

MOULVIBAZAR POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

Manpower shortage hampers study, other activities

MINTU DESHWARA

Academic and administrative activities at Moulvibazar Polytechnic Institute are being hampered seriously due to manifold problems, including shortage of teachers and other essential employees.

Due to acute shortage of staff, most of the practical classes and lab works are not being held on time, students alleged.

This crisis extended across all the levels, including academic and administrative personnel as well as outsourcing workers, they said.

Currently, classes are being conducted with limited resources, while an unusual practice is being introduced at the institution to cope with the situation.

There are a total of 126 posts of teaching staff, including the principal, vice-principal, chief instructors and general instructors, at the institution.

But unfortunately, 110 posts of teachers have been lying vacant for long and only 16 individuals are trying to fulfil those roles at present.

This acute shortage of teaching staff has been badly hampering the institution's ability to deliver quality education.

According to the sources at the institution, Moulvibazar Polytechnic Institute started its journey in Matarakan area of Sadar upazila in 2010.

At the beginning, all the working teachers used to take classes in two shifts as there were 37 posts of teachers back then.

But in 2021, separate posts of teaching staff were created to run the two shifts.

However, no teachers have been appointed to the created posts so far.

Moreover, an acting principal is currently performing the duties in absence a regular principal.

One out of the two posts of vice-principal is also lying vacant for long.

During a visit to the institution, this correspondent found all the three posts of chief instructors at the Computer Department vacant.

Only two out of 10 instructors are currently performing their duties, while all the 10 posts of junior instructor are vacant.



Despite having adequate infrastructures, shortage of staff has been hampering academic activities of several hundred students at Moulvibazar Polytechnic Institute.

PHOTO: STAR

Out of the three posts of chief instructors at Electronics Department only one instructor is serving at present.

Nine out of 10 posts of instructors are also lying vacant for long.

Alongside the lone post of workshop superintendent, posts of 10 junior instructors are also vacant.

Although there are only two posts of chief instructor at the Non-Tech Department, one is currently working.

The lone post of physical education instructor is also lying vacant.

Besides, the scenario is almost the same in all the other academic and administration sections of the institution.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to fill the

gaps, classes are being taken by employing some temporary teachers and combining them with the teachers of Skill and Training Enhancement Project (STEP), funded by the government and World Bank.

Since 2014, there are a total of 18 instructors and junior instructors at STEP.

Though those teachers are taking class regularly, they are not getting their salaries for the last 38 months, some teachers, seeking anonymity, alleged.

A number of teachers said they always remain under huge pressure as most of them have to take multiple classes in almost every working days, disrupting overall quality of education.

On the other hand, at least 46 out of

76 posts of craft instructors are also lying vacant, hampering the practical classes.

Similar vacancies also exist in the administrative department as only three out of 14 staff are working to cope with the present situation.

Mentionable, Moulvibazar Polytechnic Institute has a total of 1,491 students, while the number of female students is 180.

The institution has two academic and an administrative building alongside a students' dormitory.

Contacted, Mizanur Rahman, acting principal of the institution, said he has informed the higher authorities about the vacant posts, but they are yet to take any necessary step in this regard.

Jamalpur town dwellers face acute drinking water crisis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Thousands of residents in Jamalpur town have been facing severe crisis of pure drinking water for long.

Besides, about 1.80 lakh dwellers, living in Jamalpur municipality, are the worst sufferers as the level of groundwater in the municipality areas has drastically gone down in the last two decades.

The most of the municipality dwellers are facing severe drinking water crisis and cannot even lift water with the tube-well and electric water pumps as the water level has gone down around 24 feet below the ground.

Meanwhile, experts identified several reasons behind the water crisis and sudden fall of groundwater level.

According to the experts, lack of rainfall, severe draught like situation, unplanned housing, installation of submersible pumps, filling of ponds and water reservoirs are the major reasons behind the fall in water level.

According to the district public health and engineering department, about 6.15 lakh people live in Jamalpur Sadar upazila, while nearly 1.80 lakh people reside in Jamalpur municipality.

Sultan Mahmud, executive engineer at Jamalpur directorate of public health, said around 80 percent residents in the municipality area are unable to lift water with the tube-wells and finding it hard to manage water for other domestic uses.

The most affected areas are Baniabazar, Bajrapur, Mukandbari, Purba Mukandbari, Mridapara, Dakpara, Beltia, Muslimabad and Jigatla, where dwellers cannot even lift a single drop of water, he added.

Abdul Motin of Nayapara area said they have been facing acute drinking water crisis for a year and most of the collecting water from distant sources.

Another Shafiqul Islam of Ukilpara said, "I have been collecting drinking water from the municipality pump, which is about half a kilometre from my residence."

