

SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS

Ctg Govt Art College faces closure

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Manifold problems, including shortage of teachers, have threatened the existence of Chittagong Government Art College -- the country's lone government college for fine arts.

Established 34 years ago, the college has now only 15 teachers, including seven from other disciplines who have nothing to do with fine arts. Absence of a policy on recruitment of teachers has led to such a situation.

All concerned, including teachers, students, artists, consider turning the college into an institute under the Chittagong University as the best means to save the college and restore its past glory.

Founded at the private initiative of some art connoisseurs in 1973, the college is now limping with only eight teachers of fine arts, whereas some 60 teachers are required for its four practical and a theoretical departments.

Moreover, four senior teachers -- Soumen Kanti Das of applied arts, Laila Anjuman Ara Habib of theoretical department, KMA Quayyum, the lone teacher of painting, and Shahrul Haider, the lone teacher of graphics department, -- are scheduled to go on LPR (leave preparatory to retirement) by 2009.

It would deepen the crisis at the college as 10 posts of teachers, out of 18, have been lying vacant since long.

The other seven teachers, including principal and vice-principal and teachers of different subjects such as Bengali, English, mathematics, general history and sociology, are posted on transfer at the college, although these subjects are not included in the curriculum.

As a result, the teachers of fine arts have to take three or four honours classes a day while the teachers of general subjects mostly spend idle time.

At present, the college has 175 students in the four-year honours and one-year master's courses.

A teacher of general history is now taking theoretical classes on the history of fine arts while an English teacher is taking theoretical classes on 'Bangladesh: History and Heritages'.

A teacher of political science transferred to the post of Lecturer of Bengali is also taking theoretical classes on the history of fine arts.

Principal Meena Das, a teacher with background in mathematics, said the teachers of general subjects posted on transfer hardly take any classes since their subjects are not included in the college curriculum.

The college introduced honours courses in 2003-04, but posts of teachers were not created as per requirement, sources said.

At present, there are two posts of lecturers and one post of assistant professor in each of the four basic practical departments, but there are no posts for associate professor or

professor, depriving the fine arts teachers of promotion or scope to become the principal or vice-principal.

KMA Quayyum, the lone teacher of painting, did not get any promotion during his 30 years of service in the college.

Lack of a proper policy in both the Public Service Commission and Bangladesh Civil Service holds back the recruitment of teachers with background in fine arts, said Principal Meena Das.

The crisis would worsen further when master's classes would start within a few months, said Assistant Professor Soumen Das.

Delwar Hossain, a student who

recently appeared in the 1st year final examinations, said they have suffered a lot due to shortage of teachers.

As a teacher has to take several classes a day, he or she hardly finds enough time to complete the syllabus properly or to take good care of every student, he added.

This institution was first established as a feeder institution of the fine arts department of Chittagong University (CU).

It was turned into a government college in 1984 and the government also took a Tk 4 crore project in 1992 for its further development.

Under the project, two academic buildings, an administrative building, a three-storey air-conditioned art

gallery, an auditorium, an open stage and a library were constructed.

The CU authorities in its syndicate meeting on September 23 in 1997 took a decision to create a Fine Arts Institute combining the CU fine arts department and the Chittagong Art College.

The government also declared that the college will be turned into an institute under the Chittagong University and the decision was also published as a gazette notification on March 11 in 1999.

But a writ petition filed by Prof Syed Abdullah Khalid, a teacher of the university, against the decision brought the process to a halt.

As a High Court division bench rejected the writ petition on May 7 in 2001, Prof Khalid filed another petition with the Supreme Court against it. The Supreme Court also dismissed the petition.

But to the utter disappointment of art lovers, the CU authorities had cancelled the decision regarding the institution at its syndicate meeting on July 29 in 2002 only a few days before the Supreme Court gave its verdict.

Sources alleged that pro-Jamaat teachers of the university were behind the cancellation of the decision.

Principal Meena Das said they have already sent a letter to the education adviser seeking steps to resolve the crisis facing the college and formulate a recruitment policy.

Upgrading the college to an institute might be a permanent solution to this crisis, she added.

Fahmina and Rashu, two students of honours 2nd year, said that merging the college and the CU fine arts department into an institute can ensure proper utilisation of infrastructural facilities of the college.

Senior journalist and columnist Abul Momen, also a former principal of the college, is in favour of creating an institute combining the Chittagong Arts College and CU fine arts department.

"There is no alternative to establishing an institute as a means to save the Chittagong Arts College and make the CU fine arts department effective at the same time."



