



Saifur asks varsities to increase income

Students' tuition fees, seat rent to be raised

Vexed by growing demand for allocation for public universities, the government plans to raise tuition and other fees and seat rents of students in a bid to increase the varsities' own incomes, reports UNB.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman in a meeting with the University Grants Commission (UGC) on Wednesday asked for raising incomes of the universities by different means.

Earlier, UGC Chairman prof Dr ATM Zahurul Haq sought top-level policy decision on increase in self-incomes of the universities.

Since the universities are autonomous, Saifur suggested the authorities to enhance tuition and other fees by building a consensus of the varsity administrations and students who will be affected following the action.

"It's not necessary to look at private universities. Just observe how much a schoolboy pays and how much a university student," Saifur told the closed-door meeting in the conference room of the Finance Division.

Sources close to the meeting said the Finance Minister didn't hide his frustration about the low tuition of the government universities and said it can't be that the only Tk 12 fee would continue year after year.

As the UGC sought more allocation as the universities are running short of funds, Saifur hurled a snub: it became a culture that everybody wants money but doesn't go for exploring own resources.

"It's a disease that the politicians, MPs, everybody come for allocation from the government. But these people don't try to exploit the resources they have," a source quoted the Finance Minister as saying.

Allocation for the public universities of the country have increased in volume in past five years, from Tk 311 crore in 1998-99 to Tk 396 crore in current fiscal (2002-2003).

But this time, in terms of percentage of national budget for

2002-2003 which is Tk 57,780 crore, the allocation for the state-run universities came down to its lowest level, 0.69 percent.

In the previous four fiscal years, the allocation had averaged between 0.72 in 98-99 and 0.76 per cent in 2001-2002, of total national budget.

Considering budgetary allocation for education, the allotment for the universities also came down to lowest level from its share. In the current fiscal, the allocation for the universities is 5.85 per cent of total education budget.

It was 6.6 per cent in 2001-2002, 6.54 per cent in 2000-2001, 6.77 per cent in 1999-2000 and 6.55 per cent in 98-99.

According to a report of the UGC placed in the meeting, the budget shortages of country's eight public universities since fiscal 1995-96 to 2001-2002 stood at Tk 51.27 crore.

The shortages included Rajshahi Tk 18.30 crore, Dhaka Tk 11.13 crore, Islami Tk 6.38 crore, Agri Tk 5.39 crore, BUET Tk 3.02 crore, Chittagong Tk 2.62 crore, Jahangirnagar Tk 2.56 crore and Shahjalal Tk 1.87 crore.

Besides, Khulna, Islami and Shahjalal universities have a shortage of Tk 4.44 crore as there is no allocation from annual development program for 323 officials-employees employed under the ADP.

As the universities can't relieve them as in that case the administrative activities would be hampered and also couldn't pay for last 18 months, the UGC sought Tk 4.44 crore from the government.

The Finance Minister, however, agreed to release Tk three crore for meeting up salaries of the ADP-sponsored officials and employees of the three universities in view of the coming Eid.

The UGC in the meeting, attended by its members and senior officials informed that the Commission itself is also running with a budget shortage of over one crore Taka.