

Govt mulling closure of educational institutions

Says Quader, amid stalemate in decision despite coronavirus concerns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid concerns from students and their guardians following the first confirmed cases of coronavirus in the country, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said the government is mulling over closing the educational institutions.

"Closing schools and colleges is being discussed at the high level of the government. We are intensively monitoring the situation. We will take necessary steps in the right time," he said at a press conference after an AL secretariat meeting on the celebration of the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the party president's political office at Dhanmondi in the city.

Sources at the meeting said several leaders present there spoke in favour of closure of all educational institutes.

Up until yesterday, the decision had remained in limbo, with the health and education ministries referring to each other for taking the decision.

Since March 8, when the first novel coronavirus-affected person was diagnosed, Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, on several occasions, said the decision of shutting down educational institutions will be



School students wearing face masks to classes have become a common scene over the last week, since the first case of coronavirus was reported in the country. The photo was taken yesterday in front of Ashkona's Bangamata Sheikh Fozilatunnessa High School.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

taken following the directives of the health ministry.

Education Minister Dipu Moni on several occasions also said the government will decide on closure of schools after consulting with specialists.

However, Health Minister

Zahid Maleque yesterday noon after an inter-ministerial meeting told reporters that the education ministry will take decision regarding shutdown of educational institutions.

Asked about the ministry's decision, he said they gave

directives to representatives of the education ministry to beef up hygiene measures and provide soaps and sanitisers.

"Moreover, we've asked them to disinfect benches after classes," he said.

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Man with coronavirus symptoms flees hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A patient with coronavirus-like symptoms escaped from Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital yesterday afternoon.

Shahjahan (40), who returned from Bahrain, was admitted to the hospital's medicine ward around 8am.

He was suffering from fever, cough, sneezing and breathing issues, hospital Director Uttam Kumar Barua told The Daily Star.

After examining his health condition, doctors suspected that it might be a case of coronavirus, so they called for a team from Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), the director said.

When the IEDCR team reached the hospital around 12:30pm and went to the medicine ward, doctors did not find him or his wife there, he added.

Uma Rani Saha, a nurse at the hospital, told The Daily Star that the patient was very nervous when he heard that he might be infected with coronavirus.

Shahjahan, hailing from Noakhali, came to Dhaka from Bahrain on January 18.

Police arrest muggers responsible for death of woman in Mugda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested four people, who are responsible for the death of a woman after falling from a rickshaw during mugging in the capital's Mugda on February 29.

Detectives arrested the four in Mugda Stadium area early yesterday, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Detective Branch (east) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star.

The arrestees are Mizuan Mia (29), Sheikh Liton (38), Abdul Majid (33) and Rafiq Hawlader (42). Police seized a firearm, one round of bullet, two knives, two private cars, and some cash from their possession.

Of them, Mizuan gave confessional statement to a Dhaka court yesterday.

Mizuan came to the capital 15 years back, but joined hands with Majid five years ago and formed a gang.

Mizuan and one Mona used to take cars from Liton. Mona drove car while Mizuan snatched people's bags and valuables from the moving vehicle.

Liton called Mizaun on February 28 and told him to come to Shahjahanpur at night. On arrival, he saw Mona and Liton with the car. Mizuan and Mona started moving on the city street looking for a prey. Early in the morning, they found Tarina Begum Lipi on the rickshaw with her son in Mugda area.

"Our car intercepted the rickshaw, and I snatched her bag," Mizuan told the court, adding that they got a cellphone and Tk 2,000 in her purse. Lipi (38), who then fell from the rickshaw, died hours later in a hospital from head injury.

Hailing from Sylhet's Sadar upazila, her family members came to Dhaka on February 24 to visit their relatives in South Rajarbagh. The incident happened around 5:30am while Lipi and her family members were going to Kamalapur Railway Station to board a train to Sylhet.

When her rickshaw was crossing Mugda stadium, a mugger from inside a white car pulled Lipi's bag so hard that she fell onto the road and suffered a head injury.

