



Empowering Students to Tackle Challenges and LEAD PROGRESS



PROF. M. TAMIM

Vice Chancellor, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)



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The Daily Star (TDS): As the new Vice Chancellor of IUB, what are your initial impressions of the university and its community, and what aspects of IUB stand out to you as its core strengths?

M. Tamim (MT): Since joining IUB in December 2024, I have been thoroughly impressed by the university's commitment to academic excellence and its vibrant campus community. The emphasis on research is evidenced by the specialized centers and institutes and an environment conducive to innovation and scholarly pursuits. The quality of student life is exemplary, with over 50 active student clubs catering to a wide range of interests, including arts, culture, sports, and technology. They enhance the student experience, and nurture leadership and teamwork skills. Our students have consistently produced outstanding results in sports, earning accolades in national and international competitions. They have a high propensity for innovation and creativity in science, technology, and entrepreneurship. Their projects address some of the most pressing real-world challenges through sustainable solutions. The dedication of the faculty, the enthusiasm of the students, and the strong support system provided by the university collectively highlight IUB's strengths in offering a holistic education and a culture of continuous learning.

TDS: What are your immediate priorities for the university, and how do you plan to engage with faculty, students, and other stakeholders in shaping IUB's future direction?

MT: My immediate priorities include strengthening academic programs to align with industry demands, enhancing research capabilities, and promoting international collaborations. Engaging with faculty, students, and stakeholders is crucial; therefore, I plan to establish open communication channels and encourage participatory decision-making processes. This collaborative approach will ensure that the university's strategic initiatives are inclusive and reflective of the community's aspirations.

TDS: What is your vision for IUB in terms of contributing to the development of higher education in Bangladesh, and how do you plan to leverage the university's existing strengths to achieve this?

MT: I envision IUB as a leading institution that not only imparts quality education but also contributes significantly to national development through research and community engagement. By leveraging our experienced faculty, state-of-the-art facilities, and strong



industry connections, we aim to develop programs that address contemporary challenges and produce graduates who are well-equipped to drive progress in various sectors of Bangladesh. I want to encourage research that focuses on local problems. Local application of research outcome will bring more satisfaction to the students and faculties.

TDS: How do you plan to approach challenges in the higher education sector, such as aligning academic programs with job market demands and fostering an

environment that promotes research and innovation?

MT: We regularly consult with industry experts about bringing our curricula up to speed with the latest industry trends and needs. The Career Guidance and Placement Office prepares students for the workforce by organizing workshops, mock interviews, career fairs, and skill development programs. We have a university-wide strategic approach to engage with industry players through partnerships, internships, and collaborative projects. These engagements provide students with hands-on experience and valuable exposure to real-world scenarios. We also invest in professional development for faculty to adopt innovative teaching methodologies. The Institutional Quality Assurance Cell at IUB, led by some of our most accomplished academics, ensures that our academic programs meet international standards and produce graduates equipped with critical thinking and problem-solving skills. To promote innovation, we are strengthening our research centers by providing them with the necessary resources to create an environment that encourages cutting-edge research. By prioritizing these areas, we aim to cultivate a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, empowering our students to be leaders and problem-solvers in their respective fields.

Private Universities Are Leading the Way

FROM PAGES 1

Offering a wide range of programs and degrees, these universities cater to the diverse aspirations of students seeking quality education. With a strong emphasis on specialization, modern curricula, and the building of solid reputations, private universities have gained considerable momentum. Their increasing popularity is evident not only in the rise of student enrollments but also in their growing preference over public universities in many cases.

"Curriculum flexibility and consistent adherence to academic calendar are among the strengths of private universities. They also have the freedom to hire foreign faculty, unlike public universities, which are limited by the 1973 Act in appointing foreign scholars or members of the diaspora for teaching. In terms of international outlook, private universities are leading the way by offering opportunities such as credit transfers to foreign universities and hiring international professors for specific semesters. These practices foster the exchange of global knowledge," says Dr. Shamsad Mortuza, professor of English at Dhaka University, a board member of ULAB, and former pro-vice-chancellor at ULAB.

Students choose universities based on their personal preferences, aiming to receive an education that aligns with their aspirations and dreams. The choice of institution plays a crucial role, influenced by factors such as quality faculty members, well-designed courses, research opportunities, and laboratory facilities. Additionally, students consider job market trends, both locally and globally, when making their decisions.

"IUBAT offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs tailored to meet the evolving demands of the national and global job market. From Business Administration and Agriculture to Computer Science, Public Health, Engineering, Nursing, Tourism and Hospitality Management, English, and Economics, each program with a forward-thinking curriculum is designed to build professional skills and foster an appropriate mindset for career advancement," shares Professor Dr. Abdur Rab, Vice-Chancellor of IUBAT.

Dr. Saiful Islam, Vice Chancellor of the American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB), says, "The courses of different programs are periodically updated to keep pace with the continuous changes in the engineering, technological, and computational worlds and to meet the evolving requirements of industries, the corporate world, and other employers. Global trends in the subjects are important factors, which are carefully monitored and taken into account while updating the course syllabus."

Currently, the majority of students in private universities are pursuing degrees in science and business studies, with universities providing strong support to ensure quality education. According to the UGC report, engineering and technology account for the



largest share, representing 43.90 percent of total enrollments in the academic session. This is followed by commerce education at 22 percent, arts and humanities at 11.07 percent, law at 6.09 percent, and social sciences at 3.49 percent in private universities.

