

**How many students are there in the country's private universities?**

According to statistics, the number of students studying in private universities at present is about 200 thousand. It's hard to give an exact number because new students are getting admitted and others are passing out.

Many are not aware of the fact that private universities are providing education free to students. It is unfortunate that many say that private universities are simply out there to make money. That is not true. Our university at present is providing scholarship to a total of 2000 students.



**The government's initiative may be good, but the style of implementation is not right**

- Sabur Khan, Founder & Chairman, Daffodil International University

Of them, 800 are getting full scholarship and 500 are getting 50% scholarship. The subsidiary is being provided by the fees from the well-off students. Critics just see the course fee we are taking, they are not aware of the scholarships. I am yet to see anyone in the media praising the private universities for the contribution they are making in the field of education.

Many contend that students of public universities do relatively better than those of private universities. I would agree because the best students of the country get admitted to the public universities. That is why they have good results. The students who come to private universities are mixed. There are those who don't get a chance in public universities and so come to private universities. They manage to stand up to the competition existing in these universities and I applaud them for that.

**There are many complaints about the standard of education in private universities**

You cannot generalize. There are many private universities and it is for the government to judge which ones are good and which ones are not. Questions have arisen about the

validity of certificates issued by certain universities. Such allegations have been launched against one or two universities only. But the media tends to generalize and lump all private universities in the same category. This is very demoralizing. Sometimes even I feel demoralized to think that I have put so much effort into establishing this institution, but no one sees the positive aspect of it. They only look at the negative side.

Whoever has the merit will survive in fair competition, the others will not. It is the responsibility of the government and the UGC authorities to monitor and see which institutions are providing quality education and are committed.

**Recently the government has been issuing red, green and yellow signals to universities who haven't been able to shift to their own permanent campuses. How do you view this?**

The government certainly has the right to issue this alert, but I feel bad that the government never once states that private universities have introduced an international standard of education in the country. We do have resource problems. For example, it is difficult to get one large plot of land in

the city. This applies to anyone and everyone. Daffodil University has all permanent campuses, but not all in one place. They are scattered over the place, but not housed in rented premises. I had to do this because I didn't get one plot of land large enough. But I am ready to follow the conditions and have bought a plot of land for the purpose. I only regret that I am not being judged on the quality of education I am providing, but being painted with the same brush as all the rest. There are some universities which are merely selling certificates and we are all aware of that. But why should we be evaluated in the same manner? What does the government want?

The Honourable Prime Minister has declared that universities will be opened in all 64 districts of the country. That is all well and good and I commend her for that, but at the same time I want to say that you cannot give these new universities the opportunity while forsaking the old universities which have been models in the field. That is not fair play.

There are about 40 to 50 applications for new universities and these might be given approval, yet the old universities aren't being given a chance. Ultimately if a whole generation is destroyed like this, where will things stand? When governments change in the future, the new government will simply do the same. There is a lot of frustration in the private universities right now.

Bangladesh's BUET and Daffodil University have been included among the 100 top ranking universities of the world. Why hasn't the government acknowledged this in anyway? On the whole I would say that the decision taken by the government is good, but the implementation process is not.

**The government has said if the conditions are not fulfilled, admissions for next September will be stopped.**

Those who have set up universities as entrepreneurs may have done so from a business point of view and it is for the government to identify them. Instead of doing that, the government says unless you shift to your own campuses, admissions will be shut down from September. They can't simply impose this rule with hardly a

six-month warning. I think they should give at least five years' time or, if the government wants to adopt a very hard line, then two years. Simply punishing everyone *en masse* is demoralizing.

Even those who established universities 16 years ago, still haven't gone to their own permanent campuses. Yet we who have established universities just seven to eight years back are being meted out the same punishment as them. That is not fair. That is why I say that however great the government's initiative may be, the implementation is all wrong.

I will repeat, if the government's intentions are sincere, then they must carefully scrutinize the universities. The Education Minister is a very dynamic man. He is well aware of which universities are functioning well and which are not.

**So what is our appeal to the government regarding a resolution to the existing crisis?**

The government can adopt two strategies. One is to tell the universities that they have to move to their own permanent campuses within five years, or two years. They can have an undertaking in this regard. The government has said five years, but at the same time imposed the condition that admissions will be stopped if this is not fulfilled by September. This condition must be withdrawn. I have my permanent campus so I am not worried, but others are. That is my concern too.

The second option is that the government can carry out to a qualitative study of the universities and say, you have been around for the last 17 years, you cannot be given any time further than September. Those around for 10 years, cannot be given more time than two years. Thus, time limits can be set according to category. This will be effective.

Everyone will welcome this. If this is not done, an unpleasant situation will arise. Students are emotionally attached to the institution they study at. If the government doesn't value these emotions, however good the initiative may be, it is bound to fail. ●