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IUB goes online fully from July

FE Report | June 22, 2020 00:00:00 (https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/print/iub-goes-online-fully-from-july-1592758348)



IUB vice chancellor (acting) Milan Pagan Newspaper subscription

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) is going fully online from July aiming to continue education during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The university authority has already carried out dry run for online courses and prepared for a go from July 5.

"Semester from July 5 will start online... so, everything including admission, registration and all classes will be done online. yesterday (Tuesday) we decided to close the physical campus and offices in line with the government decision," IUB vice chancellor (acting) Milan Pagan said. Bangladesh business directory

"That doesn't mean that we aren't working, everybody is working from home," he said in an online interview with the FE. IUB has decided to finish the previous semester with online education and classes and they applied to University Grants Commission and they were allowed.

"Now we finished past semester and are getting ready for next semester online, to do that, we held trial classes last week, both faculties and students participated in trial classes," the VC said.

IUB is using a very unique approach based on the Microsoft platform, Google Classrooms and Google meet. Its IT department created a virtual IUB that enables everybody to participate in online courses, submit assignments, etc, he added.

Mr. Pagan said responses from the students were very positive towards online courses.

"At first, everybody was a little bit apprehensive and scared about this online approach, but once students got hands-on experience they were very appreciative of what we are doing."

He said IUB had not brought students on the campus since the lockdown or general holiday and it did not intend to bring them back in the future unless the situation was normal.

"We are in a situation that online education was not practised before... the government didn't even allow distance or online education for the universities," the VC said, adding that they were pretty much unprepared.

UGC has recently said the universities in the country are not yet capable of conducting their academic activities online due to lack of technical facilities and funds.

"I fully agree with the UGC report that universities are not ready for online education, there are challenges, there are issues but we are working to overcome that," Mr. Pagan said.

"We have to be very clear here that not everything can be done online. There are certain lab classes, there are certain practical classes where it cannot be done online fully."

He added: "That is why the developed world started a blend-it approach where everything is neither exclusively online nor exclusively face-to-face but a combination of both."

Mr. Pagan also said, "We will be now doing everything online. Once the situation improves, we will bring students on the campus to complete practical classes."

Guardians can be assured that quality of education will not be compromised during online courses. The first challenge before going online was mindset, he said.

"If somebody has been teaching in the classes in the traditional way using the white board and marker and power point for decades, it is hard to switch immediately... similar thing happens for the students."

He said they addressed that challenge but the challenge IUB could not address was putting infrastructure in rural areas.

The government needs to address power problems, affordable and quality internet connection to help continue online education, he added.

Another problem IUB has been facing during Covid-19 is financial crisis of students. They have extended hands to students so that they can continue education.

"In addition to financial aid, we created a student welfare fund for the students where all alumni, faculties, trustees and staff contributed from their pockets to enable the needy students to continue education."

"We want to ensure a situation where no student of IUB is left behind because they cannot afford to pay for their education," he said.

The acting VC said online is not the solution. "We need to be realistic, we had a much more severe pandemic in which hundreds of millions of people died, but we went on."

"We have to be careful that we can't graduate our students through online classes only, so we have to go for the blend-it model," he said.

Milan Pagan said the government should stop using same measures for all private universities.

"There are over 100 private universities in Bangladesh and I claim that top 10 to 15 or maximum 20 are offering quality education." Bangladesh business directory

He said the government should acknowledge the fact that there are huge variations in the quality of private universities and rules and regulations should be as per the quality.

Mr Pagan also said, "We are facing quality problem with secondary level students who are coming to the universities."

The government did a lot but needed to improve the secondary level education, he added.

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