

Desperation over ACCOMMODATION

RU admission seekers struggle to find a place to stay as exams start

ANWAR ALI with ARAFAAT RAHAMAN

As feared, many admission seekers of Rajshahi University (RU) and their guardians were desperate to find a place to stay yesterday, and the situation was exacerbated by unusually high accommodation rents in the city.

RU authorities began holding its three-day honours admission tests yesterday, keeping students' residential halls, bar the women's dorms, closed. Some 1.28 lakh students are sitting for the tests, which will be held till October 6.

Many admission seekers and their guardians said they had to sleep under the open sky, after finding no place to stay. Some were seen passing the night on footpaths, and some stayed inside the buses by which they came to Rajshahi.

Rents for seats (dormitory accommodation) soared. A seat that used to go for Tk 1,200 per month was rented out for at least Tk 3,000 per night.

"I was roaming around the train station, planning to spend the night there. Finally, a person offered me a room to stay along with six other admission seekers," said admission-seeker Naim Hasan from Dhaka.

Khalilur Rahman, a resident of Dhaka, said he managed a seat at a private hostel

for himself and his son for two nights, spending Tk 6,000.

Ahmed Ibrahim of Patuakhali, who went to Rajshahi with his son and daughter for the tests, said, "I managed a seat for my daughter at the women's hall, but found no place for my son and I."

Later, a stranger arranged the night's stay for Ibrahim's son at his home, and the admission seeker had to stay in the veranda.

Many Rajshahi residents, RU's teachers and students, and local politicians hosted the admission seekers at their houses.

Mohammad Shahriar Alam, state minister for foreign affairs, said his parents and sister made arrangements for 12 students and their guardians to stay at their homes. "We do this every year. It has become a tradition for the people of Rajshahi," he said.

Asaduzzaman Asad, former district secretary of Awami League, said 17 students were staying with him at his home.

Amid this situation, RU Vice Chancellor Prof Golam Sabbir Sattar announced that they will consider holding tests in all divisions from next year.

"We will discuss holding the admission tests either in all divisions or in clusters

with other universities," he said while observing the tests on campus yesterday.

He, however, said the decision depends on a series of discussions with university academic councils and government officials.

Regarding accommodation for girls, RU Provoosts' Council Convenor Prof Md Ekram Hossain said the women's dorms housed some 600 girls and their guardians on Sunday night.

The dorms, which have a capacity for taking in 3,000 people, were set to accommodate some 2,500 yesterday night. Meanwhile, claims of charging extra fares were raised against drivers of auto-rickshaws and human hauliers. Students said auto-rickshaw drivers charged them Tk 30 to Tk 50, when the usual fare is Tk 10.

Due to the inflow of so many people, there were major traffic jams at different intersections. Auto-rickshaw driver Hafizur Rahman said they charge higher during admission tests, as traffic jams during the period reduce their income.

Rajshahi Metropolitan Police Commissioner Abu Kalam Siddique said they ensured security for the visitors, and will take steps if anyone charges higher for anything.



Many admission seekers and their guardians have taken up abode at the city's Kazla Gate Masjid, after finding no other suitable accommodation. Meanwhile, the RU premises were buzzing with people from across the country yesterday.

PHOTO COURTESY: MAHFUZUR RAHMAN

- 1.28 lakh students sitting for three-day tests on Oct 4-6
- Only women's dorms open at RU
- Accommodation rents have soared
- Many staying under open sky, at mosques, inside buses
- Locals trying best to host students, guardians

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ADMISSION-SEEKER NAIM HASAN FROM DHAKA

Vaccination for students, teachers begins at DU

Dorms reopen today



The special vaccination drive started at the medical centre of DU yesterday. The centre has facilities to vaccinate around 5,500 students, along with some teachers and staffers.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DU CORRESPONDENT

A day before the Dhaka University halls reopen, Covid-19 vaccination drive for the university teachers, students, officials and employees began on the campus yesterday.

The vaccination programme is being held at a temporary set-up at the Martyred Intellectual Dr Muhammad Murtaza Medical Centre. It is slated to continue till October 17.

Dr Sarwar Jahan Muktafi, chief medical officer of the medical centre, told The Daily Star that they have the facilities to vaccinate around 5,500 students, along with some teachers and employees.

Earlier around 9:30am yesterday, Vice-Chancellor Professor Md Akhtaruzzaman inaugurated the campaign. He said they took the initiative so that students can get vaccinated within a short period of time.

"We will be able to resume normal operations as soon as all students get vaccinated," he said.

Speaking at the inauguration, Dhaka district Civil Surgeon Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan said, "We don't usually allow setting up vaccination centres outside of hospitals or government organisations, but we've permitted this centre with highest priority."

According to an official of the university's ICT cell, around 23,000 of the total 47,000 students have received at least the first dose of Covid-19 vaccines, meaning around 49 percent students have been vaccinated.

Among them, around 18,000 have received the



Total students **47,000**
23,000 have already received first or second dose
265 teachers, students, staffers inoculated yesterday
 Drive to continue till October 17

second dose, the source said. Earlier, DU provost standing committee had recommended resuming in-person classes once all students get vaccinated.

