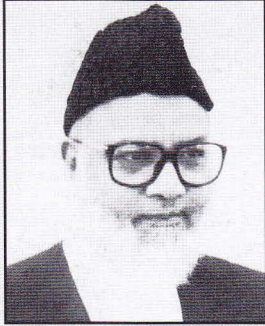


## MESSAGE

### CONVOCATION SPEAKER



**JUSTICE MUSTAFA KAMAL**  
FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE OF BANGLADESH

It gives me great pleasure to know that East West University is going to hold its next Convocation on the 11th February, 2004.

I congratulate the successful examinees of all faculties due for conferment of their respective degrees on them on that day. It is a red letter day in their lives that they are unlikely to forget ever. I share their joy, the joy of their parents, relations, friends and teachers. I wish them all the success and glory in their later lives and hope and pray that whatever they do and wherever they are, the stamp of quality and character that their alma matre has imprinted on them will shine forever and will be reflected on their pursuits, activities and achievements.

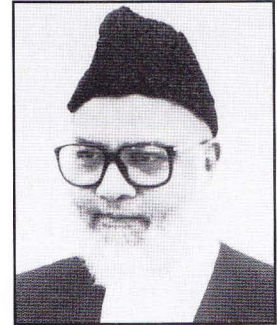
May this Convocation be a resounding success.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mustafa Kamal".

Justice Mustafa Kamal



**JUSTICE MUSTAFA KAMAL**  
**CONVOCATION SPEECH**  
**FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE OF BANGLADESH**



**Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim**

Hon'ble Chief Guest and Chancellor of the East-West University, Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Special Guest Dr. Osman Farooq, Hon'ble Minister for Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, President of the Board of Directors of the University Dr. Farashuddin Ahmed, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University Professor Syed Ferhat Anwar, Dean of Faculties of the University Professor Abdul Mannan, Convocation Martial Mrs. Firdaus Ak, all teachers of the University, distinguished guests and students receiving degrees today

**Assalamo Alaikum**

I am deeply grateful and thankful to the President and members of the Board of Directors of the East-West University for having invited me to be the Convocation Speaker today. Small as I am I feel even smaller on being bestowed with this rare honour and distinction. I deem it a great privilege and opportunity to share with you some of my thoughts on education in private universities that I articulated elsewhere as well.

Allow me to congratulate first of all most heartily the young graduates and post graduates who have received their degrees today. I congratulate their parents, guardians, teachers and faculty members for the success of their wards and students. I share their joy and sense of fulfillment and wish them a successful, productive and happy life for the future.

Education in the twenty first century is in the crossroads of a renewed thinking. As science and information technology continue to make tremendous strides, making yesterday's innovations obsolete the next day, education and education-related thoughts are posing a constant and continuous challenge to policy makers and educationists. They are pondering over the tone, contents and expected outcome of education, its costs and facilities, quality of the teacher and the taught, employment opportunities for the degree-holders and over many other education-related issues.

Now that private universities in Bangladesh have crossed the figure of fifty, time is ripe for an internal and outside review of their overall achievements, shortcomings, needs and programmes for expansion in the future. I shall offer my own thoughts in this regard in a brief compass.

A volatile political climate, an educational management failure and an operational chaos in the public universities are the harbingers of private universities in Bangladesh. Along with population explosion there has been an education explosion in Bangladesh for long at the primary, secondary, college and university levels. The public universities were simply unable physically to accommodate the growing number of H.Sc degree-holders into their fold each year. One way of solving the problem was to restrict higher education to those who could gain entry into the limited seats of all public universities and colleges on merit. It would have been politically an impossible step to take on the part of any