PHOTO: STAR

Ghulam Ali Khan performs at a Ghazal concert at Radisson Water Garden Hotel in the city yesterday. The High Commission of Pakistan in Dhaka organised the concert as part of celebrations marking the 60th Independence Day of Pakistan.

Call to stand by flood victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different socio-political organisations have called upon the countrymen to stand by the flood victims and help them by every means possible.

In a statement, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Manjurul Ahsan Khan demanded conducting a market operation to check the price hike and start a rationing system for the villagers.

In a different statement, Bangladesh Workers' Party President Khandakar Ali Abbas and General Secretary Saiful Haq called upon people from all walks of life to extend their helping hands to the flood victims.

President of the Central Committee of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Samik Jote Abul Khayer Sajjad and General Secretary Abdul Khaleq, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal-JSD President Professor Mohammad Shafique and General Secretary Abdul Malek, leaders of

Jatiya Mukti Council, Jatiya Mukti Council President Badaruddin Umar, Vice President Proshit Bikash Khisha and Secretary Fayjul Hakim and members of the executive committee of the Institution of Diploma Engineers in separate statements also urged the government to take necessary actions to help the flood victims.

Meanwhile, president of Bangladesh Chhatra Union Central Committee Shamsul Alam Sajjan and General Secretary Khan Asaduzzaman Masum in a statement yesterday expressed grave concern over the overall flood situation in the country, says a press release.

They urged the countrymen specially the students' organisations to extend their helping hands to the flood affected people.

They also demanded that the government announce the situation as a 'National Disaster'.

Unknown people set fire to compartment of train at Kamalapur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown people set fire to a train compartment at Kamalapur Railway Station in the city yesterday burning five seats and part of its ceiling.

There was no casualty. According to Government Railway Police (GRP), unidentified people entered the compartment of Titas Commuter Train at around 3:00pm and set fire to five seats.

The train stationed on the platform was scheduled to leave the station for Brahmanbaria at 5:35pm.

Sub-Inspector (SD) Amirul Islam of GRP told The Daily Star that railway staffs and locals rushed to the spot after they noticed the blaze and doused it instantly.

High officials of Bangladesh Railway visited the spot.

The SI said they could not arrest anyone in this connection.

IRREGULARITIES

RU teacher sued for demanding VC's resignation

RU CORRESPONDENT

The vice-chancellor (VC) of Rajshahi University (RU) has filed a defamation case against a history department teacher who recently demanded his resignation in a memorandum to the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Sources said VC Prof Altaf Hossain filed the case with Rajshahi Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court against Prof Farukuzzaman on Thursday.

Prof Farukuzzaman, who was a former director of RU Public Relations Department, is an active member of Progressive Teachers' Society, a Pro-Awami League Teachers' group on the campus.

Earlier on July 7, Prof Farukuzzaman submitted a memorandum to the UGC chairman and the education secretary demanding resignation of the vice-chancellor for his alleged irregularities.

In a faxed memorandum, Prof Farukuzzaman alleged that the VC had controversially recruited more than 500 teachers, officials and employees on political considerations by violating directives of the UGC and the ministry.

The VC also promoted a pro-Jamaat assistant registrar to the post of registrar without a meeting of the selection committee.

He also re-appointed some former deans to their posts after the expiry of their tenure without election.

In his memorandum, Prof Farukuzzaman also alleged that the VC appointed his three relatives as lecturers at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) although there was no vacant post.

The VC also abused his power by appointing pro-Jamaat teacher Prof Nazrul Islam as a permanent professor of Education and Research Institute without any advertisement, he added.

When contacted, VC Prof Altaf admitted that he has filed a case against Prof Farukuzzaman as the memorandum has tarnished his image.

When contacted, Prof Farukuzzaman said, "As a conscious man I protested VC's irregularities and corruption, and I presented the real picture of RU."

Sources said Judge Afzal Hossain of the CMM court has received the case and asked Mother Police Station to investigate the matter and submit a report within August 19.

Call to observe Aug 9 to uphold dignity of indigenous people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Indigenous Day on August nine should be observed all over the country to uphold the dignity of the indigenous people as Bangladesh is a member state of the United Nations, speakers said yesterday.

While inaugurating the eight-day-long programme in observance of the International Indigenous People's Day at the Dhaka University Senate auditorium the speakers said around 45 ethnic minorities are living in Bangladesh and they are void of their rights for social, economical and political discrimination.

Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples' Rights Movement and Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum jointly organised the programme.

