

DRAFT UMBRELLA ACT FOR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Proposed law to face same fate of uni-track edn system

Say eminent academics

SURAJNITH DEBNATH

The caretaker government's move to approve the draft of an 'umbrella act' for all public universities without consulting the academics and others concerned will destroy their autonomous characters, said eminent academics of the country.

They said the proposed draft, if approved, might face the similar fate of the much-talked uni-track education system at secondary level that the immediate-past BNP-Jamaat alliance government tried to introduce without any discussion with the experts concerned.

The alliance government was forced to postpone the system in the face of widespread criticism by leading academics and intellectuals.

The University Grants Commission (UGC), an apex body to monitor both public and private universities, has already sent the draft of the 'umbrella act' to education ministry.

"At any day, the draft is likely to be approved at a meeting of the advisory council," said a high official of the education ministry.

In the name of lack of time, the education ministry will not discuss the draft with experts especially academics and others concerned before sending it to the advisory council, he added.

Sources in education ministry and UGC said a vested quarter which was involved with previous controversial initiative of uni-track education system, is now trying to approve the draft of the 'umbrella act' in violation of Public University Ordinance 1973 which is the pro-

sector of university's autonomy.

According to the draft of the new 'umbrella act', a search committee will select persons for all top posts including vice-chancellors, provosts, chancellors, treasurers, syndicate members and deans of public universities.

The President will form the search committee to be headed by a retired vice-chancellor.

But according to Public University Ordinance 1973, syndicate members and deans are elected.

UGC Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam said they had sent the draft of the 'umbrella act' as per the direction of the education ministry issued on March 21.

He, however, admitted that discussion with the experts is needed before approving the draft.

"We obeyed the instruction of the education ministry to make the draft of the 'umbrella act'. What I can do if the higher authorities decide not to discuss the issue with educationists and others concerned," he replied when asked why he did not arrange a discussion on this issue?

The Daily Star talked to several renowned academics about this issue and all of them expressed their concern over the move of the caretaker government.

They said all public universities cannot run under one rule because these are not similar.

They also said it will be a great mistake if the government approves the draft of the 'umbrella act' without scrutinising all its aspects through exchange of views with educationists and others

concerned.

Prof Syed Manzurul Islam, member of the search committee formed on May 15, said the spirit of the university autonomy will be affected if the 'umbrella act' is approved.

"We always welcome the reform of Public University Ordinance 1973, but the unilateral move for approving the proposed 'umbrella act' is not acceptable to teachers.

The ministry should form a committee to be led by a noted educationist for holding discussions on the umbrella act," he told The Daily Star.

Dr Mohammad Aowner Hossain, general secretary of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta), said there were moves for removing the university ordinance in the past, especially during the tenure of Ziaur Rahman and HM Ershad, but the initiatives were not successful.

"BNP-Jamaat-led government took a initiative to introduce uni-track education system without consulting teachers, students and guardians, but their initiative was not successful. In the similar way, this unilateral decision of introducing 'umbrella act' will also not be successful," he said.

Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, a renowned academic, said autonomy is essential for a public university and it is a wrong decision to run all public universities under one rule.

"We got autonomy for public university after our liberation war. The Public University Ordinance 1973 is related to our independence, and this move for 'umbrella act' is an undesirable initiative," he

told The Daily Star.

"At first, discussion with students and teachers will have to take place before taking the initiative for a new act. This unilateral steps will not be well for the nation," he added.

Former chairman of UGC Prof Asaduzzaman said he does not understand why such an initiative has been taken without consulting teachers and students of public universities.

"Only four universities including Dhaka University are now running under the university ordinance. Rest of the public universities are running under their own individual rules. However, during my tenure I recommended that the ordinance should be reformed," he said.

AAMS Arefin Siddique, former president of Duta, said public universities especially Dhaka Universities have been facing various pressure since 1973, but the university authorities could resist the pressure with the help of the ordinance.

Terming the 'umbrella act' as black law, he said its provisions, especially the nomination system for syndicate, dean and other vital posts will create anomaly.

"We might update our ordinance but this should be done by our teachers and students," he told The Daily Star.

It may be noted that the draft of 'umbrella act' has recommended banning of party-affiliated politics by students and teachers on the campuses of all public universities.



A team of National Youth Forum Bangladesh called on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Four killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Ratan, 25.

Gaffargaon police said the accident occurred when a Pagla-bound bus from Gaffargaon collided head-on with a truck coming from the opposite direction, leaving Ratan dead on the spot.

