

SSMC HAS ONLY 11 CLASSROOMS FOR 660 STUDENTS

Classes held 'anywhere', 6 chairs for 7 lecturers in one room

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Sir Salimullah Medical College (SSMC), the second largest medical college of the country, has only 11 classrooms for around 660 students, which is quite inadequate for smooth running of academic activities.

Classrooms crammed with students, partitioned rooms for the teachers, makeshift reading rooms in the veranda and classes being arranged in Mitford Hospital's rooms are common scenes at the SSMC.

"A congenial atmosphere of holding classes is totally missing here as classrooms are packed with students," said a teacher. The authorities are forced to hold classes even at the girls' common room, he said.

"We cannot use the common

room for the last two years," said Tania, a student, adding that the girl students' reading room is arranged at the veranda adjacent to the common room.

Students of two batches have to attend classes together in a small room of pharmacology department as two classrooms of the department have been declared risky due to their dilapidated condition.

At present the college building has two lecture galleries which are used as exam halls and for holding classes as the building does not have a designated exam hall. "All the classes in lecture galleries remain postponed thrice a year during internal exams," said a student.

The classes of forensic medicine are held in two rooms, one of them is a teachers' common

room on the seventh floor of Mitford Hospital. Medicine and surgery classes are held in two seminar rooms of the hospital.

"Attending classes in a hospital room is always difficult. When we have two consecutive classes with the latter one at the hospital sometimes we have to run to get to the class in time," said Romel, a fourth-year student.

With each batch having around 150 to 180 students, the total number of students stands around 660 from first year to fourth year of the medical college. Fifth-year students attend classes at the hospital.

Of the 11 classrooms, anatomy department has four, pathology and microbiology department has two each, and biochemistry, physiology and



The makeshift girls' reading room at the veranda of the Sir Salimullah Medical College.

pharmacology department has one classroom each.

The department of community medicine is suffering the most as it does not have any classroom of its own. Lecturers of this department were seen sitting inside a dilapidated room crammed with tables and chairs. This is their only place of sitting when they do not have classes.

"The lecturers do not have individual rooms, so they have to sit together here," said a teacher of the department.

"This room has six chairs for seven lecturers. So when all of us are here one has no place to sit," he added.

The way to the lecturers'

room is narrowed down by a partition in the veranda to arrange a makeshift room for two associate professors.

"This is not a room. Actually it is a partitioned veranda. When it rains water seeps inside the room," said a teacher.

Asked about the shortage of classrooms, AMSM Sharfuzzaman, vice principal of the medical college, said once the construction of the new academic building is finished the problem would go.

"The new building is expected to be finished in the first week of June. There will be two lecture galleries with the accommodation of 300 students. PWD is supposed to

hand it over to us on 25th May," he said.

Construction of the building started in 2003 although it was supposed to begin in 2002. The work remained postponed for and started again last year. Originally it was scheduled to be finished in 2004.

Arefur Rahman, executive engineer, Medical College Division, PWD, said the construction work started late because it took time to remove illegal houses of third and fourth class employees of Mitford Hospital on the plot.

He said work of the eight-storey academic building has been completed up to five-storey.

Hostile condition at girls' hostel

Almost all the rooms of the lone girls' hostel of Sir Salimullah Medical College are overflowing with students as the hostel does not have the capacity to accommodate such a large number of students.

Around 60 percent of the total students of the college are girls.

Eight to 27 students are staying in one room of the hostel. On each floor only three toilets and two bathrooms are available for 60 to 70 students.

"For taking a bath every day we wait for hours for our turn in front of the bathrooms," said Mukta, a fourth year student.

At present there are no reading room, dining room or

TV room as all of these rooms are being used for accommodating girls.

In the absence of a dining room the students have to take meals in the ramshackle hostel canteen. A TV set is placed under a shed in front of the canteen. The guestroom is allocated to foreign students.

"When any relative comes from home we cannot arrange space for him/her to stay. When a male visits us it becomes very embarrassing to welcome him as there is no guest room," said Yasmeen, another student.

Asked, the vice principal of SSMC said an intern hostel for female doctors is under construction which will help ease the problem.



PICTURE TELLS THE TALE: A student studying in a room at the lone girls' hostel of the SSMC.

Centre for visually challenged students at DU needs care and attention

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The first ever resource centre for visually challenged students at Dhaka University needs immediate expansion as the place is now frequented by more students.

"Sometimes there are around 13 students a day," said K Fazlur Rahman, librarian, DU Central Library.

"Visually impaired students mostly record class lectures and later memorise them. But now they can study books at this centre," said a visually impaired student of DU.

The centre was set up with the aim to provide the visually challenged students with the same rights and educational facilities enjoyed by normal students.

