

## Ministry orders shutdown of 'peace' schools

*Controversial activities prompt govt decision*

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The education ministry has asked the home ministry to shut down the "unapproved peace schools" immediately, said a press release yesterday.

"We have taken the decision as those educational institutions have no approval from the government," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told this newspaper.

"No institute can run without following rules and regulations," he added.

Seeking anonymity, several officials of the education ministry said the step to shut down the schools was taken following intelligence and news reports that their curriculum promoted religious extremism.

On May 22, after a meeting of the cabinet committee on law and order, the government asked law enforcement agencies to keep an eye on the network of "peace schools and colleges" across the country, according to news reports.

The meeting, held at the home ministry, discussed an intelligence report on the operation of "peace schools", said meeting sources.

The intelligence report said around 27

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"peace schools" in six districts were being run by pro-Jamaat-e-Islami men and a portion of their income was being spent on the party's organisational activities.

Of the peace schools, the one in the capital's Lalmatia has government approval, according to an education ministry official.

The ministry has asked the Dhaka Education Board to cancel the approval of the school for "its involvement in controversial activities", said the education ministry press release yesterday.

"We have asked the Dhaka Education Board to explain how the Lalmatia school got approval. We will take further steps on this matter after investigation," Nahid said yesterday evening.

In response to a query, a senior official of the education ministry told this newspaper, "These unapproved schools must be closed. That's why we have asked the home ministry to do this."

Asked how the unapproved schools had been running so far, he blamed it on lax government monitoring.