If the groundwater level goes down below 22 to 23 feet, it becomes impossible to lift water with tube-wells or any ordinary motor pumps, Executive Engineer Mahmud said.

They were trying to find a permanent solution to ease the public sufferings soon.

"We have installed several deep-water tanks to meet the demand and steps are on to install some more water tanks," he added.

Family killed, dismembered

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Assistant Superintendent of Police AKM Mohiuddin Selim of PBI Ctg metro unit told The Daily Star.

He said, "After Hasan returned, his wife and sons wanted his assets in Banshkhali, Chattogram in their names. But Hasan wouldn't agree.

"Hasan first arrived at Jahangir's house on September 10. Later, on Tuesday night, when his elder son Mostafiz visited him regarding the property dispute, Hasan got into an argument with his family. At one

stage, his family murdered him and cut him into pieces."

Speaking to this newspaper, Inspector Elias Khan of the PBI Ctg metro unit said, "In CCTV footage, Jahangir was seen carrying the dismembered body of his father in a sack. It's truly a cold-blooded murder."

"We are trying to arrest Hasan's younger son, Jahangir, and his wife. Hasan's wife and elder son have been shown arrested in a case filed with Patenga Police Station," he added.

Khaleda must seek

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government every month for her treatment abroad. Last month, her family filed an appeal in which it was clearly stated the madam [Khaleda Zia] should be immediately released and arrangements should be made to send her abroad.

"Nevertheless, if they [the government] send a message and show a positive attitude, we will submit yet another application."

On September 12, the Security Services Division under the home ministry issued a notification extending the suspension of Khaleda's jail term by another six months.

It said she has to receive treatment in Dhaka and will not be allowed to go abroad during this period.

Contacted, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of BNP, said whether Khaleda's family will submit the application to the home ministry is yet to be decided.

On Friday, the party conducted special prayers for her in mosques across the country after Juma prayers.

Meanwhile, after being transferred to the Coronary Care Unit of Evercare Hospital around 11:30am as per her medical board's recommendation, she was moved back to a cabin around 4:30pm, her personal physician AZM Zahid Hossain told reporters.

The 78-year-old former prime minister has been suffering from various ailments, including liver cirrhosis, arthritis, diabetes, along with kidney, lung, heart, and eye problems.

World Bank approves

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programmes to improve reading proficiency, and 15,000 teachers will receive training to improve their teaching skills. The programme will also support mental health counselling and help prevent gender-based violence in at least 30 percent of targeted schools.

ADB OKAYS \$100M FOR 3 UNIVS

The Asian Development Bank has approved a \$100 million loan to assist Buet, Dhaka University and Jashore University of Science and Technology in upgrading their computer science, software engineering and information technology degree programmes, said a press release on Friday.

These programmes will adopt blended learning techniques and integrate the latest technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and internet of things.

ADB will support establishing modern classrooms and laboratories, collaboration and start-up spaces, and auxiliary facilities in the three public universities.

Under these programmes,

mandatory internship opportunities, career counselling, and industry placement to undergraduate students, particularly for women, will be provided.

ADB Social Sector Economist Ryotaro Hayashi said this initiative will help develop more competent and technology-savvy graduates and entrepreneurs who would help propel the country's IT industry.

Poor execution

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Presenting a keynote at the opening session, SM Mehedi Ahsan, general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planers (BIP), expressed concern that the government won't be able to realise its Vision 2041 if the rural and the urban areas are not developed in a planned way.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, executive director of the UN Habitat, and Ichiguchi Tomohide, chief representative of JICA in Bangladesh, also spoke at the event, presided over by BIP President Mohammad Fazle Reza Sumon.

Organised by the BIP, the three-day conference will end tomorrow.

AL not worried

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treatment in Singapore, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said the government wants to conduct a peaceful, free, and impartial election.

Regarding the EU's decision not to send a fully-fledged election monitoring mission, Quader said the government stands by it.

Agriculture Minister and AL Presidium Member Abdur Razzaque said some Western countries and their leaders are confused about the political situation in Bangladesh based on misleading information.

"We want to tell them that we did not face defeat in the 1971 Liberation War; we will also not be defeated in the future," he told the peace rally held at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said, "We do not have anything to worry about; rather, those who want to obstruct the process of a peaceful election should be worried."

"The decision to grant visas is solely up to that country [the US]. The US government did not issue any statement regarding anyone in particular," said Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, while talking to reporters after an event at Sathkira Police Lines.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister's Private Industries and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman said US visa restrictions will not disrupt bilateral business relations between the two countries.

"I think this is very good that they will take action against those who will try to disrupt the election process," he said while talking to reporters at a programme in the capital yesterday.