As institutions of higher education, private universities are increasingly attracting significant interest from international students. According to the UGC report, the number of foreign students enrolled in private universities is nearly double that of public universities. This highlights private universities as hubs for cultural exchange, fostering the sharing of ideas and perspectives among both local and international students—an essential aspect of education in today's globalized world. However, educationists emphasize the need to further enhance opportunities and the academic environment to attract even more foreign students.

The affiliation of private universities with foreign institutions, centers, and local higher research organizations is creating significant opportunities for students, including potential credit transfers and future research prospects.

"Our Business Department recently earned accreditation from the ACBSP, a prestigious North American accreditation body. Furthermore, we have signed MOUs with institutions such as the Asian Institute of Technology, Macquarie University in Australia, and a university in the United States," shares Prof. Shams Rahman, Vice Chancellor of East West University.

"IUB has MoUs with a number of local and foreign universities and institutes

such as Kobe College (Japan), University of Hyogo (Japan), University of Maribor (Slovenia), Vellore Institute of Technology (India), Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka, Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB), Lanka-Bangla Finance, and more," according to the Media and Public Relations Office of the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

Private universities are predominantly located in the cities of Dhaka and Chattogram, attracting students from across the country with the advantages of urban amenities. Following the directives of the University Grants Commission (UGC), most private universities have relocated their campuses to permanent sites, offering enhanced infrastructure and facilities conducive to education.

Additionally, some private universities now provide hostel accommodations, particularly for female students coming from outside Dhaka and Chattogram. Notably, private student hostels and affordable rental options near many private universities have significantly alleviated accommodation challenges for students.

In today's world, global university rankings serve as a benchmark for academic excellence and institutional performance, providing students and parents with valuable insights when considering potential enrollment in private universities. A review of the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings reveals a notable increase in the number of Bangladeshi universities featured. By 2025, 15 Bangladeshi universities are listed, compared to four in 2023 and just

two in 2022. Among these, approximately 50 percent of the universities in 2025 and 2024 are private institutions.

The rise of private universities in global rankings is a result of their continuous efforts in academics, with significant investments in programs, research, publications, and overall institutional growth. "A university's foundation lies in quality education, which requires faculty members who have studied both locally and abroad," says Kazi Tareq Ullah, Acting Dean of the School of Business Administration.

He goes on to explain, "Recently, more than 50 PhD-holding faculty members have joined our university across various departments. Furthermore, in 2024, Uttara University was ranked 276th among the top 300 universities globally in innovation by the WURI rankings. It also achieved an impressive 12th position worldwide in the Student Support and Engagement category among the top 100 universities." He further emphasized that Uttara University provides free transport for its students.

Scholarship opportunities significantly enhance students' academic journeys, making their experiences more inspiring and manageable. Currently, private universities in Bangladesh offer a wide range of scholarships based on academic performance, tuition fee waivers, and other financial benefits. Additionally, many private universities provide scholarships specifically for women, marginalized groups, and students with disabilities, ensuring access to higher education for diverse student populations. Moreover, some universities maintain more affordable tuition fees to further support

students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds.

"Starting in 2024, students admitted to the university will receive scholarships for all four years based on their results, unlike many universities that require maintaining specific academic marks. This ensures financial clarity for guardians throughout the period. In addition to scholarships for freedom fighters and the Adibasi quota, we also support students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds and those with relatives who have studied at our university," says Mohammad Omar Faraque, Director (In-Charge) of Outreach & Public Relations at the State University of Bangladesh.

The availability of advanced lab facilities, opportunities within business groups, and strong university connections to business conglomerates significantly influence students' choice of universities and their preference for subjects aligned with the universities' areas of focus, especially to become skilled professionals.

"To address the growing demand for skilled professionals in the country's Textile, RMG, and Fashion industries, BUFT offers a diverse range of undergraduate and graduate programs spanning Textile Engineering & Management, Industrial Engineering, Apparel Manufacturing & Merchandising, Knitwear Manufacturing, Fashion Studies & Design, Business, Environmental Science, and English. Additionally, the university provides certificate courses in Apparel, Knit, Woven & Sweater Merchandising," shares Prof. Engr. Ayub Nabi Khan, Acting VC of BUFT.

"We prioritize the engineering, business, and English departments. Students have easy access to the state-of-the-art labs provided by the Abul Khair Group. Those who achieve outstanding academic performance are often offered job opportunities at the Abul Khair Group. Last year, approximately 300 students from our university were recruited by the group, including 140 from the Civil Engineering department alone," mentions Jahid Hasan, Deputy Director & Head (Acting) of Admission, Promotion & PR, Presidency University.

Despite the growing presence and influence of private universities in Bangladesh, challenges in consistently maintaining high educational standards continue to be a concern for many educators.

"In our country, both public and private universities often struggle to maintain consistent educational standards. These challenges require targeted initiatives to improve the situation. While a handful of private universities meet qualitative benchmarks, the majority face significant difficulties in upholding these standards," says Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, Professor Emeritus at BRAC University. "It is crucial to prioritize educational quality, implement effective student assessment methods, and ensure efficient university management. These efforts are essential to enhance graduates' competitiveness and prepare them to meet the demands of the modern age," he adds.