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government. Another solution could have been a massive expansion of the then existing seats and facilities of all public universities and colleges. That too would have been an economically impossible step to take on the part of any government. The best boys and girls who passed their H.Sc. examinations with credit had of course no difficulty in getting admission to the medical, engineering, science, liberal arts, commerce and legal education in the public universities, but the vast mass of ordinary H.Sc degree-holders had to remain contented with the second best or third best choices by admitting themselves to either Government degree colleges or private colleges or by just dropping out. Once in, the students found the public universities seized with some irredeemable problems. The teachers had and still have the right to participate in active politics and a number of them has excelled as politicians, with or without compromising their excellence as teachers. The impact of this much-trumpeted entrenched right of the teachers on educational environment is for everyone to see. The students themselves were of course in the forefront of active politics for nearly three quarters of a century now. Their fractious and armed skirmishes and the political activism of an influential section of the teachers took the toll of higher education in the shape of umpteen educational disasters. Universities have been closed indefinitely time and again. Repeated clashes between student groups and their outsider goons in the residential halls and university campuses have resulted in deaths and injuries. There has been a perennial sessions jam. Students receive their degrees on getting 2 to 3 years older in age, imposing a heavy financial burden on their parents and guardians. There is a tragic drop in the quality of education received by the majority of students. We can see for ourselves an ever widening gap between education and employment opportunities in all fields. Rich parents growing increasingly alarmed about the future of their children started sending them abroad, often at a tender age, to skip the irritable and expensive vagaries of higher education in Bangladesh. The country was silently witnessing a new pattern of brain drain with utter disgust.

In the backdrop of this chaotic higher education scenario, the emergence of private universities was a welcome event, for it raised the hope that the new institutions would be free from the prominent ills of public universities. Private Universities have set up a better record in some respects. A teacher there is not known to be more a political activist than a person of quiet scholarly pursuits. We hear of less intra-teacher warfare there. Nor do we hear and see conspicuous student political activism in the private university campus. We find their passing out parades at regular and expected intervals. They are more focused on education. At least their campuses do not pose a law and order problem to the security authorities. I presume the quality of education they receive and assimilate is consequently better.

But no institution can rest on its laurels. It must continuously think of the cost-benefit ratio and strive towards a better and still better performance.

The first thought that comes to my mind is about the cost of education in private universities in Bangladesh. I do not think that the cost prospect attracts the middle and low income groups to send their bright children to private universities, except when the students are allotted some free seats or given some scholarships from some sources. If education is taken to be a service and not a business and if the right of education is not to be denied to anybody because of pecuniary circumstances, then the cost element certainly needs to be restructured to accommodate deserving students from the middle and low income groups. The more the private universities attract the best from the middle and low income groups, the better does their performance indicator look.

Secondly, a University by definition is a universe in miniature. All disciplines, subjectmatters of study, thought and research find a place in a University. An institution cannot properly claim to be a university if the subjects taught are of a limited number. It becomes then an institution of limited studies. An extension of subjectmatters of study may be an expensive proposition, but the matter cannot be postponed or delayed for an indefinite period. Private universities cannot continue as institutions of limited studies for long. They ought to give their institutions a universal look to be able to justify their creation and continued existence.





Thirdly, private universities in Bangladesh thrived and flourished quickly in the last two decades because of their quick perception of the ratio of educational needs and higher education abroad as well as employment opportunities both at home and abroad. They provided some intensified and concentrated courses of studies in specific fields that were immediately absorbable in the higher education and employment market. New private universities continued to follow the beaten track and it is now clearly visible that some sectors of the employment market are oversaturated with an abundant supply of graduates and post-graduates in the same subject with interchangeable standards. The heydays of immediate employment are over. If the gap between education and employment so widens, as it happened in the case of public universities for long, the attraction towards private universities will be on the wane. Private universities may take a close look at this trend. Educational institutions everywhere conduct a faithful study of the relationship between the societal demand for educational subjects and the corresponding opportunities of higher education abroad and job opportunities both at home and abroad. They adjust their educational programmes accordingly. Private universities invariably develop a close liaison with the industries, commerce, banking, insurance, the vocations and the professions and with a host of other traditional and emerging economic activities to correlate the needed educational demand with requisite supply. If private universities remain unmindful of this area of essential inquiry their efficacy and usefulness are likely to suffer, if not immediately, in the not too distant future.

