

Facebook ban to prevent question leak!

Education ministry wants the site blocked for limited time during SSC exams

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The education ministry wants Facebook blocked for "sometime" in Bangladesh during the upcoming SSC and its equivalent examinations to prevent question paper leak.

Being unable to check the menace, the ministry now thinks that shutting down of the social media platform would be an effective way to stop the leak as it found questions being leaked out and circulated on different social networking sites in the nights before tests or in the mornings.

"We are requesting the authorities concerned to keep Facebook closed for a limited time. We will try to find out when this [the leak] might occur during the exams," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told reporters at his ministry yesterday.

They are discussing the matter with Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission and the information communication and technology

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ministry, he added.

Asked whether Facebook would be closed from the beginning of the exams until the end, the minister said, "It will be [blocked] during a test for a limited time. Nobody will be harmed by this. It would just be for one to two hours."

He said they were considering shutting those technological facilities that were being used to leak questions. "We are very desperate and aggressive to prevent question leak."

Asked whether shutting down of Facebook for a few hours would help, he said analysing the trend of the last two to three years, researchers found that the questions had been leaked out in the early hours or in the morning before a test.

Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and its equivalent exams will begin on February 1.

The development came when allegation of leak of the question papers of all public exams like JSC, SSC and HSC, medical college and university admission tests and state-owned banks' recruitment exams was widespread over the last couple of years. In most cases, questions were leaked allegedly through Facebook.

The education ministry initially brushed aside those allegations and then took some measures to stop the leak, but the leaks continued.

In a recent report, the Anti-Corruption Commission has pointed the finger at officers in the education board, BG Press and other government officials for the incidents.

Yesterday, the minister said all the candidates must enter and take their seats at their respective exam centres 30 minutes before the test.

"Earlier, the examinees were allowed to enter even 30 minutes after a test began. But we will not allow it now. No excuses will be acceptable," he said, suggesting that the students consider the distance between their homes and exam centres and traffic jams.

He also said secretaries of the centres would open envelopes containing question papers 30 minutes before a test starts.

"No one will open the envelopes [except the secretaries]. If anyone does, it will be regarded as an offence and action will be taken against the person," Nahid said.

A vigilance team will be deployed at every centre to see whether anybody opens the envelopes before the time. Officials from the education ministry, education board and directorate will be in a team in the capital.

Besides, the ministry has sent a letter to the Cabinet Division for taking steps so that deputy commissioners, upazila nirbahi officers and other government officials outside the capital monitor.

The minister said all types of coaching centres would remain closed from three days before the beginning of upcoming SSC examinations until the end of the tests.

Nahid also urged the guardians not to run after the leaked question papers or resort to any unfair means to get their children passed.