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Countrywide UPE programme put off

DHAKA, Jan 1 (BSS): The countrywide Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme, scheduled to be launched from today, has been postponed till a re-evaluation by the elected government.

Addressing a press conference here today, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Adviser-in-Charge of the Ministry of Education, said the interim government, however, would honour the commitment of the past government for Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the law on it.

He said the government would also not shift from the strategy for implementing such a programme.

Mentioning the reasons for the postponement of the programme Prof Siddiqui said it was "unrealistic" to launch such a gigantic programme all over the country at a time. The law on UPE provides for a phase-wise implementation of the programme, later the strategy was changed, he said, adding, we presume this handsome political motive.

He said the preparatory work on the programme could not also be completed due to political disturbances during the last few months.

Prof Siddiqui said in the coming months the Ministry would

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remain busy, revising the implementation strategy, to identify each child to be enrolled, part-time teachers to be employed and the extra space to be used as class rooms before submitting the proposal for consideration of the new government.

The programme envisages involvement of four-million additional children of the 6-10 years age-group in Class One in January this year. This requires extra 44,266 class rooms and as many teachers. Only an elected government could take decision on such a matter, he added.

Prof Siddiqui announced that the government had decided to pay Taka 500 to each of the 28,000 teachers working in 7000 primary schools, which were recognised by the government but were not getting any government support. This would be effective from today, he said, adding, this decision would also strengthen the Universal Primary Education Programme.

In reply to a question he said the school mapping programme, undertaken by the Ministry as a preparatory work for launching the UPE programme was in progress and would be completed by March 1991.

In reply to another question the Adviser said the overall situation in the educational institutions all over the country was peaceful except some incidents in certain institutions. He sought co-operation of the Press in maintaining peace on the campus and said none of us wanted peace to be disturbed.