

Excellence in Education Through Cooperation and Compassion

In conversation with Prof. Md. Anwarul Kabir, Vice Chancellor, State University of Bangladesh

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Vice Chancellor Prof. Md. Anwarul Kabir speaks to The Daily Star about the comeback of State University of Bangladesh, how they have been delivering quality education services to its students throughout the years and how the institution continues to be a symbol of excellence in the field of education throughout the pandemic.

Can you tell us about the origins of State University of Bangladesh (SUB)?

State University of Bangladesh has been one of the leading private universities in Bangladesh. It was established in 2002. Hence, our journey has been continuing for the past 18 years. To date, we have 10 departments and 18 programs. Some notable departments include Architecture, Business, Computer Science and Engineering, English, Pharmacy and Public Health. Some departments offer more than one program, which includes Bachelor's and Master's programs. Our Pharmacy department is highly reputed in Bangladesh. Both the Pharmacy programs in our university have been accredited by the Bangladesh Phar-



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macy Council. Our Architecture program is accredited as well. We always try to acquire the best available professors, lecturers and resources for our departments to function properly.

Due to Covid-19, the universities of the country like other academic institutions are detached from physical classes for about one year. How have you survived during this situation?

Like many countries around the world, the education sector in Bangladesh was severely affected by Covid-19. But, through sheer determination and coordination, the private universities in Bangladesh have persevered by shifting to an online education platform. During the beginning of the lockdown, our top administration, teachers and our students put huge efforts into integrating towards an entirely new platform

of education system. In only a week, we did the monumental task of transitioning from an offline class to online classes. We have already conducted our Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters through online classes, and continue to do so in Spring 2021.

What sort of support have been provided to the students by SUB?

Our faculty members, coordinators, and Heads of departments extensively reached out to all our students and provided counselling and support to transition into this online medium of education. You know that a lion share of the students who pursue university education reside in the countryside. It was a mammoth task for the SUB to bring all of them to our network. We also knew that the students, and especially their families, were in financial hardship because of the pandemic. For that, we have been providing every student with a 20 percent special waiver, so that no student is left out with the woes of financial hardship. We also monitor how many students are attending the classes, and coordinate with faculties and department Heads in finding students who were unable to attend those classes for lack of resources. We helped them by providing the essential resources. We have also revoked imposing fines on students who paid their fees at a later time.

Are you satisfied with the online classes those you have provided to your students?

How have you maintained the quality of the classes?

We did not apply the online platform of education in isolation. We looked at various other universities in our country, and abroad. Above all, we brought everything to the notice of the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC). Whatever we did, we tried to follow the guidelines of the UGC. They directed how to conduct online classes and take online exams. They provided us with the guideline where four modes of exam structure could be used to take exams. The modes are categorically included visual presentation, case method, assignment and viva voce. For the outgoing students who have lab work, UGC circulated a 7-point direction which was to be followed for those students to take class in the University. So, we have followed all the directives of UGC to keep our education to the quality that was before the pandemic.

The government has indicated that academic institutions including universities will be opened soon. What preparation have you taken for post-Covid classes?

SUB has state-of-the-art facilities in Dhanmondi and Kalabagan, and a permanent campus in South Purbachal. We have a plan to take classes in all the three campuses. We are fully prepared to take physical classes as soon as the government and education board gives us the green signal to move towards opening the university. We

have taken the necessary health guidelines to action. We have the service to check the temperature of anyone who enters the university premises. We have stationed hand sanitizers at important sections of the university ground. We have spread out the seating arrangement in the classes to maintain the social distancing guidelines.

We have known that SUB has taken extended initiatives to expand its international linkage and research activities with a new dimension. Can you elaborate on these?

As far as research is of concern, our university is maintaining relationships with various government agencies. Some of the colleagues from our Food Engineering department have already received funds from the Ministry of Science and Technology. Some are also on the verge of acquiring funding for various other research and projects linked with the government. We also have the policy of promoting our faculty members based on their research capabilities. So, we have three journals, which have been published by three different schools and a good number of articles have been submitted. They have been sent to the reviewers and when all formalities are complete, the journals will be published soon. It's wonderful to have research and journals published in Bangladesh and in the rest of the world. We have been performing really well in this regard and I'm very happy about it.

What message does SUB have for those who recently passed the HSC exam and intend to get admission in universities?

I would like to congratulate all of them for their success. This is a crucial time for them, because now they need to choose a career. Our career development centre is very strong; our teachers are also very capable in showing the right path to the students. For students who passed HSC this year, SUB can be a good university to guide them towards their desired destination. We have a very strong alumni network as well, which is 15,000 strong. They work in various public and private industries, which students might find very helpful in the future. We are also trying to develop soft skills in all of our students to benefit their future careers. I have conducted a workshop with business students on Income Tax return so that they can fill the necessary forms without any outside assistance. We always believe in ethical education. One has to work hard if they want to get a degree from our institution. So, we hope the students will choose State University of Bangladesh as their new home for quality education and build capacity within themselves.