

RU medical centre brings no benefit to students



File photo

Habiba Akter, a third-year student of Rajshahi University, one day found herself struggling to breathe. Seeking help, she went to the university's medical centre. However, even after waiting for around 30 minutes, no doctor or nurse came to her aid.

While the medical centre has a nebuliser machine, there is no one to help patients use it in the case of an emergency.



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As such, Habiba had to leave the centre without receiving any treatment.

This has largely been the scenario of RU's medical centre for the past several months. Established in 1958 with a view to ensure healthcare to students and staffers of the university, it is yet to serve its purpose properly.

At present, the centre is running amid an acute lack of doctors and nurses, while other medical officials there are hardly performing their duties.

Worse still, on November 24, the medical centre put up a notice halting treatments in the afternoon citing "insufficient manpower".

As per documents, the centre has a total of 36 posts for doctors, but 22 of these have been vacant for a long time. It is also supposed to have six nurses, including two male nurses, but at present only two female nurses are working at the centre.

The handful of doctors available at the centre have been struggling to serve a large number of students.

Similarly, there are only three emergency medical officers against the total six posts.

According to university sources, it was announced on October 24, 2020 that 13 doctors would be recruited against 18 vacant posts. However, the recruitment process eventually got postponed. Meanwhile, after the Awami League government's ouster on August 5, four doctors resigned from their duties at the centre.

While the centre has some advanced equipment, there is not enough manpower to operate those. The ECG machine has no operator, while the digital X-ray machine has no full-time technologist. The number of beds for patients is inadequate, while the oxygen channels are insufficient.

At present, the services at the medical centre are largely limited to primary treatments only, said officials.

Students also complained that they have not been getting proper medicines from the medical centre. The medicines available at the centre are of low quality.

Each RU student has to pay Tk 100 yearly as a health-related fee, which generates a substantial revenue for the medical centre. However, its officials claimed to have three drafts of their budget still pending with the RU administration.

On-duty doctors are often unable to provide proper medicines and other facilities to the students due to insufficient budget deficit, the officials added.

"Lack of manpower is a big obstacle for us. Whenever we approached the university administration in this regard, they only gave us assurances, but made no visible effort to resolve the issue," said Mafruha Siddiqa Lipi, chief medical officer at the centre.

Referring to the November 24 notice, Lipi said, "We are somehow managing to cover the morning shift with the number of doctors we have, but it is not possible to run the afternoon shift."

"Currently, each doctor has to attend hundreds of patients daily. Recruitment of more manpower is desperately needed to provide services properly," she added.

Contacted, RU Vice-Chancellor Saleh Hasan Naqib said they are working to resolve the issues pertaining to the medical centre.

"We have arranged to appoint an Ophthalmologist on an urgent basis. Steps are on regarding the other issues. There has been some delay in recruitment over transparency and scrutiny in the process. All the problems will be resolved by January," he added.

RU Pro-VC Mohammad Main Uddin, however, could not specify any deadline to resolve the issues.