

Three public universities face session jam again

SURAJNITH DEABNATH

The three main universities of the country—Dhaka University (DU), Rajshahi University (RU) and Chittagong University (CU)—are facing additional session jam of at least six months following last month's street and campus violence that started in Dhaka University.

Generally, August-October is the pick period at these universities for holding examinations but these three universities have remained closed since August 22 and will reopen after the vacation of Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr and Durga Puja.

Sources at these universities said 819 examinations at DU, 500 at RU and 300 examinations at CU have been deferred because of this unscheduled closure.

The caretaker government imposed curfew in six divisional headquarters and shut down all universities and colleges and directed to vacate all dormitories on August 22 following violent clashes between students and security forces on the DU campus during August 20-22. The violence also spread to other university campuses and city streets across the country.

The university syndicates con-

cerned decided to reopen DU and RU on October 28 and CU on October 24. Most education institutes have, however, already resumed their academic activities by the second week of this month after the government lifted the restriction on reopening of universities and colleges on September 3.

Officials of the three universities said they kept the universities closed for more than two months to avoid further violence and bring back the congenial atmosphere on the campuses.

DU Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof SMA Faiz said at the syndicate meeting they had to consider the present situation, especially that arose following the arrest of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

While talking to The Daily Star, CU VC Prof M Badiul Alam also said, "We think the situation is not stable now. We took the decision to keep the university closed until October 23 to avoid further violence."

RU VC Prof Altaf Hossain said the situation is different on DU and RU campuses from that of other public universities as the violence took place most on these two campuses. Because of this the syndicates of these universities decided

to keep the universities closed for two months, he added.

The situation has turned more complicated as four DU teachers and eight RU teachers are now in jail and courts have issued arrest warrants against many teachers, students and employees.

University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam said it is very difficult for public universities to recover two months' gap and the universities have to incur huge financial loss.

UGC sources said the financial loss of all public universities for a day's unscheduled closure amounts to about Tk 1 crore while DU alone incurs a loss of Tk 60 lakh.

Around 32,000 DU students, who are already about two years behind academic sessions, are assumed to be tangled up in the session jam caused by the recent 66-day closure. The DU authority postponed 819 examinations, including 400 examinations in the Business Faculty.

"My exams began and only two examinations were held before the university was closed. I am not sure when the remaining exams will be held. The campus situation may again become unstable if students start demonstration demanding

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Public universities

FROM PAGE 16

release of the detained teachers and withdrawal of cases," said a second year student of mass communication and journalism.

The academic activities of the DU had been tottering for the last few years because of frequent strikes by student organisations, political violence, hartal and work abstention by teachers.

The DU remained closed for 22 months in the last four years. Apart from 90 days' scheduled vacation in an academic year, the university remained closed for more than 44 days a year on an average due to such unexpected incidents.

A student of the arts or social sciences faculty has to spend around seven years to complete the four-year undergraduate course while a student of fine arts requires 13 years to complete the honours course.

Admitting that there is huge session jam, the DU VC said it is impossible to reduce the session jam putting the extra load on the students.

RU

The final examinations of honours and master degrees at most RU departments began before the

university was shut down for 66 days, but the departments could not complete the examinations.

About 25,000 RU students are now facing the fresh six-month session jam.

CU

About 27,000 students of CU also face a fresh session jam due to the unscheduled closure of 62 days.

According to the examination control section of CU, English department has the most session jam of four years.

VC Badiul Alam said they will try to recover the gaps cancelling the winter vacation.