Police said the gang continued their notorious activities, and robbed one in Mirpur the same day.

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Police get 215 new SP-rank posts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a major development in Bangladesh Police, the Ministry of Home Affairs has created a total of 215 new posts of superintendent of police (SP) rank in its organogram, in a bid to bring dynamism to the force.

With the 215 new posts, the total number of posts in the Bangladesh Police organogram from constable to inspector general of police (IGP) will now stand at 2,12,744, according to a ministry circular signed by Tahmina Begum, deputy secretary to the home ministry, issued yesterday.

According to the circular, these SP posts were only created in different police units, including Police Headquarters (PHQ), Criminal Investigation Department, Special Branch, Bangladesh Police Academy, Metropolitan Police, Range Police, Anti-Terrorism Unit, Tourist Police, River Police and in-service training centres.

However, there will be no changes in the positions of current district SPs.

Officials said there were only 367 SP posts in the police force earlier, which now stands at 582.

The 230 officials who got "in-situ promotion" as SP from their posts of additional superintendents around one and half years back, will be appointed against the vacant posts, a high official of PHQ told The Daily Star yesterday.

These officials got promotions on November 7, 2018, but did not get the charge of office till now, as no posts were vacant.

An "in-situ" official is someone who continues to hold the same office and perform the same duties even after being elevated to a higher position.

Aiming to resolve the crisis, PHQ proposed to create 230 new SP posts in the force after abolishing the same number of additional SP posts from the organogram, following a meeting on August 25, last year. The ministry finally approved the proposal yesterday.

Certificates on demand!

Rab busts 'degree selling' scam

MUNTAKIM SAAD

"A certificate may change your life and fulfil your dreams," reads the tagline of their website.

"Centre for Private Education" lured in people through the website and a call centre, with the promise of providing any certificate they wanted -- from SSC to Master's -- for a price. Rapid Action Battalion on Saturday conducted a raid at the offices of Razia Group of Companies, and found the "educational institution" in Gulshan and Badda areas, ABM Faijul Islam, additional superintendent and staff officer (Operation) of Rab-3, told The Daily Star.

They arrested four people and recovered some certificates, passports, testimonials, leaflets, money receipts and registry books.

The arrestees are Azizur Rahman (27), Rafiqul Islam (30), Shariful Islam (18), and Haider Ali (30).

Rab said the institution is owned by one Ziaur Rahman, chairman of Razia Group of Companies.

Located in Pragati Tower in Badda, the company has other sister concerns like Mina Interior & Architecture Ltd, Razia IT Solution Ltd, Razia Medical Tourism & Travels, Study Aboard -- visanews24.com, Mina Developers Ltd, Razia Hajj & Umrah Agency, E-commerce -- Shop Online, and Glasgow Commerce College, according to their website.

They have another office in Gulshan's Kalachandpur, where the "Centre for Private Education" is located, Rab said.

At the office, there is a call centre where four to five girls work as agents.

They would divide clients in four groups: if someone did not pick up calls, they wrote "no response". If the potential client showed no interest, they are "cold customer"; if one is somewhat interested, they are listed as "warm customer", and if anyone shows genuine interest to get certificates, he is tagged as "hot customer", Rab said after interrogating the arrestees.

They called interested customers to their offices, and had them admitted to their institution for Tk 5,000, Rab said. An SSC certificate would cost Tk 30,000, HSC for Tk 60,000 and higher degree certificates for Tk 1,20,000.

After signing a contract, the customer gets a receipt, and is told to meet after two months.

"In this period, the customer doesn't need to visit the office either," the Rab official said.

The next steps were taken by the company chairman Ziaur Rahman. "Ziaur has put 'Dr' before his name, though we didn't get any authenticity of it. We are looking for him," the Rab official added.

