

CTG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1,200 students face uncertainty

BMDC refuses to register the MBBS students including around 600 from Saarc countries over violation of admission rules by university

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Around 1,200 MBBS students of the University of Science and Technology Chittagong face uncertainty, as Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council has refused to register them for the university's violation of admission rules.

The USTC, a private institution, admitted around 400 students each in the 25th, 26th and 27th batches whereas the rules permit it to admit around 100 in each batch, said sources at the USTC and the BMDC.

Without registration with the BMDC, the 1,200 students, including around 600 from

India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives, cannot do internship or become medical practitioner.

The students have been demonstrating in the port city over the last four days, demanding the authorities take steps to resolve the matter. Many of the foreign students have already contacted their embassies concerned in Bangladesh.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Mohammad Nasim said the USTC did not follow the rules and that it was running at its own will.

"They admitted students three times the

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permissible number," he told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that the BMDC cannot register students bypassing the rules.

"We have given them [USTC] chance several times but they have not corrected themselves. The situation has become horrible now."

Asked about the foreign students, he said, "We are thinking about them and will try to find a solution."

Contacted, USTC Registrar Badrul Alam Bhuiyan said they got a letter from the government in 2015, which asked them to admit 75 students every year. But before that, there was no restriction on admission of students.

"We had 387 students in the 24th batch [2010-2011 academic session], and all of them got registered with the BMDC. So, we admitted around 400 students in each of the next three batches."

"After getting the letter, we have not admitted excess students."

Referring to registration of the 1,200 students, he said, "We are trying to solve the problem through discussion with the BMDC."

Contacted, Dr Md Zahedul Haque Basunia, registrar of the BMDC, said they refused to register the students because the USTC violated the rules by admitting more students than permissible.

Asked how 387 USTC students of the 24th batch got registered with the BMDC in 2012, he said it was done following intervention of the higher authorities.

About this, the health minister said they did it on compassionate grounds.

"We showed them [USTC] mercy because of the foreign students, but they [USTC] continue to resort to irregularities year after year."

"When I go abroad, foreigners ask me about them... I went to Sri Lanka recently and the health secretary of

that country politely raised the issues regarding the USTC," Nasim said.

Of the 600 foreign students at the USTC medical faculty, around 300 are from India, about 250 from Sri Lanka, 30 from the Maldives and 10 from Bhutan.

Many of the students from India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives told The Daily Star that they already contacted their embassies in Bangladesh through emails, and the officials concerned told them that they were keeping a close watch on the matter.

In three separate posts on Twitter yesterday, India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said, "I have received the report from Harsh Shringla, Indian high commissioner in Bangladesh. The university has admitted more students than permissible. He is in touch with the university and Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC)."

"To find a satisfactory solution,

Indian students should remain in touch with our mission in Dhaka."

She said the Indian government is in contact with the Bangladesh authorities.

The Indian minister made the remarks in response to a news report of The Hindustan Times.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, Dr Faisal Iqbal Chowdhury, general secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association, Chittagong, said, "The future of around 1,200 students is now uncertain because of the USTC management's greed."

"The government should have taken stern action against the USTC authorities long ago." That would have prevented it from admitting more students than permissible, he said.

"When institutions such as Dhaka Medical College and Chittagong Medical College admit around 200 students every year, how could the USTC admit more than 400 students a

year?" he asked.

PLIGHT OF STUDENTS

Sara Rahin from Kashmir said many of the Indian students contacted the Indian High Commission, and the officials there said they were discussing the matter with the Bangladesh authorities.

Several other Indian students said they paid nine lakh rupees during admission and around three lakh rupees a year in tuition and accommodation fees for the last five years.

"Each student paid more than 25 lakh [Indian] rupees in five years but the authorities are yet to complete our registration," said an Indian student of the 25th batch, seeking anonymity.

"When we were second-year students, we contacted the authorities for registration. They said it would be done in the fifth year."

He is now a student of fifth year, which is nearing its end.

The final professional examinations of the 25th batch are scheduled to start on January 23. But like other students of the batch, he is yet to get registered with the BMDC.

"We must get registered [with the BMDC] for pursuing internship," he said.

Some students from the Maldives said each of them had to pay \$14,150 during admission and \$4,500 every year.

On condition of anonymity, a Sri Lankan student said she paid \$20,000 during admission and \$3,000 a year for the last five years.

A Bangladeshi student, Jahedul Bahar Badhan, said the registration should be completed in the first or the second year, but the university authorities couldn't have them registered even in five years.

"Whenever we asked the authorities to get us registered, they just gave us assurance," he said.

(Our New Delhi correspondent contributed to this report)