Its aim is to prepare visually impaired students for the job market, while Sightsavers International is providing financial support to build up the centre. The UK-based organisation has been working in Bangladesh since 1973 for the prevention of blindness and promotion of the rights of the visually challenged people.

Forty-two students from 12 departments of the university now have a place for study.

The centre started its journey as a library for the visually impaired students in February this year. At present there are 25 books in the centre, each having three copies.

There are two Perkins machines for typing and two slates for the students to write in Braille, the universal language for the visually challenged. Besides, there are three computers with special keyboards. Special software helps students recognise computer commands. There is also a printer to print in Braille and a scanner.

Of the 42 students, 31 now regularly use the centre.

However, the centre is facing some problems like lack of shelves for preserving books and inadequate space.

"At present we have 1000 copies of books but we can keep only 350 here because we do not have enough shelves," said a staff.

"One room is not enough. We need at least another room," he said.

The room should be air-conditioned to maintain expensive machines like the printer that cost around Tk 5 lakh.

"A generator is also needed for the proper maintenance of the machines. But the library itself do not have any generator right now," he added.

Sources said that they have applied to the University Grants Commission (UGC) for solving these problems but things are moving at a snail's pace.

Asked about the problems, librarian Fazlur Rahman said a regular budget allocation is needed for the proper maintenance of the centre.

"Right now UPS of a computer is not working. But if we had an independent budget then we could have solved these problems ourselves," he said.

"We could have spent for translating books, Braille print, buying expensive papers for Braille print and doing spiral binding," he added.

"The centre is a very useful place for visually impaired students like us. Though we have access to the central library we need a guide to read out from

books. We talk through the guides if or when we need any book.

"But here we can read on our own in a friendly atmosphere. Besides, there are computers with Jaws software," said Sharif Ahmed, a visually challenged student of DU.

"However, another drawback is that many of us are not computer trained. So a computer is almost of no use to them. If the centre could have given them training on computer then it could have been more useful," said Sharif.

About the books he said, "Books are inadequate. For example there is only one book for the law students. And most books do not have their updated versions and many riddled with printing mistakes."

He said that Internet connection and trained staffs are needed to use sophisticated machines of the centre.

"The centre has a Braille printer but neither we nor the staffs know how to use it. If there was internet it would have been more effective," he said.

The university authority how-

ever said that the cyber café at the library has Internet line.

"As soon as the vice chancellor is back from leave the cyber café will be inaugurated. After that the centre will draw internet line from the café," said a library staff.

If the centre has an Internet line then the students will have more facilities.

"At present we are using the Jaws software for the visually challenged. If we have the Internet and the required funds then we will be able to install the dolphin software for the students," he said.

"Through the Jaws software students can hear only the American English. But dolphin software has both British and American English with many different tones. But this software is very expensive and cannot be copied like Jaws," he added.

Sources said if Internet line installed then journals, software and other matters available online can be downloaded free of cost because the British Royal fund pays all the Internet bills for stuffs for the visually impaired.



city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"I am innocent ... I did not commit any illegal activities. I have always paid taxes."

-- Mirza Abbas

Detained former housing and public works minister said at a special court after the verdict that awarded him eight years' imprisonment on charges of dodging tax and furnishing false information in his tax returns, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

"There was nothing in his address except use of some nice words."

-- Zillur Rahman

Awami League Acting Chief told reporters in his instant reaction to the chief adviser's address to the nation, on Monday. Source: The Daily Star

"The farmers of this country do not stage strike, they work hard to grow crops."

-- Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury

Chairman, Anti-Corruption Commission said at the inaugural ceremony of newly launched magazine Shaptahik at Hotel Sheraton, on Friday. Source: Prothom Alo

"The time for booking a return ticket is over for the present government. After December 31 they will end up in the empty sub-jails."

-- Major (Rtd) Akhtaruzzaman

BNP Leader said at a roundtable, on Sunday. Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"The unity of Awami League has helped bring the unity of BNP."

-- Nazrul Islam Khan

BNP Joint Secretary said at the BBC Sanglap at China-Bangladesh Friendship Conference Centre, on Saturday. Source: Prothom Alo

"Price of essentials cannot be decreased. This is the reality."

-- Maj Gen (Rtd) Golam Quader

Communication Adviser told reporters, on Tuesday. Source: Jugantor

"This country will transform into a different one from Bangladesh if anti-Liberation forces come to power."

-- Air Vice Marshal (Rtd) AK Khandakar Bir Uttam

Told reporters, on Sunday. Source: Jugantor

"I cannot even think of interfering into your internal matters."

-- James F Moriarty

US Ambassador to Bangladesh told reporters, on Thursday. Source: Bhorer Kagoj

Compiled by Durdana Ghias