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Govt may ban private coaching by teachers

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The government is considering imposing a ban on private coaching or tutoring by school and college teachers.

The decision is aimed at fostering a sound teaching atmosphere in educational institutions and access of equally affordable education for all students.

"We hope that the decision, banning private coaching and tutoring by teachers, will be taken by this week. It will be applicable for both government and non-government teachers," Education Secretary M Mamtazul Islam told The Daily Star.

Following the directive of Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, top officials of different education authorities including Ministry of Education, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) and secondary and higher secondary education boards held several meetings during the last week and discussed the issue. They are hopeful about coming up with a solution to the issue after a few more meetings, the education secretary added.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the first week of June directed education ministry to take effective measures for stopping private coaching and tutoring by the

teachers as the practice distracts them from performing their duties effectively at their jobs and thus affects their quality of teaching.

There have been widespread allegations that teachers of both public and private schools and colleges have been ignoring their duties in classrooms, and getting themselves involved with private tutoring or coaching centres for extra income.

Most participants during the meetings last week agreed that teachers' involvement with private tutoring or coaching centres is greatly harming the quality of education and financially disadvantaged

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To remedy the situation, all public school and college teachers serving in the same institution for over ten years are to be transferred to new institutions, according to a new directive issued to DSHE by the education ministry.

The education ministry sources said for the past few years, almost all deputy commissioners in their annual meetings with the government have been recommending barring teachers from offering private coaching. They also stressed the need for adopting a policy to regulate coaching centres.

A survey titled Education Watch Report 2006, conducted by

Private coaching

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students lose out in the process, said education ministry sources.

Officials from National Curriculum and Textbook Boards (NCTB), Teachers Quality Improvement (TQI) project and Non-Government Teachers

Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA) participating in the meetings also spoke against coaching centres and private tutoring and said that the practice stands in the way of equal access of education for all and it unnecessarily compels the guardians to spend a hefty amount of money, the sources added.

The speakers opted for a ban on teachers at primary to higher education levels from involving themselves in private tutoring or coaching centres, said the sources.

A countrywide investigation by the education ministry found the allegation to be true that most teachers of public and private schools and colleges are negligent about their jobs as they spend most of their time by either working for coaching centres or providing private tutoring for high fees.

"It was found that many teachers, who don't even attend their classes regularly, have been engaged in private tutoring -- a trend that caught on during the early 80s," said a top official at the education ministry.

It is alleged that many of the coaching centres are even involved in leaking question papers of public college and university admission tests which in the long run puts a dent in the quality of education.

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), reported a growing trend of dependency on private tutoring since classrooms no longer provide quality education.

According to the report, 88 percent of public high school students and 78 percent of private high school students in urban areas rely on private coaching or tutors. On an average, the guardian of a student spends Tk 16,894 annually on private tutoring.

Academicians welcomed the government move and said private tutoring or coaching needlessly costs a guardian a large amount of money in addition to other expenses incurred during a student's education.

Renowned educationist Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury said private tutoring and coaching should be stopped, but the teachers' wages and social security will have to be increased before imposing the ban.

He also suggested providing modern training for teachers to improve the quality of education.

Selim Bhuiyan, chief coordinator of Shikhhak Karmachari Oikya Jote, a platform of teachers and employees of non-government high schools, colleges and madrasas, said it would be a wrong decision if the government imposes the ban before raising the teachers' salaries and other benefits.

There are 80,397 primary schools, 18,500 high schools and 3,150 colleges across the country employing more than 6.5 lakh teachers.