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UGC finalising 5-year roadmap to transform higher education

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The University Grants Commission is finalising a five-year national action plan to transform Bangladesh's higher education sector through reforms focused on employability, digitalisation, research, artificial intelligence and internationalisation.

The proposed 'National Action Plan for Higher Education Transformation: Achieving Sustainable Excellence (2026–2030)' aims to raise the country's

universities to international standards and better align higher education with global technological changes and labour market demands.

A discussion meeting on the draft action plan was held on Thursday at the UGC, chaired by education minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon, where senior officials of the Ministry of Education and the UGC exchanged views.

Speaking at the meeting, Milon said the roadmap for transforming the country's higher education sector should originate from the UGC itself, since the commission plays a vital role as the central regulator and coordinator of the higher education system.

He said that the UGC's leadership needs to be made more effective and dynamic to raise higher education to the desired standard.

The minister said that successful higher education reform initiatives and experiences from different countries should be reviewed and the aspects suited to Bangladesh's context should be implemented, suggesting that experiences from China, the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Pakistan be put to use in this regard.

He said that the government's goal was not merely to produce meritorious students but to ensure the excellence of their talent.

Universities need to take effective steps to attract foreign students and turn Bangladesh into a regional higher education destination, Milon said, calling for a coordinated national policy on foreign student admission, academic cooperation and internationalisation.

He added that the country's large population is a potential asset that can be transformed into an effective force for national development through planned higher education, skill development, research and investment in innovation.

UGC chairman Professor Mamun Ahmed said the long-term reform plan has been undertaken to align the country's higher education with changing global realities, technological advancement and labour market demand.

He said the draft five-year action plan was prepared based on the recommendations of a recent national workshop on higher education transformation held at Dhaka University in the presence of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, along with government priorities and the UGC's strategic plan.

Mamun said that the action plan sets out five strategic priorities: enhancing graduate employability and ensuring demand-based education while strengthening university-industry collaboration and global competitiveness; digital transformation and the use of artificial intelligence; teacher development and professional skill enhancement; research excellence, innovation and internationalisation; and governance, quality assurance and institutional reform.

He said targets have been set for all universities in the country to introduce outcome-based education, career development centres, internship and employment-tracking systems, a learning management system, digital administration and AI-based education systems by 2030.

'The plan also includes doubling the number of research publications and patents, expanding international research and academic partnerships,

building an integrated national higher education database, and establishing Bangladesh as one of the regional hubs for higher education and research,' the UGC chairman said.

He said that a series of consultation meetings with vice chancellors of public and private universities, academics, industry representatives, development partners and civil society representatives would be held as part of finalising the draft. 'The plan will be finalised based on the opinions and recommendations of the stakeholders concerned and then placed before the Ministry of Education for implementation.'

Mamun sought the ministry's overall cooperation for the plan's swift implementation.

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