

DU BUDGET 2020-21

Research gets low priority yet again

DU CORRESPONDENT

Despite repeated complaints from different sections of academics and students on Dhaka University's lack of research work, the university's newest budget still paints a bleak picture for the sector. Moreover, the authorities did not spend the full amount allocated in education and research sector for the last fiscal year (2019-2020), according to the revised budget.

Tk 869.56 crore budget for fiscal year 2020-21 was placed at the second chapter of annual Senate session, which was adjourned on June 14.

It was initially approved on June 28 by finance committee and later on by the syndicate on Monday.

In last year's budget, the total allocation for research was 40 crore 60 lakh 70 thousand taka. But in the revised budget, total spending in the sector last year was shown to be Tk 36.62 crore.

This is not a first-time occurrence, rather the university has not been able to spend the allocated amount for research several times in the last decade.

According to the university budget book, in 2016-17, 12.16 crore was allocated while Tk 8.16 crore was spent.

In 2014-15, Tk 2.36 crore was spent from the Tk 3 crore allocation; in 2012-

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Schools have been closed for months now. To escape the boredom of their homes and get some fresh air, these two teenagers have picked a serene spot beside the Kirtonkhola river to get some studying done. The photo was taken yesterday at Barishal Sadar upazila's Chorkaua area.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

ENSURING SECURITY FOR WORKERS

Vietnam to investigate Bangladeshi brokers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Vietnam government has ordered police to investigate the brokers from Bangladesh and ensure security for Bangladeshi workers in the Southeast Asian country, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

The move comes three days after 17 Bangladeshis traveled to Hanoi from Vung Tau, around 1,677 kilometres away from Hanoi, and had been sitting by a roadside some 200 yards off the Bangladesh embassy, demanding repatriation to Bangladesh. "The Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam issued an order to Ho Chi Minh City Police, Binh Duong Police and Vung Tau Police to investigate the brokers from Bangladesh and ensure security for foreign workers," said the statement.

Vietnam police are working with local companies which sponsored their visas to take responsibility of the 17 and take them back to Vung Tau City, give them accommodation, jobs and facilitate their repatriation when commercial flights resume, the foreign ministry said. Talking to The Daily Star over phone, one of the workers said they had gone to Vietnam early this month but were hardly given any job. Recently, their Bangladeshi brokers cut off water pipe connections to their accommodation in Vung Tau and threatened them of grave consequences after some of the workers had spoken to the media.

"We all have BMET [Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training] cards. We were promised good jobs... We faced various forms of exploitation by Bangladeshi brokers. We want to return home," said Faridul Islam, one of the 17 Bangladeshis. Contacted, Bangladesh Ambassador to Vietnam Samina Naz said the Vietnam authorities instructed the company of these 17 people to take responsibility.

"The company representative called us with assurances that they would take them back to work even though they fled the company, breaching their rules. The company will provide their return fare [to Vung Tau], accommodation and food. They have passports, visas and work permits

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'Look after women migrant workers'

Rights groups urge countries of origin and destination at RMMRU e-symposium

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Migrant rights and advocacy groups from across regions yesterday called on countries of origin and destination to undertake a gender-responsive assessment of the Covid-19 crisis, recovery packages and plans with particular focus on low-skilled women and men migrant workers to guide investment priorities.

They urged the governments to invest in preserving women migrants jobs, facilitate recovery of unpaid wages and assets left behind, and allow women migrants the possibility of contracting other available jobs in destination sites.

They further urged to provide income support and ensure free testing and treatment for Covid-19 for all migrants in better equipped and infection controlled environments in both countries of origin and countries of destination. They made the call during an e-symposium titled "Drawing the Curtain: Experiences of Women Migrant Workers" organised by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).

It was part of RMMRU's series of such events under the banner "Build Back Better" on the Covid-19 situation and migration. As a long term initiative, the rights and advocacy groups urged the governments to frame

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5 'online gamblers' arrested in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Detectives yesterday arrested five alleged members of an online gambling syndicate from different areas of Chattogram city.

The arrestees are Shakhawat Hossain Shaon (20), Monir Ahmed (40), Arif Uddin (40), Foyzal Khan (32) and Javed Mia (40).

Police seized Tk 2.22 lakh in cash, several laptops, and a private car from their possession.

Md Ali Hossain, deputy commissioner of Detective Branch of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (North Zone), said the syndicate used to swindle money from public through several online sites and mobile apps and they already accumulated a huge amount of money.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Asif Mohiuddin said Shaon, the kingpin in the gambling syndicate, already bought the brand new car through illegal earnings.