The injured were rushed to Gaffargaon Upazila Hospital and local clinics.

Our correspondent from Magura adds: One person succumbed to his injuries at Faridpur Medical College Hospital (FMCH) yesterday.

The dead identified as Nimai

Bhajan, 55, of village

Mochlondpur in Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur, was critically injured in a road accident in Magura on Monday.

He was in the Faridpur-bound pick-up van from Jhenidah with his fish fries, police said.

The accident occurred when a pick-up van hit a passenger loaded rickshaw van from behind on Monday at Hulnagar area on Magura-Faridpur highway, leaving one Chaitanya Sarkar, 45, dead on the spot and two others including Nimai injured.

Anwarul Haq joins Brac



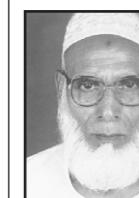
Anwarul Haq, a noted journalist, columnist and former diplomat, has been appointed director, Public Affairs and Communications of Brac, says a press release.

Prior to joining Brac, Haq was the Minister (Press) at the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi.

He also served several national publications, including The Daily Star, the now-defunct Morning Sun and The People, in various capacities.

Haq was elected president of Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) for two consecutive terms. He was also the secretary general of Old Faujians Association, organisation of the former cadets of Faujdarhat Cadet College.

Missing



Mohammad Abdul Majid Hawladar, 57, has been missing since June 29 after he went out of his 3/5 Khilgaon Staff Quarter residence at around 8:30am.

He was last seen wearing a full pant and full sleeve check shirt.

A general diary (no 159) was filed with Khilgaon Police Station on June 2.

Anyone having information about his whereabouts is requested to call Mamunur Rashid Mamun at 7216848 or 01711640193.

Obituary

Kaniz Rahman Koli, 71, former teacher of Shaheed Anwar Girls' School and College and wife of late Lt Col Imdadul Rahman, passed away at Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Dhaka on Sunday, says a press release.

She was buried at Cantonment graveyard after a namaz-e-janaza at Banani Old DOHS Mosque in the city.

To pray for salvation of her departed soul, a doa mahfil will be held at Banani Old DOHS Community Centre after Asr prayers on Friday.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the function.

Qukhwani



Qukhwani of Albadil Halim Khan Khoka, a former Rupali Bank officer and son of late Albadil Aziz Khan, will be held at his residence at 64 Siddheshwari Circular Road after Magrib prayers today, says a press release.

He passed away on July 1.

Friends and admirers are requested to attend the qukhwani.

Steps to help acid survivors

BSS, Dhaka

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The government has taken stronger and more effective initiatives in aid of acid survivors, said an official handout yesterday.

It has undertaken multifarious programmes, including ensuring enforcement of existing laws to 'control acid, check acid-related crimes and assist the victims of acid attacks', the handout said.

It added the government activities also include formulation of guidelines as per section 5 (a), (b) and (c) of Acid Control Act 2002, formation of district units of National Acid Control Committee and national acid control fund and district committee fund.

Establishing rehabilitation centres for acid survivors -- first in

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Dhaka on a priority basis and later in all divisional headquarters in phases, opening one-stop service centres for acid affected people in all medical college hospitals and district hospitals, and training of doctors and staff of different district hospitals under the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital are among the measures taken by

the government.

The government has also taken measures for regular monitoring of the cases filed under Acid Control Act 2002 and its related laws and strengthening the programme of distributing the money realised from the convicts in acid-related cases among the affected people, said the handout.

At a press conference in the city, Munkir Nayeem Sunny, a second year student of Notre Dame College, said his father Obaidul Rahman Shyamal killed their mother Sultana Yasmin Mani at their residence at Baridhara at about 3:00pm on June 18 and then hung her body from a ceiling fan with a scarf to make it look like a suicide.

He also alleged that his father had also manipulated the postmortem report, which said that Mani committed suicide, although there were injury marks in different parts of the body, including her chin.

His father's shady dealings with some unscrupulous officials has made all this possible, he added.

He also demanded that autopsy be performed on his mother's body again to find out the real cause of her death.

Nayeem said his father often tortured his mother in order to take landed property of her parents under his possession.

He also alleged that some police officials of Cantonment Police Station are not taking the case seriously as they have some understanding with his father.

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MOTHER'S DEATH Son, daughter demand trial of father

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A college student and his sister yesterday demanded that their father be brought to justice, accusing him of killing their mother.

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