

Press Note on CU reopening

The Ministry of Education on Wednesday night issued the following Press Note about the reopening of the Chittagong University, reports BSS.

The Press Note said: The Government decided to reopen the Chittagong University, the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and Agricultural University from 3rd April 1983, in the first phase, which were closed following the disturbances of the 14th and 15th February 1983. In respect of Chittagong University this decision was taken after consultation with the University authorities.

Following the announcement over news media the Chancellor's Secretariat communicated the Government decision to the Vice-Chancellor of Chittagong University about the reopening and advised him to take necessary steps in this regard. Concurrently on 31st March 1983, the VC of CU called a meeting of the University Syndicate to inform it of the Government decision. In the meeting the Syndicate made an observation about the desirability of the reopening of all the universities simultaneously but did not adopt any resolution contrary to the decision taken by the Government.

The teachers of Chittagong University refrained from taking classes allegedly as a decision of the CU Teachers Association and with the concurrence of the

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Federation of the University Teachers Association. The association justified its position on alleged ground that University was not reopened by the authority as prescribed in the Chittagong University Act 1973. Copies of the resolution of the Syndicate meeting and the meeting of the Chittagong University Teachers Association were forwarded by the VC of CU to the Chancellor's Secretariat.

On receipt of this intimation from the VC and after hearing that the University teachers were abstaining from their duties the Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Secretary to the Chancellor, accompanied by Commissioner, Chittagong Division, went to the Chittagong University campus and held a meeting with the VC, Deans of Faculties, Provosts of Halls, and Professors of the University and some representatives of the Chittagong University Teachers Association. In the meeting the following points were made by the teachers present:

a. That in closure and the reopening of the University the Government has violated the provisions of the CU Act 1973.

b. That the University was reopened without reference to the proper authority prescribed in the same Act.

c. An attempt has been made to isolate the University from other universities, namely, Dhaka, Rajshahi and Jahangirnagar Universities.

d. That the teachers were not consulted by the Government before it took the decision to reopen.

e. That during the period of closure there had been some losses of properties in the campus and that some relief would have to be provided.

The above points were also communicated by the VC, CU to the Minister for Education at Dhaka over telephone soon after the meeting was concluded. The observations of the Government on the issues raised above are the following:

a. Under normal circumstances it is the function of the Syndicate to take decision regarding closing or reopening of the University. But because of the situation on the 14th and 15th February '83, the Government closed down the University. As regards reopening of CU the Government with prior consultation with and consent of the concerned authority and in full assessment of the situation announced the date. At the same time it advised the University authority to take necessary and appropriate steps to resume academic activities. In complete understanding of the above, the VC, CU called an emergency meeting of the Syndicate on

31st March 83 to invoke the provision of CU Act 1973.

b. Each university is a separate entity governed by laws of its own. In normal circumstances the University authorities take decisions regarding vacations, holidays, publication of results and conducting examinations, admissions etc. independent of one another. While taking decision to reopen the CU the Government was guided by the considerations of conditions prevailing in the campus.

c. There is no provision either in the CU Act 1973 or in any statute thereunder which provides for formal consultation with the teachers of the University, nor is there any precedent for the same. Furthermore, the VC, CU was in touch with the Chancellor's Secretariat and with the Education Minister throughout the period of the closure.

d. Subject to verification of the losses as reported, the Chancellor has already made a financial grant by way of relief. If after final assessment further relief is required, the Government will consider it sympathetically.

It is a matter of great regret that the CU teachers while demanding the preservation of the University Act 1973, have themselves violated the provisions of the same. There are thousands of students who returned to campus and are waiting for the resumption of normal academic activities.

The government expresses keen concern over the teachers' abstention from performing their duties. It views this as extremely harmful to the interests of worried guardians and most students. The University is already behind in its academic calendar. Besides, should the teachers continue to refrain from resuming duties, they would be deemed to have committed offence under the Chittagong University Act 1973.

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