

PM for reviving girls' stipends to curb dropout, child marriage

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Online Desk : Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Monday directed the authorities concerned to examine the feasibility of reintroducing universal stipends for girls from Class VI to the degree level, aiming to encourage them to continue their education and help prevent child marriage. He gave the directive at a meeting on the Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust at the Prime Minister's Office in the Cabinet Division of the Secretariat.

The meeting was informed in detail about the trust's ongoing activities, its goals and role in preventing students from dropping out by providing financial assistance during their education, said Prime Minister's Deputy Press Secretary Shahadat Hossain Shadhin. The impact and achievements of the universal stipend programme for girls, introduced during the tenure of former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, were also discussed.

The programme was credited with helping increase girls' school attendance, encouraging them to continue their studies and discouraging child marriage. Against this backdrop, the Prime Minister asked the authorities to assess the possibility of reviving universal stipends for girls from Class VI to the graduation level. He stressed the need for preparing a clear proposal after analysing the possible cost, number of beneficiaries, implementation process and expected social and educational impact of the programme.

The meeting also discussed providing stipends to boys on the basis of merit and eligibility to encourage them to pursue education. Besides financial support, the meeting put equal emphasis on students' nutrition and health as important factors for improving the quality of education. Various aspects of the school-level mid-day meal programme, including its management, nutritional value and ways to ensure safe preparation and supply of food for children, were discussed.

The Prime Minister stressed that food provided to students must be nutritious, safe and of good quality, and said there should be no compromise over food standards. The meeting also discussed two alternative approaches to implementing the mid-day meal programme, taking into account cost, management efficiency, local participation and quality control. Tarique Rahman directed the authorities to launch pilot projects in two separate districts, with each district testing one of the proposed approaches, to assess their effectiveness, feasibility and potential outcomes.

Education Minister Dr ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon, Prime Minister's Education Affairs Adviser Mahdi Amin, Secondary and Higher Education Division Secretary Abdul Khaleque, PM's Additional Press Secretary Atikur Rahman Rumon and other relevant officials attended the meeting.