"The opposition party has openly declared that they will not let the election be held under Sheikh Hasina's leadership. How would they manage that? The only way is violence. I believe, [the US] will impose visa restrictions on those involved in violence."

People won't accept move to foil polls from outside: PM

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(the electoral system) have been reformed.

"The Election Commission is now completely independent."

In reply to a question about the new US visa policy regarding attempts to subvert the election process in Bangladesh, Hasina said they should slap sanctions, considering who starts undermining the election first. "If only the Awami League is targeted, I have nothing to say," she added.

Noting that the opposition parties

Minority affairs commission to be formed soon

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the Minority Protection Act and Elimination of Discrimination Act would be formulated following recommendations of the commission.

The other pledges that were made in the AL's electoral manifesto before the last national election would be implemented in phases, said Anwar, also a former cabinet secretary.

Following his assurances, the minority community leaders ended their hunger strike.

"Everybody made different promises to us -- but none keeps the promises," said Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad.

77 rivers in grip of greedy sand traders

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Titled "Mapping the sand extraction scenario in Bangladesh 2023", the study, however, shows that at least 265 people are illegally extracting sand from 132 unauthorised sites of 77 rivers. It says at least 54 out of the 265 individuals are local public representatives.

According to the study, the Padma, the Jamuna, the Meghna, the Brahmaputra, and the Surma are the hotspots of sand extraction.

Of the 132 illegal sites, 20 are in the Padma, 13 in the Jamuna, 12 in the Meghna, six in the Brahmaputra, five in the Surma and the Piyaon, four in the Teesta, three in the Sangu, and three in the Ichhamati. The rest are located in other rivers across the country.

The study also says there are at least seven sites in the Bay of Bengal where illegal sand extraction is being carried out.

Explaining how unplanned sand extraction impacts the ecological balance, RDRC chairman Mohammad Azaz said, "As Bangladesh is a riverine country, it largely depends on rivers and their resources, especially water and the fishes. Sand extraction impacts the geo-natural environment

Parishad.

The AL will not be able to seek votes from the minority communities if the promise is not fulfilled.

"Now, he [Anwar] has promised that the commission will be formed soon. However, we want to see whether this promise is implemented or not on time. And it will not be wise to think that you will get our vote automatically without asking for it," Dasgupta added.

Leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Oikya Parishad started a 48-hour hunger strike from 6 am on Friday to press home their demand for implementation of the promises

of the river, which disturbs the ecology of the rivers."

Citing documents of the land ministry from 2017-19, the report says the number of Balumahal was 733 in 2016 while it was reduced to 707 in the fiscal 2017-18.

In the fiscal 2018-19, 382 -- more than half the total number -- were leased out for dredging and extracting sand.

The government regulates sand extraction activities with a 2010 law, which was amended in the last parliament session and renamed as "Bangladesh Balumahal and Soil Management Act, 2023".

According to the amended law, extraction of sand and soil from rivers is illegal if it is carried out for commercial purpose and if the dredging leads to erosion; if it harms a river's natural environment, biodiversity, fishes, and ecosystem, or if it harms arable land or the flora and fauna in any area.

As per the law, sand extraction from any unauthorised site, or Balumahal, is a punishable offence.

Commenting on how sand should be extracted from rivers, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers

made by AL in the previous election manifesto.

The pledges include the enactment of the Minorities Protection Act, Elimination of Discrimination Act and Intestate Property Conservation Act; the formation of the National Commission for Minorities; proper implementation of the Transfer of Entrusted Property Act and Hill Peace Agreement and Hill Land Commission Act; and the implementation of the Plaintiffs' Act.

The religious minority communities' platform will hold a mass rally at Suhrawardy Udyan on October 6 to press home the demands.

Association (BELA), said there are only two purposes of sand extraction from rivers -- supplying sand as construction materials and river training.

"There is no scope of extracting sand in an unplanned and unscientific way. There should be a hydrographic survey before dredging a river. But that's not how it happens."

Rizwana also said it is necessary that the administration watches the sand extraction sites and that the highway police also check vehicles carrying sand.

Sharif Jamil, the Bangladesh representative of International Riverkeeper, said the actual picture of illegal sand extraction is far grimmer than what the study suggests.

The government rewards the lease of sand extraction sites to people considering their political affiliation, he alleged.

"That's why those who are rewarded the lease extract more sand than what they are supposed to. Even the government agencies are dredging rivers without conducting any hydrographic survey," he said.

We can't save our rivers if such practices are not stopped, he warned.

to the propaganda, she said her government doesn't spare anyone even in case of small-scale corruption.

She also said those who are spreading falsehood should be exposed.

Responding to a question if her daughter Saima Wazed would be picked for the next leadership position, Hasina replied, "The possibility is very slim. The people of Bangladesh and my party [Awami League] will decide who will come to the leadership in future."