Fourthly, because of the much higher cost that is involved in receiving education from private universities, it is the concern of the whole society to know the quality of the students who are drawn into it. Neither the government nor the private universities has given us an account of the quality of the students who have been accommodated in these universities so far. To allay the popular misgiving that money is the key determinant for costly education, the private universities owe it to the society to make a clean breast of the hard facts surrounding the admission policy.

Fifthly, private universities should be self-sufficient in their teaching faculties. Employment of part-time teachers from public universities and other educational institutions is no gain but a loss to both. A time period may be fixed to achieve this object, variable upon the age of the private universities and during the interregnum the proportion of full-time and part-time teachers may be fixed on a rational and reasonable basis. Private Universities can contribute to a huge extent in reducing brain drain. They can also be a useful instrument in achieving a reverse brain drain, especially Bangladeshi brains serving other countries. China achieved that, India is nearly catching up. We in Bangladesh have a long way to go.

Sixthly, the society has come to accept the hard fact that an education given privately is necessarily more costly than an education given in a public institution. But it is also the legitimate expectation of the society that private universities will provide better well-equipped libraries, latest and modern laboratory equipments and a greater use of modern information technology in teaching methods.

Last, but not the least, I must confess my disappointment with the mushroom growth of private universities in the big cities in congested rooms of rented premises in congested areas. When I grew up as a school, college and university student I came to associate educational institutions with open playing fields, sprawling lawns and unhindered fresh air and light. My heart aches with pain to see my successor generations not enjoying a fraction of what I received during my student days. No playing fields, no outdoor sports activities, no large auditorium, no recreational arrangements. It is indeed heart rending to find students in the prime of their youth languishing in the city's ghettos while receiving higher education. Private universities should set up their own campus and move quickly there. What a campus should look like, what its facilities are and how it adds to an environment conducive to education need not be spelt out by me. Teachers and educational authorities are well aware of the same. Again I think of a time limit in this regard. A private university may not be allowed recognition if a minimum student-land ratio is not maintained in the campus. A healthy education can grow only in a healthy atmosphere.

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To the graduates and post-graduates of today I will now devote my special thoughts. Your days of studies with little or no responsibility to bear are now over. You are now entering the harsh new world of reality. You look into the future with great expectations that I share with you. But you must be prepared for frustrations as well, because not all expectations are fulfilled. It is in this new world of reality that your education received from your alma matre will now be tried and tested. Faith and trust in Allah, dependence on Him on all occasions, truthfulness, honesty, perseverance, diligence, timeliness – are all qualities that may sound hackneyed and oft-repeating to you, but truth is eternal and knows no variations with changing circumstances. Suffering some hardships at the threshold of a responsible life is a general rule applicable to all, with some exceptions that only prove the rule. But as you gain momentum in life and you turn the corner of your economic fortune, you will see a vastly expanding community of opulent population leading a permissive and indulgent life, taking this mundane life to be the only one to be lived and forgetting altogether that an eternal life hereafter is round the corner waiting to dismantle your wordly preoccupation. That eternal life starts with a heavy accountability. You have to answer to your Creator all your thoughts, deeds and actions in this world. Never forget for a moment your ultimate accountability and do not join those who cross the limits set for the believers by their Creator. You may be sorry for a time not to have joined them, because your association with them may have earned for you more riches and material acquisitions, but remember, he who laughs last laughs best. Those of us who have sailed in the turbulent ocean of life for a longer term than you know at first hand in this life itself that a lifestyle prescribed for the believers by Allah Himself yields better and richer dividends visible and perceptible to those who ponder.

I wish you again all the best and I thank all of you for your patient hearing.

**Jazakallah**

