointments in the face of continuous lobbying and pressures from the political parties," said Samina Lutfa, associate professor at Dhaka University.

As there were experienced individuals in the advisory council, people had high hopes about positive changes, particularly in educational institutions that have been struggling due to politicisation.

"As this government came to power with the mandate of students and citizens, we expected it to take bold steps — beyond lobbying and pressure — to bring real changes to institutions. Unfortunately, we have yet to see such initiatives," Samina said.

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The Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial in the capital's Rayerbazar. The monument was designed by architects Farid U Ahmed and Jami Al Shafi to honour the luminaries who sacrificed their lives for the country's independence. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS' DAY

# No list of martyred intellectuals for now

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Ministry of Liberation War Affairs has put on hold its initiative to prepare a comprehensive list of martyred intellectuals, who were brutally killed by Pakistani military forces with the help of local collaborators in 1971, creating uncertainty over the completion of such a list.

The ministry back in 2020 took the initiative as there was no complete record even five decades after the country's liberation, detailing how many of the brightest sons and daughters of the soil were martyred.

The work was supposed to be completed by December 16 this year.

The ministry in the past four years published four gazettes listing the names of 560 intellectuals, based on recommendations from a national committee. The national committee had a sub-committee to scrutinise the list.

The national committee held its last meeting on March 18, while the sub-committee held it on July 1.

"Since then, we have not heard anything from the authorities regarding the list. I don't



think this initiative will see the light of day again," said a member of both committees, preferring to remain unnamed.

According to sources at the ministry and committee, the work was postponed to avoid any new debate over the number of martyred intellectuals.

"The listing process has been postponed as no committees are in place. If the committees are reformed, then listing the martyred intellectuals will be considered again," said Ishrat Chowdhury, secretary of the Liberation

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## Nation pays homage today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation today observes Martyred Intellectuals' Day, recalling the ultimate sacrifice of the leading intellectuals killed systematically by the Pakistan occupation army and their local collaborators at the fag-end of the country's Liberation War in 1971.

The day marks as one of the most tragic days in the country's history when renowned academics, doctors, engineers, journalists, and artists and other eminent personalities were dragged blind-folded out of their homes in the capital and killed in cold blood.

Sensing the imminent defeat, the Pakistani occupying army and their local collaborators abducted the luminaries and killed them to intellectually cripple the soon-to-be-born nation.

These shining individuals were the guiding light for Bangalees and instrumental in the movements against disparity and repressive

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Helal Hafiz (1948-2024)

## The poet of love, rebellion falls silent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

His words, woven with the fervour of rebellion and the tenderness of love, have left an indelible mark on the nation's literary landscape.

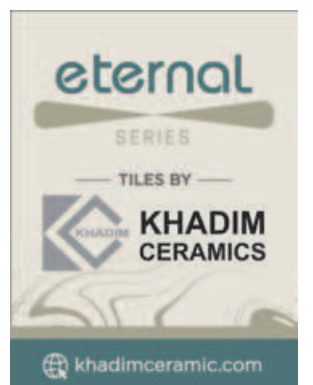
His debut collection, "Je Jole Agun Jole", ignited the hearts of thousands, and the first two lines of his poem "Nishiddho Sampadokio" became the anthem of resistance during all progressive movements starting from 1969 mass uprising, the Liberation War, and the anti-autocracy movements. His legacy is not just in the verses he penned, but in the spirit of defiance and hope he inspired in a generation.

The country mourned the loss of its

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Gulistan's bustling sidewalks are lined with stalls offering winter wear at relatively lower prices. People from limited-income groups rely on these shops for their seasonal clothing needs. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



## Misri's visit to help advance Dhaka-Delhi relationships Says Indian MEA

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday said Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's recent visit to Dhaka would help sustain and advance ties between the two countries.

Asked at the weekly media briefing to comment on Misri's talks with Bangladesh's interim government, Ministry of External Affairs spokesman

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