

Leading unis withdrawing

FROM PAGE 3
agricultural universities.

GENERAL CLUSTER

Jagannath University, which spearheaded the first cluster admission test, has formally withdrawn from the system and announced its 2024-25 undergraduate admission circular independently.

Prof Md Rezaul Karim described the cluster system as an initiative introduced with good intentions but marred by poor planning.

At Khulna University, Vice Chancellor Prof Rezaul Karim said students and faculty alike have opted out of the system.

"KU now handles five batches simultaneously, instead of the usual four, causing a session jam and disrupting the academic calendar," he said.

While acknowledging the university's recent progress in academic excellence, he warned that the flawed admission process risks undoing these gains. "We are also considering holding our own admission tests," he added.

Meanwhile, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Comilla University, Barishal University, and Noakhali Science and Technology University have also decided to hold independent admission tests.

Prof Md Anwarul Azim

Akhand, Convenor of the GST Integrated Admission Test Committee and VC of Maulana Bhashani Science and Technology University, expressed hope that the cluster exam could still proceed with the remaining universities.

He said no official discussions have taken place yet as the current academic year is still ongoing. A proper decision from the government is awaited.

ENGINEERING CLUSTER

The engineering cluster, consisting of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology, and Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, is also dissolving.

KUET announced its independent admission circular on November 17, scheduling its test for January 11, 2025.

Following this, RUET called an emergency meeting to discuss its participation.

"With KUET's departure, the cluster effectively no longer exists," said RUET Vice-Chancellor Prof SM Razzak.

CUET has yet to finalise its stance, but said the departure of two major universities has left the future uncertain.

AGRICULTURAL CLUSTER

In the agricultural cluster,

admission processes for nine universities under the 2023-24 academic year are still ongoing, leaving decisions for 2024-25 pending.

Bangladesh Agricultural University has proposed holding its own tests, as recommended by its Dean Council. However, no official circular has been published yet.

Meanwhile, a group of students preparing for the 2024-25 admission tests submitted a memorandum to the education ministry, urging measures to preserve the cluster system.

They said without it, their application fees and travel expenses would rise substantially.

UGC's POSITION

University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof SMA Fayed said the UGC has no legal authority to prevent universities from conducting independent admission tests.

Prof Fayed suggested that universities opting out should consider holding tests in divisional cities and keeping application fees low.

"We will monitor the decisions of other universities and coordinate the next steps. However, universities should prioritise students' convenience and consult all stakeholders before finalising their decisions," he added.

AL's election

FROM PAGE 3

The Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad-led commission presided over the one-sided January 2014 election, in which 153 out of 300 lawmakers were elected unopposed after the opposition, including the BNP, boycotted the vote. The Awami League-led alliance secured more than two-thirds of seats in all three general elections under the Hasina government.

During the discussion, participants unanimously called for a caretaker government, Badiul said. "The Election Commission must be made independent and strengthened," he added. There was also widespread support for reinstating the "no" vote option and promoting internal democracy within political parties.

"If democracy is not established within political parties, it cannot be

expected to flourish at the national level," he added.

Proposals for direct presidential elections and direct elections to reserved seats for women in parliament were also raised by academics and citizens.

Jahangirnagar University Prof Nasim Akhter Hussain suggested a bicameral legislature and an increase in reserved seats for women to 100.

Prof Al Masud Hasanuzzaman of the same university discussed various aspects of the proportional representation system, as well as issues such as proper constituency demarcation, transparent party funding, and the involvement of all stakeholders in ensuring fair elections.

Film star and Nirapad Sarak Chai Chairman Ilias Kanchan also proposed reintroducing the "no" vote system and urged a swift resolution of election-related cases.

Limit PM's terms

FROM PAGE 3

Mohammad Moinul Islam from the Department of Population Sciences at Dhaka University, and Prof Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, a member of the University Grants Commission and teacher of international relations at Dhaka University.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Prof Tanzimuddin said that he proposed the establishment of a bicameral parliament and limiting the prime minister's tenure to two terms.

He also recommended that the prime minister, speaker, and deputy speaker relinquish their party's leadership positions, retaining only primary memberships.

He suggested dividing the Upper House into four zones -- Northern, Southern, Central, and the Chattogram Hill Tracts -- to ensure effective governance in these regions.

According to his proposal, each zone would have 80 to 100 representatives, with equal representation for men and women.

He further proposed that national elections be conducted under a non-partisan advisory council.

He also advocated for

an inclusive nationalism model to replace the current Bangladeshi nationalism framework.

Prof Mohammad Moinul Islam from Dhaka University proposed integrating population dynamics into the country's development projects.

He urged the commission to define small ethnic groups and ethnic minorities explicitly in the constitution.

He also recommended ensuring gender balance in parliamentary seats, removing the term "Gonoprajatan" (People's Republic) from the constitution, and reviewing the constitution every 10 years to modernise it.

The meeting was attended by Commission Chair Prof Ali Riaz and commission members Prof Sumaiya Khar, Barrister Imran Siddique, Prof Mohammad Ikramul Haque, Sharif Bhuiyan, Barrister M Moin Alam Ferozi, Firoz Ahmed, and Md Mustain Billah.

The Constitutional Reform Commission plans to continue its consultations with various individuals and organisations to gather more feedback for the reforms.

The cases enlisted in yesterday's cause list of the Appellate Division will be heard on December 1 and that of the High Court Division will be heard today.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed expressed deep shock at the death of Justice Ruhul Amin and prayed for salvation and eternal peace of his departed soul and conveyed sympathy to his bereaved family members.

Justice Ruhul Amin's namaz-e-janaza will be held at Supreme Court's Inner Garden after Zohr prayers tomorrow, he added.

Ex-chief justice Md Ruhul Amin no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former chief justice Md Ruhul Amin died at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka early yesterday. He was 83.

He breathed his last at 4:30am while undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Justice Ruhul Amin was the 15th chief justice of Bangladesh. He has left behind his wife and two daughters.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed suspended all judicial functions of both the Appellate and High Court Divisions yesterday in tribute to Justice Ruhul Amin, according to Supreme Court sources.

However, the administrative procedures of the SC ran as usual.

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PRAYER TIMING
NOVEMBER 25
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-10 12-45 3-45 5-19 7-00
JAMAAT 5-45 1-15 4-00 5-22 7-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, emphasised the risk of cross-infections from different dengue serotypes, which can cause severe complications if hospitalisation is delayed.

"Anyone with fever

should immediately

consult a doctor and follow

prescribed treatment," she

advised.

5 ex, present officials

FROM PAGE 5

Upon hearing arguments from both sides, the judge turned down the bail pleas and ordered to send them to jail.

The judge also issued arrest warrants against nine others, including Biman's former managing director and CEO Kevin John Steele, and its former flight captain (operation) Ishrat Ahmed, as they were shown fugitives in the charge sheet of the case.

Earlier on May 20 this year, Md Anwarul Haque, deputy director of Anti-Corruption Commission and also the investigating officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court.

The IO dropped the names of 14 others from the charge sheet as

their involvement in the corruption was not proved.

ACC had filed the case on February 6 last year, accusing 23 people for causing financial loss to the national flag carrier by colluding, and misusing their power, and embezzling money by leasing and then re-delivering two Boeing 777-200 ER aircraft from Egypt Air under a five-year contract.

The aircraft, both

around 12-15 years old, suffered engine failures at the end of the first year and eventually became inoperable, causing Biman a loss of total Tk 1,61 crore.

The findings came up in investigation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism.

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