DORMS TO REOPEN TODAY

The vaccination drive comes ahead of the decision to reopen the university's halls today after 18 months, albeit at a limited scale—only for honours final year and masters' students.

According to a recent decision of the provost standing committee, only honours final year and masters' students who will be able to produce their vaccine certificates or have received at least the first dose will be allowed to enter the residential halls.

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Dengue claims two more lives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

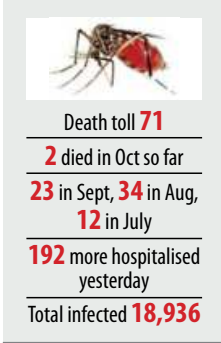
At least two more dengue patients died while 192 were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday, of whom 30 are from outside Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With the new cases, 739 were diagnosed during the running month out of a total 18,936 infected this year. Of the total, 2,448 were from outside Dhaka.

In September, 7,841 were diagnosed with dengue, 7,698 in August, 2,286 in July, 272 in June and 43 were infected in May.

According to the DGHS, 71 people have died of dengue infection in the country this year. Twelve people have died in July, 34 in August, 23 in September and two in October so far.

Though most of the patients who were hospitalised have so far been released, 922 are still undergoing treatment at hospitals in Dhaka, and 179 outside the capital.



A life dedicated to the struggle for freedom

Speakers recall contributions of noted journalist Khandaker Muniruzzaman at book launch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a commemorative event yesterday recalled the nation-building contributions of celebrated journalist Khandaker Muniruzzaman, highlighting that he was a progressive mind who upheld progressive ideals, secular politics and freedom of speech.

Muniruzzaman's activism was not limited to journalism only -- he was also actively involved in various labour movements and worked for oppressed and marginalised communities, they said.

He also played a significant role in different movements in the country, said speakers at the launch of "Jibon Nibedito Muktir Sangramey: Muniruzzaman Smarak Grantha" -- a book commemorating the contributions of the noted

journalist -- held at the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

The event was organised by the book's editorial team.

Muniruzzaman (71) passed away on November 24 last year. He was serving as the acting editor of the Daily Sangbad at the time of his demise.

"Muniruzzaman is the name of a 'true human warrior' of our time," said Bangla Academy Director General and noted poet Mohammad Nurul Huda.

Addressing the discussion as chief guest, Nurul Huda said Muniruzzaman made significant contributions to different struggles of the country's liberation movement in the 1960s and the Liberation War of 1971.

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Distinguished guests at yesterday's commemorative discussion on noted journalist Khandaker Muniruzzaman, where the cover-jacket of the memorial book "Jibon Nibedito Muktir Sangramey: Muniruzzaman Smarak Grantha" was unveiled, at the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

PHOTO: STAR



With the price of everyday household items going out of reach, people have started turning up in numbers to get their groceries at subsidised rates from Trading Corporation Bangladesh (TCB) trucks. Under yesterday's overcast skies, people held up umbrellas and queued up in long lines at the capital's South Rampura's designated TCB truck spot.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Must nationalise education, abolish discrimination

Demand non-govt teachers ahead of World Teachers' Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers from non-government educational institutions have demanded an end to the discrimination, in terms of salaries and other benefits, between teachers of private and public institutions.

They made their demands at a press conference organised by Bangladesh College Teachers' Association and Bangladesh Principals' Council at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday, ahead of World Teacher's Day 2021 today.

Mohammad Mazharul Hannan, chairperson of Bangladesh Principals' Council, demanded abolition of all discriminations existing in the government and non-government educational institutions.

The group also demanded nationalisation of the education system to improve the quality of education.

Speakers from Bangladesh College Teachers' Association said prior to the nationalisation of education, government

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Momen congratulates Mamata

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen has congratulated West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her party Trinamool Congress for her victory in the by-polls.

In a message to Mamata Banerjee, he hoped that Bangladesh's relations with West Bengal would be closer and complementary in the days to come.

Momen said the landslide victory in the Bhabanipur constituency for the third consecutive term is reflective of the people of West Bengal's continued confidence and deep faith in Mamata Banerjee's leadership.

Momen wished Mamata good health and continued success and greeted her ahead of Durga Puja.

Mamata won

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'An oppressive tool to control women'

Khushi Kabir on fatwas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In order to stay in power, political parties try and appease religious sentiments, observed rights activist Khushi Kabir yesterday.

"The government lacks the will to question religious organisations even though they claim that they are trying to do everything to reduce gender discrepancies, the religious card is essential for politicians to stay in power," said Kabir, honorary coordinator and adviser to Sangat, and coordinator of Nijera Kori.

She made these observations at eShe magazine's South Asia Union Summit Led by Women in a panel titled "Doctrine of Oppression: The Gendered Cost of Religious Extremism".

Referring to how Qawmi madrasas are funded by the government, she said, "Despite the fact that they are not transparent about their curriculum and don't allow the government to have a say in what they teach, passouts from these madrasas are treated as equivalent to having a Master's degree. When bloggers, free-thinkers or rationalists try to raise voices about this, the government supports religious extremists by arresting those raising their voices."

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