

Create scope for higher education for rural students

President tells Brac University convocation

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday urged the authorities of private universities to create opportunities of higher education for the children of the country's rural people.

"Many of the country's people are being deprived of the opportunities of higher education," he said this while he was addressing the 5th convocation of Brac University at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid attended the convocation as the special guest while Professor Martha Alter Chen from Harvard University delivered her speech as the convocation speaker.

Speaking on the occasion, Zillur said that although children of the well-off section living in urban areas are getting opportunities of higher education in private universities, the children of rural people are getting deprived of.

"The main reason is that the guardians cannot afford the educational cost of their children in these private universities," he said.

Appreciating the Brac University for including some applied subjects in its curricula, the president hoped that students would be able to adjust themselves with learning of new subjects like biotechnology and informational technology.

"I hope such new subjects will play a significant role in building 'Digital Bangladesh' alongside spurring the rural economy," he said.

Describing universities as centres of excellence, Zillur hoped that the authorities would make sure education is not provided only based on textbooks.



President Zillur Rahman gives away a gold medal to a student at the 5th convocation of Brac University at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city yesterday. On his left is Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury and on his right are Fazle Hasan Abed and Nurul Islam Nahid.

"All the universities through their academic activities will have to prove that we're not lagging behind in providing education of international standard," he said.

Congratulating the new graduates, Zillur said they will have to utilise the immense potentials of Bangladesh with their wisdom, talents and intelligence.

He hoped that the new graduates would truly contribute to the welfare of the

country's mass people being imbued with humanity, patriotism and the spirit of the great War of Liberation.

Addressing the convocation, Nahid said the government is relentlessly working to ensure quality education in all private universities.

"The private university activities," he said. Private University Act 2010 is being formulated for bringing transparency and accountability in private university activities," he

said. Nahid mentioned that the government would provide all-out support to the private universities which would be able to maintain government criteria and provide quality education.

"We want both the public and private universities to provide world-class education," he said.

Brac University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury and president of its Governing Board Sir Fazle Hasan Abed also

spoke on the occasion. A total of 561 students, including 385 in undergraduate and 176 in graduates, received certificates in the convocation.

Two students -- Nubaha Mahbub of Economics (BSS) and Matthew James Reeve, Master of Public Health -- received the Chancellor's Gold Medal while another 11 students received the Vice Chancellor's Gold Medal at the convocation for their outstanding results.

UK to cut foreign student visas from outside EU

UNB, Dhaka

The number of visas granted to students from outside the European Union (EU) is to be cut in a crackdown on abuses of the system, UK Home Secretary Alan Johnson has said.

Last weekend it emerged that the UK Border Agency had temporarily suspended student visa applications from northern India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Johnson said in London yesterday tougher rules would require applicants to speak English to near-GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) level and ban those on short UK courses from bringing dependants. He said the rules were aimed at those who came to the UK primarily for work, according to a report of BBC.

The Home Office would not confirm reports the changes may cut visas issued this year by tens of thousands.

A spokesman said the review of student visas had been ordered in November. In 2008/9, about 240,000 student visas were issued by the UK.

News of the measures, which will not require legislation and will be introduced within weeks, comes a week after student visa applications from Nepal, northern India and Bangladesh were suspended amid a big rise in cases.

The spokesman said the rules were aimed at those who came to the UK primarily for work.

Last year, the UK introduced a system requiring students wishing to enter the country to secure 40 points under its criteria.

However, the government has faced criticism that this has allowed sus-

pected terrorists and other would-be immigrants into the UK.

In a statement, Johnson said he made "No apologies for strengthening a already robust system."

He added: "We created our points-based system so that we could respond quickly to changing circumstances, when necessary, to raise the bar students have to meet to come to the UK."

"We remain open to those foreign students who want to come to the UK for legitimate study - they remain welcome."

"But those who are not seriously interested in coming here to study but come primarily to work - they should be in no doubt that we will come down hard on those that flout the rules."

Under the measures, successful applicants from outside the EU will have to speak English to a level only just below GCSE standard, rather than beginner level as at present.

Students taking courses below degree level will be allowed to work for only 10 hours a week, instead of 20 as at present.

Those on courses which last under six months will not be allowed to bring dependants into the country, while the dependants of students on courses below degree level will not be allowed to work.

Additionally, visas for courses below degree level will also be granted only if the institutions they attend are on a new register, the Highly Trusted Sponsors List.

Officials said they were acting after the system had been overwhelmed and concerns had been raised that many cases were not genuine.

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BARAPUKURIA MINING Two class rooms of madrasa damaged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Land subsidence caused by underground mining activities damaged two classrooms of a madrasa in Barapukuria village under Dinajpur district Wednesday night.

Villagers said rooms for class VI and VII at Kaderia Dwimukhi Dakhil Madrasa collapsed around 11:20pm with a bang creating panic in the area. Some other rooms too have developed cracks.

"For students' safety, we are taking classes under open sky since the incident occurred," said Nuruzzaman Akand, superintendent of the madrasa.

Mining activities of Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) raised concern among the inhabitants of 15 villages around the company as frequent shaking and land subsidence damaging their houses or destroying

croplands, villagers said. Demanding compensation and rehabilitation of the affected villagers, a three-kilometres human chain was formed in the area on January 17 last.

Meanwhile, the madrasa authorities on Thursday informed the BCMCL authorities about the collapse of the building. But the mining company is yet to respond.

Contacted, BCMCL Managing Director Quamruzzaman admitted the incident. He along with other officials of the company visited the spot and assessed the damage of the madrasa, he added.

He also said BCMCL would repair the damaged rooms within the shortest possible time.

Coal mining officials are also concerned about the frequent land subsidence since the first one was reported in May 2006, sources said.



AB Bank Foundation has recently distributed blankets among the poor and destitute people at Kollagram in Khadim Nagar, Sylhet. The photo shows Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Atiur Rahman handing over a blanket to a woman. President and Managing Director of AB Bank Ltd. Kaiser A Chowdhury was also present.

India to take steps to activate Saarc Food Bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India yesterday assured Bangladesh of taking necessary steps and extending cooperation to activate the Saarc Food Bank, a proposal approved by the eight-member grouping in its 14th summit in the Indian capital of New Delhi in 2007.

The assurance came when Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Rajeev Mitter called on Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque at his ministry office, according to an official handout.

Dr Razzaque said the food bank proposed by the South Asian Association for Regional

Cooperation (Saarc) can play effective role to ensure food security in the region. Climate change may cause food insecurity in the region, so the proposal of the food bank should be made effective soon, he noted.

"The networking among the Saarc countries must be strengthened about the issue and India's role in this regard is crucial," he told the Indian envoy. He said Bangladesh can use the experience of India's National Rural Employment Generation Programme that brought positive change in India.

Dr Razzaque said there is also almost a similar programme in Bangladesh. However, Bangladesh could surely get experience of India, he added.

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