

Educational institutions to reopen soon

Says Dipu Moni

STAR REPORT

Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday expressed hope to reopen educational institutions soon, following the downtrend of Covid-19 infection rate in the country.

"We have to be more careful amid the pandemic. We want to reopen the educational institutions as soon as possible. The infection rate has been decreasing, so we hope we can reopen the institutions soon," she said at a programme at Sylhet Circuit House, reports our Sylhet correspondent.

The minister was speaking at a view-exchange programme with leaders of Sylhet district and city unit of Awami League.

DU in-person classes for freshers from Feb 22

Meanwhile, Dhaka University authorities have decided to resume in-person classes for first-year students on February 22, maintaining health guidelines.

Besides, the scheduled examinations will be held as per the routine, said a DU press release yesterday.

"We will also take the initiative to resume in-person classes for students of all academic years, if the Covid situation improves by this time," said Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Akhtuzzaman.

On January 21, the university suspended in-person classes till February 6, following government decision amid a surge in Covid-19 cases. Later, the suspension was extended till February 21.



An 11-member delegation on behalf of the protesting students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology had a meeting with Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni at Sylhet Circuit House yesterday. The minister said the meeting was fruitful, and hoped to fulfil the students' demands that have not yet been met.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

'VC's removal up to chancellor'

Says Dipu Moni after 3-hour meeting with protesting Sust students

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni said the students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust) have explained the reasons behind wanting the VC's resignation, and their demands will be shared with the chancellor.

"The appointment and removal of a vice-chancellor lie with the chancellor. We have heard their reasons and will share them with the chancellor. He will then decide in this regard," the minister said yesterday, while talking to journalists at Sylhet Circuit House after meeting with a delegation of eleven protesting students.

The meeting started at 2:55pm and concluded at 6:15pm. Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury and UGC Secretary Dr Ferdous Zaman were also present at the meeting.

"Many of their demands have already been fulfilled. We hope to take necessary

DEMANDS FULFILLED

- Detained alumni granted bail
- Treatment for injured student Sazal Kundu
- Proctor Prof Alamgir Kabir, student guidance director Zahir Uddin Ahmed removed

DEMANDS UNFULFILLED

- Withdrawing cases against students
- Reopening mobile numbers and mobile banking of detained alumni

measures to fulfil their other demands soon," said Dipu Moni.

"The meeting was fruitful. We wish the situation returns to normal at the university as soon as possible."

After the meeting, the minister went to the Sust campus around 7:00pm and talked to other students.

On January 13, residents of Begum Sirajunnessa Chowdhury Hall started a movement, demanding resignation of its provost. The protest turned anti-VC when on January 16, police entered the campus, injuring at least 40 protesting students. On January 19, 24 students started a hunger strike.

During the movement, two cases were filed—one by police against 200 to 300 students and another by a Tanti League leader against more than 150 alumni, of whom, five were arrested by police.

On January 26, two former professors of the university—Dr Muhammed Zafar Iqbal and his wife Dr Yasmeen Haque went to visit the protesting students. The next morning, after 163 hours, they called off the hunger strike upon being assured by the former professors of their demands getting fulfilled.

However, the students continued their protest, demanding the VC's resignation.

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

Rab denies failure to unravel mystery

Journalists call for immediate submission of probe report of probe report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) refused to admit their inability to properly investigate journalist couple Sagar Runi's murder, ten years after the case was handed over to them.

"How can you say that Rab is not capable? The investigation officer is probing all angles of the case. The investigation is ongoing," Rab Legal and Media Wing Director Commander Khandaker Al Moin told reporters yesterday.

Sagar Sarowar, news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and Meherun Runi, senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012, at their rented flat in the capital's West Rajabazar.

"We have regularly updated the court with the investigation's progress. Hence, the court has given us more time," said Moin.

"After the murder, several people were primarily arrested. Statements of 160 witnesses have been recorded. DNA samples have been sent to the US. We received some information from there and hope to reveal those soon."

When asked about the no-confidence of the victims' families in Rab's probe, the Rab spokesperson replied that he has not been notified of this, and the matter is under the court's jurisdiction.

"INCAPABLE OFFICERS SHOULD BE FIRED IF NECESSARY"

Colleagues of Sagar and Runi expressed their frustration over Rab's supposed failure to identify the murderers in ten long years.

Journalist leaders, during a protest rally held at the premises of Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday, said invisible forces are working against the case's proper investigation.

They also mentioned that the deadline for submitting the probe report has been deferred 85 times.

DRU president Nazrul Islam Mithu urged

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PRAYER
TIMING
FEB 12



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5-25	12-45	4-30	5-57	7-15
Jamaat	6-00	1-15	4-45	6-01	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Preparations are going in full-swing at Suhrawardy Udyan ahead of Ekushey Boi Mela, slated to start from Tuesday. After two years of pandemic-induced financial losses, publishers are looking to make a return to profits this year. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Book fair may go on for longer

Says state minister for cultural affairs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid yesterday said there is a plan to increase the duration of Amar Ekushey Boi Mela, as Covid-19 infection rate has gone down.

He said this time, the duration of the fair will be two weeks. "In fact, we have become accustomed to the fact that Ekushey Boi Mela will be month-long... But we could not start from February 1 due to Covid."

"However, considering the Covid situation, if the infection rate comes under control or decreases... then we will try to increase the duration," he said.

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QUAD FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

Australia, US announce new funds for Indo-Pacific

PORIMOL PALMA

Australia and the United States have announced new funds for the promotion of democracy, human rights and economic development in the Indo-Pacific region.

Australia will invest \$10.2 million, while the US has announced to give \$1 million to promote youth engagement in democratic processes and protection of human rights in Bangladesh and Nepal, according to two separate statements yesterday.

In addition, Australia has announced another \$61.6 million for the region's countries, which includes Bangladesh, to be provided for regional cooperation, disaster resilience, the digital sector, energy, infrastructure and more.

The US government has also planned a \$10 million project for the next five years in Bangladesh that will look to promote open governance and accountability, according to a diplomatic source.

The announcements come after a foreign minister-level meeting of Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) members—the US, Australia, Japan and India—which concluded in Melbourne yesterday. The four countries pledged to deepen cooperation and ensure a coercion-free Indo-Pacific region.

Foreign ministers of Quad vowed to work on humanitarian relief, terrorism, cyber and maritime security, and global supply chain challenges in the region.

The US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor in a statement said it will work to mobilise youths in policy making and participation at all levels of government, as well as promote transparency, accountability and civic participation.

"The Biden administration seeks to strongly engage Bangladeshi government, civil society and media to improve governance and democracy," a diplomatic source said.

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