Shaon also managed several mobile banking accounts for money transaction, said the police official.

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In search of a millenium-old higher-learning centre

Archaeology department to start looking for Chandrapur; historians say it hosted an educational complex with nine mathas

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Ancient Bengal was a land of knowledge where institutional education flourished through vihara (monastery), mahavihara (monastic complex of viharas) and matha (cloister, institute or college). Thousand-year-old heritages like Nalanda, Shalban, Somapura, Vikramshila, Jagaddala and many others stand tall as a testament to our glorious past.

These ancient higher-learning institutions eventually laid the foundation of what later came to be known as universities.

Srihatta (present day Sylhet division) is home to such an institution, which is older than Jagaddala, as disciplined as Nalanda and was built in the early 10th century, according to historians.

King Srichandra of Chandra dynasty of south-eastern Bengal patronised constructing nine mathas at Chandrapur of Srihatta.

Details of these mathas were inscribed in a copperplate grant (historical legal records engraved on copper plates) found in Paschimbhag of Rajnagar upazila in Moulvibazar in 1958, which was later decoded and translated.

And after 62 years of this historical finding, the Department of Archaeology is all set to explore and excavate the long-lost heritage of the land, which lies beneath the ground -- once known as Chandrapur.

CHANDRA DYNASTY

The Chandra dynasty of south-eastern Bengal ruled these lands from approximately 900 to 1050 AD, spanning five generations of kings, according to eminent historian Prof Dr Abdul Momin Chowdhury.

According to his book "Dynastic History of Bengal", the kingdom was established by king Trilokyachandra and later ruled by his successors Srichandra, also spelled Sricandra, (930 to 975 AD), Kalyanchandra



PHOTO: COURTESY

A photograph of The Paschimbhag copperplate inscription, whereabouts of which are currently unknown.

(975 to 1000 AD), Ladhachandra (1000 to 1020 AD) and Govindachandra (1020 to 1050 AD).

"Under Srichandra, the kingdom prospered and reached its peak, which seemed to continue during the reign of his son and successor Kalyanchandra," he mentioned in the book.

King Srichandra's administrative centre was at Vikramapura -- present day Bikrampur of Munshiganj -- and the kingdom included most of the northern, eastern and southern Vanga or Bengal.

PASCHIMBHAG COPPERPLATE INSCRIPTION

King Srichandra ruled for 45 years, longest in the dynasty; and his achievements, prosperity, battles and generosity were engraved in the copperplate inscriptions or grants at the time.

So far, 12 inscriptions of the Chandra dynasty are found and eight of them are from during the reign of Srichandra.

These are Rampal plate, Kedarpur plate, Idilpur plate, Madanpur

plate, Dulla plate, Bogra plate, a plate at Bangladesh Museum and Paschimbhag plate. All of them are land grants (a grant of public land, especially to an institution, organisation, or to particular groups of people).

Paschimbhag plate is the most notable and discussed.

According to Kamala Kanta Gupta Choudhury (commonly referred as Kamalakanta Gupta) -- a decoder of the inscription and author of "Copperplates of Sylhet" -- the inscription was accidentally found by one Binod Bihari Chakravarti in 1958 in a vacant land of Paschimbhag village of Rajnagar upazila in present day Moulvibazar.

The inscription was then passed into the custody of Pandit Syamapada Kavyatirtha Bhattacharya. Later in 1961, Sylhet Historical and Archaeological Society's member Aminur Rashid Chowdhury acquired it for the society and Kamalakanta Gupta decoded it by 1962.

"But whereabouts of the copperplate is unknown at present. It was primarily preserved by the society and some say it was later given to Kolkata Museum. But I visited all possible places in the last four years [in India and Bangladesh], but could not find it," Dr Md Zafir Uddin (Zafir Setu) of the Bangla department at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, told this correspondent recently.

WHAT THE INSCRIPTION SAYS

The Paschimbhag copperplate inscription was of 5th regnal (of a reign or monarchy) of king Srichandra, which was approximately during the year 935 AD.

Though family history of the king, his conquest and many other incidents were engraved in it, the main reason of the inscription was for land grant.

It was written in Sanskrit but the script is Devanagiri -- a left-to-right abugida (writing system) based on the ancient Brahmi script -- commonly

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Bangladesh calls for equitable access to Covid-19 vaccine

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has called for fair and equitable access to Covid-19 vaccine to make sure all countries, especially ones that need it the most, have access to the life-saving product.