Raja Devasish Roy inaugurated the programme at Dhaka University Senate auditorium where Prof Dr Anisuzzaman was present as chief guest.

Devasish Roy said information about indigenous people and their rights was not properly covered in

media.

Even the textbooks do not contain adequate information that leads to discrimination towards them, he added.

Apologising for the repression on indigenous people that has been taking place since the liberation war, Prof Anisuzzaman said politics should ensure their welfare.

"We must remember that the change that will come for better life and better living should not be imposed on others," he added.

Highlighting the need to observe the day nationally Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University said Bangladesh needs to observe the day to safeguard the dignity of the indigenous people.

He urged the caretaker government to observe the day nationally saying that the previous partisan governments failed to do it.

"The constitution did not say anything about the rights of these ethnic minority groups. They are neglected in state policy, no law is enacted to protect their rights and even the existing laws are not

implemented," he said, adding that their language, culture, land and resources are threatened for this indifferent attitude of the state.

Presided over by Journalist Syed Abul Moksud, the inaugural programme was also addressed by President of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum Sanjeeb Drong, General Secretary Rabindra Saren, Prof HK Arefin, Khasi Minister Nirola Tangsang and Researcher Shirin Khan.

Names of six journalists were also announced at the programme who will be honoured for their work to create public opinion in favour of the struggle of achieving the indigenous peoples' right

The journalists are Biplob Rahman, Golam Mortoza, Farzana Rupa, Nazrul Kabir, Hari Kishore Chakma and Anwar Hossain.

In the evening lamp was lit at the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla sculpture craving the welfare of indigenous people, Bangalees and all mankind.

The inaugural function was followed by a cultural programme.

CTG LANDSLIDE

Victims' families get Tk 32.80 lakh in compensation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The government yesterday disbursed Tk 32.80 lakh in compensation among the families of the victims of June 11 Chittagong landslide that claimed lives of 128 people.

Divisional Commissioner Hossain Jamil handed over the compensation cheques to 54 out of the 67 affected families at a ceremony at Chittagong Circuit House in the afternoon.

The district administration identified 128 members of 67 families killed in the landslides at different areas of Lebu Bagan, Kachiyaghona and Sekanderpara adjoining to Chittagong Cantonment and at the city's Kusumbagh and Pahartali, sources said.

Of the affected families, 36 families got Tk 50000 each, four families received Tk 70000 each and eight families got Tk 80000 each.

Each of the two families losing five members received Tk 1 lakh and four families losing four members received Tk 90000 each, said the sources.

Each of the families that lost one member got Tk 50000, those who lost two members got Tk 70000 each and additional amount of Tk 10000 were disbursed for each further casualties, added the sources.

The rest 13 families could not be compensated yesterday since their names and addresses need to be verified further, said Jamil.

However, they would be compensated gradually, said the divisional commissioner adding that the authority wanted to make sure that the compensation goes to the actual affected families.

Deputy Commissioner Ashraf Shamim, Additional Divisional Commissioner (general) Mohiuddin Ahmad, Additional Deputy Commissioner (revenue) Jafar Alam, representatives of Joint Forces and ward commissioners of different wards of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) were present at the ceremony.

Zannat Begum Jharna, 20, of Lebu Bagan area, who lost his rickshawpuller husband Ibrahim Khalil on the day, came to receive the cheque carrying her two and a half years old son Arman.

Zannat told The Daily Star that she would try to save the compensation money in a bank for the future of her son and would lead her family by doing something.



PHOTO: STAR

Chittagong Government Art College.



PHOTO: STAR

A member of an indigenous community performs a dance number at a programme marking the International Indigenous People's Day in the city yesterday. Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum organised the event.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Sohana Rauf Chowdhury, a director of Rangs Group, speaks at a press conference on Rangs Bhaban at a city hotel yesterday.

Driver shot dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A car driver was shot dead at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday afternoon.

A gang of four armed criminals chased down Delwar Hossain, 28, at Modhubazar crossing and shot him in his head and leg three times at around 1:45pm, witnesses said.

The criminals also stabbed him in his left shoulder before fleeing the scene, the police said.

Delwar, who hailed from Gandhabpur village in Rupganj, Narayanganj, was the driver of a private car.

Painting contests on Zainul

BSS, Australia

Bangla Academy Australia organised two painting competitions this year for children in memory of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin.

One of the competitions was arranged locally while the other was open to children across the globe, said a press release yesterday.

Children aged between three and 16 from different countries, including Bangladesh, took part in the competitions.