

‘Uttara University is committed to producing future-proof individuals’

INTERVIEW

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In an exclusive interview with **The Business Standard**, Prof Dr. Eaysmin Ara Lekha, the Vice-Chancellor of Uttara University, sheds light on the two-decade journey of the institution

Established in 2003 with a mission to provide quality education to those facing financial constraints, Uttara University has evolved into a hub of research and educational excellence.

How has the two-decade journey of Uttara University been?

In 2003, Uttara University was founded with the primary goal of providing high-quality education to individuals facing financial constraints and limited admission opportunities for higher education in Bangladesh.

The credit for the establishment of Uttara University goes to Dr. M. Azizur Rahman, an economist, philanthropist, and freedom fighter. After completing his doctoral studies in Economics at Vanderbilt University in the USA, Dr. Rahman returned to Bangladesh with a mission to advocate for the disadvantaged.

As the Economic Advisor for USAID, he initiated communication with aspiring students and identified the need for a private university to address the growing demand for higher education.

Uttara University was born with the objective ‘quality education at an affordable tuition,’ catering



to the higher education sector in a time when public universities had limited admission capacity.

Over the past two decades, Uttara University has played a pivotal role in supporting tens of thousands of students, both domestically and internationally, in achieving their career goals and contributing significantly to the nation's growth.

Define Uttara University's motto “Excellence in Higher Education and Research.”

After two decades of success, Uttara University has transformed into a hub of research and a center of educational excellence.

In 2023, the institution's motto evolved to “Excellence in Higher Education and Research.” This reflects the expansion and growth the university has experienced over the years. Through eight convocations, Uttara University has graduated tens of thousands of students, leading to improved lives and prosperous careers across various sectors.

These graduates are highly competitive, capable of rivaling those educated abroad. The university has implemented policies to recognise and reward exceptional researchers, including support for international conference participation and annual research awards for indexed publications.

What are the institution's long-term goals, and have they changed in the 20 years?

Uttara University's long-term goals align with Bangladesh's educational objective of providing comprehensive academic and technical proficiencies to the youth.

The institution follows a dual-semester Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum. It ensures relevance in the contemporary world. With an international advisory board, the university maintains a current and relevant curriculum, which is responsive to the values and expectations of Generation Z.

The curriculum extends beyond academic coursework to include co-curricular activities such as seminars, workshops, conferences, internships, and communication skills courses, providing students with professional development.

Notably, the university has had a focus on research throughout the years. Our Centre for Sustainable Nanoparticles Synthesis and policies honoring exceptional researchers highlight our commitment to research excellence.

Name one aspect of higher education in Bangladesh that Uttara University has pioneered.

Beyond its commitment to affordable education, Uttara University has pioneered various initiatives to enhance student experience.

The Founder's Scholarship policy provides meritorious students with entirely free education. The university supports flexibility in tuition payments through the EMI facility and has established Study Support Loans in collaboration with Bank Asia.

The institution's commitment to leadership de-

velopment is evident through co-curricular programs, including sessions on job interview skills, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, and startups.

Uttara University also hosts cultural events like Coke Studio Fanfare and promotes mental health awareness through lectures by advocates like Anusha Chowdhury, honored with the Diana Award for mental health advocacy.

The establishment of a startup, innovation, and business incubator hub, as well as specialised laboratories in Nanotechnology, Generative Artificial Intelligence, and Industrial Automation, showcases the university's dedication to providing exceptional amenities.

What more can be achieved in the coming years?

In the coming years, our students will be more equipped with skills that are in demand in the job market. We are adding more clubs to the existing ones.

For example, we are planning to further impact lives through initiatives like the Blood Donors' Club, organising frequent blood donation drives, and maintaining a swift response team for urgent requirements.

The Office of Student Affairs actively participates in humanitarian efforts during natural calamities, dispatching relief supplies to affected regions. We believe that proficiency in academia and technology alone is insufficient to encourage students to contribute positively to society. Besides, periodic counseling sessions motivate students to enhance their knowledge, intelligence, temperament, and other human qualities.

The Drop-Out Prevention Unit addresses psychological well-being concerns, and the Bangla department's Health Humanities laboratory in South Asia focuses on holistic education. We will reassess all these and work on where there is room for improvement. Uttara University remains committed to producing future-proof individuals and nurturing future leaders.