Ambassador Rabab Fatima, Bangladesh's permanent representative to the UN in New York, made the call at a virtual conversation co-hosted by Lord Tariq Ahmad, UK minister of state for the Commonwealth and UN, and Ambassador Elizabeth Cousins, president and CEO at United Nations Foundation yesterday.

Kate O'Brien -- director of World Health Organization's (WHO) Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals -- and Marie-Ange Saraka-Yao -- managing director at Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (Gavi) -- briefed on the approaches towards universal access to potential Covid-19 vaccines.

Fatima said although developments centring various vaccine candidates are undoubtedly encouraging, strong global commitment and collaboration to treat Covid-19 vaccine as a "global public good" is essential.

MEDICAL ENTRANCE EXAM

Questions leaked from DGHS press: CID

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police said question papers of medical and dental admission tests were leaked repeatedly from the printing press under Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

They revealed the information after arresting five people of a crime ring, including one of its masterminds, Jasim Uddin Bhuiyan Munnu. The other arrestees are Parvez Khan, Jakir Hossain Dipu, Samiul Zafar and SM Sanwar Hossain. They were caught from the capital's Mirpur area on Sunday and Monday.

CID Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police Sumon Kumar Das disclosed the matter at a press briefing at CID headquarters in Malibagh yesterday.

"Initially, we came to know through multiple sources that these question papers were printed from the press under DGHS since 1988," he said. "Members of this ring were linked to this press or some of their family members were associated with it. We primarily suspect that the ring used their connections and leaked papers."

CID said the accused are members of an organised gang that used to supply these papers digitally before exams from 2013-18 in exchange for a hefty amount of money.

They found at least 50 people in the racket across the country. "Hundreds of students have been admitted to medical colleges through the racket. We have identified the whole racket during a long investigation," ASP Sumon said.

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Kishore, Mushtaq denied bail again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A virtual court in Dhaka yesterday rejected a bail petition of cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore and writer Mushtaq Ahmed in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after their lawyer submitted a petition seeking bail through email against the rejection order of the lower court.

On June 16, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Jasim rejected both the remand and bail petitions of Kishore, Mushtaq and two others and allowed police to interrogate them at jail gate for two days.

At yesterday's hearing, the defence lawyer told the court that their clients were arrested on May 5 and since then they have been in jail custody, adding that they were implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass them. DMP's assistant commissioner Md Farid Ahmed opposed the defence pleas, saying charges brought against them were found to be true.

Eleven people -- including the four arrestees -- were charged with "spreading rumours and carrying out anti-government activities" on May 6. Rab-3 Assistant Director Abu Bakar Siddique said Swedish-Bangladeshi journalist Tasneem Khalil, US-based journalist Shahed Alam and blogger Asif Mohiuddin are also among those named in the case.

According to the FIR filed with Ramna Police Station, Kishore was picked up on May 5 from his Kakrail home.

It mentioned that upon interrogation, he disclosed the name of Mushtaq who was then apprehended from his Lalmatia's house in the capital on the same day.

However, Mushtaq's family alleged that he was picked up on the early hours of May 4. Kishore and Mushtaq landed in jail after they were produced before a Dhaka court on May 6.

Later, two more accused -- Didarul Islam Bhuiyan, an activist of a platform called 'Rastrachinta', and businessman Minhaj Mannan Emon -- were also arrested and are now in jail custody.



City residents are so used to seeing their roads entangled in overhead cables, many never give a second thought while looking above. But a camera pointed at the madness shows just how severe the mess is. On many occasions, authorities have tried to get rid of this menace, but to no avail. This photo was taken yesterday from the capital's Fakirapool.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Child dies, three others suffer burns in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-year-old boy died and three of his family members sustained burns after accumulated gas exploded and caused a fire in their house in Dhaka's Bangshal area yesterday morning.

The dead was identified as Mainul Islam. His parents Javed Hossain (30) and Sheuli Akter (25) and sister Jannatul Ferdous (5) were rushed to Sheikh Hasina National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute.

They sustained 37, 17 and 60 percent burns respectively.

Faisalur Rahman, senior station officer of Siddique Bazar Fire Station, said they suspected that gas emitted from a leak in the gas line accumulated in the house on the ground floor at Kasaituli area.

The explosion took place when the accumulated gas somehow came in contact with fire at around 8am, possibly an ignited matchstick, he added.

A portion of a wall collapsed on impact and debris fell on the boy, leaving him dead on the spot, he said.

The three others sustained burns as the fire engulfed the house, fire officials said. Quoting locals, Faisalur said some workers carried out repair work in the gas line and

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