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Teacher crisis plagues public med colleges

43pc posts lie vacant; colleges built during AL rule worse off

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Medical students' education is in a crisis as 43 percent posts for teachers in the government medical colleges are vacant.

Experts say this is a serious cause for concern and it puts the nation's healthcare system at stake.

The most critical gap is at the top level, where a staggering 65 percent of professor positions have not been filled. At mid-level, 45 percent posts for associate professor and 51 percent positions for assistant professor are lying vacant.

The government medical colleges can accommodate 5,380 students, according to the 2023-24 annual report of the Health Education Division.

At least four of the 37 government medical colleges have no professors at all while 18 others are limping along with only one to five professors at their disposal, according to data provided by the Directorate General of Medical Education (DGME) last month.

37 GOVT MEDICAL COLLEGES

POSITION	TOTAL POSTS	VACANT	%
Professor	877	567	65
Assoc Prof	1,634	735	45
Asst Prof	2,453	1,250	51
Curator	62	12	19
Lecturer	1,420	182	13
TOTAL	6,446	2,746	43

SOURCE: DGME

Medical education sector insiders have identified delays in promotions, a lack of faculty for eight basic subjects, complexity in determining seniority between cadre and non-cadre doctors, and the removal of many senior educators by making them Officers on Special Duty (OSD) after August 5.

Apart from compromising the education of future doctors, the crisis will further harm the country's already struggling healthcare system in the years to come, experts warn.

"The teacher shortage is hampering the quality of medical education, which will eventually have an adverse impact on the health sector," said Prof Rashid E Mahbub, a medical expert and former president of the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA).

Medical students are being deprived of necessary guidance from teachers, he told The Daily Star.

The shortage of teachers has been there for a long time.

Students at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College in Barisal on February 17 went on strike for over a week demanding a solution to the shortage of teachers.

"We're not getting quality education since there are only six professors against 50 posts while 250 students are admitted in each batch," Arafat Rahman, a final-year MBBS student of the college, told our Barisal correspondent at that time.

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Smoke billowing out of an illegal brick baking oven in Chechuri village of Khulna's Dumuria. Bricks are baked in this way in several homes in the village. Around 100 maunds of firewood are required to bake 12,000 bricks. The use of firewood for making bricks is also illegal. People have resorted to such activities due to government action against illegal brick kilns and because it is cheaper to do it this way. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Holding polls this year may be difficult

Says Nahid citing security concerns

REUTERS, Dhaka

National Citizen Party leader Nahid Islam said the interim government has been unable to fully ensure



public safety, and holding a general election this year will be difficult.

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina was ousted last August in the wake of mass student-led protests. The interim government, headed by Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, said this month that the election could be held by the end of 2025.

"In the past seven

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Gas scarcity halves industrial production

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SUKANTA HALDER

Industrial users are counting 30 to 50 percent production losses for the last couple of months thanks to a gas shortage.

And despite a recent rise in supply through the national pipeline, the textile and spinning mills, and ceramic industries have continued to suffer as the bulk of the gas has been diverted to power production units to meet the growing electricity demand with summer nearing.

At present, the country is getting 2,850 million cubic feet of gas a day (mmcf) after the addition of 200 mmcf of imported liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Monday. The demand for gas is about 3,900 mmcf, according to data from Petrobangla.

However, the imported LNG has been diverted to power plants. Gas supply to the power plants increased from 750 mmcf to 900 mmcf since last week, Petrobangla data shows.

The Daily Star talked to 10 industry owners or managers in Dhaka, Savar, Narayanganj, Tongi, Gazipur and Narshingdi and 20 residents of 15 areas of Dhaka city, all

of whom said they have been suffering due to low pressure of gas.

Production at Ashulia-based Little Star Spinning Mills slumped by more than 50 percent from its daily capacity of 12 tonnes of yarn due to the gas crisis over the last few months, said its Chairman Md Khorshed Alam.

Spinning mills need gas to run the boilers for dyeing and printing fabrics. The boiler at Little Star needs 8 pounds per square inch (psi) pressure of gas, but it often drops to 1 to 1.2 psi during the day and to 2-3 psi after 10:00pm, according to Khorshed.

"I don't know when this problem will be resolved. We have been suffering from the gas crisis for almost a year now," he said.

The pressure of gas in most of the industries demand for 15 psi, said Momen Mollah, the immediate past president of the Narsingdi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

As a result, production decreased by almost 30 percent, he said, adding that they addressed the issue to the concerned

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"The power sector is getting the increased LNG supply, and production has increased. But other sectors will not get the benefit right now. It depends on more gas production and imports"

Petrobangla top official

HISTORIC MARCH 7



'A speech more notable for what wasn't said'

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

March 1971 was electric.

A campaign of many years had reached a crescendo. The people's aspirations were vindicated as their champions had won a comprehensive majority in the 1970 election, sweeping the erstwhile East Pakistan. The people feverishly waited for Mujib to take charge of the centre that would begin their emancipation. But the Pakistani rulers were stalling.

The air became thick with anger and frustrations that led to defiance

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BUSINESS

Inflation eases but remains above 9pc

Inflation eased in February but remained above the 9 percent mark for the 24th consecutive month as rising prices of goods and services continued to erode consumers' purchasing power.

Last month, inflation fell to 9.32 percent from January's 9.94 percent, primarily driven by a reduction in food prices, thanks to an increased supply of essentials, particularly winter vegetables, in the market, according to data released yesterday by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

However, non-food inflation rose to 9.38 percent in February from 9.32 percent in January, indicating that service costs continue to strain household budgets.

Inflation has remained above 9 percent since March 2023.

STORY ON B1



Motorcycles are illegally parked on the pavement of Gulshan Avenue, obstructing pedestrians. Such practices are quite common in the capital. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Warning army not to engage made the difference

UN rights chief had told army it may lose peacekeeping missions otherwise

STAR DESK

During the July-August movement, the United Nations rights chief Volker Turk warned the army that if they got involved in the violence, then they would be banned from UN peacekeeping missions.

Turk, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, said this in an interview on BBC's HARDtalk programme on Wednesday. "During July-August, there were massive demonstrations of students, they had enough of the previous government under Sheikh Hasina, there was massive repression happening," he told Sackur.

"The big hope for them was actually our voice, was my voice, and was also what we were able to do and we put the spotlight on the situation. And we actually gave the warning to the army that if they got involved, it means that they may not be allowed to be a troop-contributing country anymore," said Turk. "As a result, we saw changes."

He went on to say, "When Muhammad Yunus took over



Volker Turk

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