Asked how he managed the certificate, the Rab official said the fraudster would get a certificate copy from the website of any university, and then edited the customer's details there. When a customer wanted to see the certificate, they would show it on a computer screen, and demanded more money to print it, he said.

Rab said they have been keeping eyes on the fraud company since January, after getting a complaint from a youth.

The youth is an SSC dropout, but needed a certificate recently for a job. He paid Tk 30,000 to the company for the certificate. They gave him a testimonial but kept demanding more money for the certificate. The youth then made a verbal complaint to Rab, added the Rab official.

The Daily Star contacted several phone numbers of Ziaur Rahman and the company, but none picked up the calls.

CONSTABLE MURDER IN GAZIPUR

Mastermind among three held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday claimed to have arrested three persons for their alleged involvement in killing a police constable of Gazipur Metropolitan Police.

The arrestees are Mofazzal Hossain (28) and Masud Mia (25) of Mymensingh and Monir Hossain (30) of Netrakona.

A team of Rab-1 arrested the three from Mastarbari area of Gazipur on Saturday night and seized a bloodstained knife, a wrench and three mobile sets from their possessions, said Lt Col Shafee Bulbul, director of Rab-1. He was addressing a briefing at the battalion media centre in the capital's Karwan Bazar.

On March 4, police recovered the slaughtered body of a youth in front of Bhalwal National Park in Gazipur. Four days later, police buried the body at Chandna cemetery in Gazipur as an unidentified body.

On March 12, Police Bureau of Investigation confirmed the identity of the deceased as Md Sharif Ahmed (33) -- a constable of Gazipur police -- through his fingerprint. The body was handed over to his family following a court order.

Rab was involved in the shadow investigation and based on information, arrested the planner and mastermind of the killing Mofazzal from Shreepur area of Gazipur, said the Rab-1 director.

Gleaning information from him, Rab arrested two others from Mymensingh, he said, adding that in primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted their involvement.

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Obituary

Raisunnessa Huq

Mrs. Raisunnessa Huq, wife of eminent economist, the late Dr. Mazharul Huq, passed away peacefully on March 12, 2020. Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un (We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return). She leaves behind her daughters Nina and Afreen, son Munir and his wife Elaine, grandchildren Zeeshan, his wife Sabrina, Adnan, his wife Abegail, Javed and Zahir, and great grandchildren Zuhan, Zehna and Bella.

While we mourn her passing, we celebrate and share her life of fulfillment and accomplishments, which was quite rare among women of her generation. Raisunnessa Huq, also known as Dolly and Kasida, will be fondly remembered by friends and family as a dedicated and passionate social worker. Her pioneering role in introducing medical social work in the country in the 1950s deserves special mention. Without any expectation of fame or even being noticed she started her work on a voluntary basis at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Over the years medical social work gained momentum and through her untiring effort medical social workers became an established cadre within the government system. In recognition of her work she received a national award in the 1960s. Her unassuming yet assertive personality was the strength behind her voluntary work.

With her passion to serve and with the encouragement of her very supportive life partner Mrs. Huq joined the Pakistan Women's National Guard in 1948 and was trained in nursing and welfare. In the early fifties she joined the Women's Voluntary Association in London and in 1956 went back to London to train as a hospital social worker at the Institute of Almoners. In 1964 she received a Ford Foundation scholarship for further studies in Public Health at the University of Berkeley, California.

In 1953 Mrs. Huq joined the Family Planning Association as a founder member. Initial activities of the Association were mostly confined to addressing the existing social prejudices and taboos against family planning and approaching the government to adopt FP as an official programme.

While working for several years in the field of Planned Parenthood and Public Health, Raisunnessa Huq was also the President of Concerned Women for Family Planning from 1976 to 1980. Till a few years ago she served as President of Ahsania Mohila Mission. The Mission recalls her invaluable contribution in establishing their orphanage and school for girls.

As we, her family, try to find peace in our grief.....

*"May the winds of heaven blow softly and whisper in your ear
How much we love and miss you, and wish that you were here"*

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