

7 DU STUDENTS COMMIT SUICIDE IN TWO AND A HALF YEARS

Authorities yet to take steps to prevent recurrence of suicides

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Despite increasing tendency among the female resident students of Dhaka University (DU) to commit suicide in last couple of years, the university authorities are yet to take any effective steps to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

In last two and a half years, seven students of the university committed suicide. Of them, five were female resident students and three incidents occurred within last one and a half years.

"The trend is increasing day by day as depressed female students do not find any mental supports in the hall to resolve conflicts of their life. They are alienated from their family and live in a place where they cannot share their guilty feelings with someone dependable. So simple, internal conflicts sometimes grip them deeply and push them towards suicide," said Prof Mahmudur Rahman, chairman of the clinical psychology department, while talking to The Daily Star.

He said the trend may rise if the university authorities do not take effective steps immediately.

The latest incident occurred on Tuesday when Chhanda Rani Sarker, a fourth-year student of the Institute of Education and Research and a resident of Rokeya Hall, committed suicide hanging herself from a ceiling fan in her room.

The very next day, two more students of the same hall tried to commit suicide, but they survived as other girls noticed their activities, said sources from the hall.

Zohra Khan Progya, Khadiza Khatun and Shilpi Rani Sarkar were three students of Rokeya Hall who committed suicide respectively on June 25 of 2007, July 28 of 2006 and October 20 of 2005, while Sabera Yasmin Papri of Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall and Humayun Kabir of Surya Sen Hall committed suicide on August 8 of 2007 and February 22 of 2005, respectively.

Sources said all the students had killed themselves failing to cope with their emotional conflicts.

After the third suicide incident

at Rokeya Hall within one and a half years, the authorities on July 28 of last year took an initiative to appoint some part-time psychiatric consultants for four dormitories of the university.

But the authorities are yet to appoint any consultant in any of the dormitories.

When asked DU Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz said, "We had to create the posts through the University Grants Commission, so it took time."

However, the process of appointing nine consultants in four female dormitories is now almost complete, he added.

The authorities of four female dormitories also decided to launch a special counselling programme for the resident students to avoid repetition of such incidents through counselling. But they

could not, because the

Prof Mahmudur Rahman said a long-term and realistic plan is needed to avoid repetition of such incidents.

"A suicide prevention commit-

tee should be formed immediately to provide regular consultancy by clinical psychologists in each dormitory.

Besides, there should be a system like 'Emergency Suicide Prevention Phone Line' so that student can get emergency counselling over phones anytime," he added.

Prof Rahman also stressed on creating a homely environment in dormitories and said it should be monitored whether the house tutors are friendly and cooperative with the resident students or not.

Quoting several female students of different dormitories he said, "Unfortunately many of our house tutors are not friendly to students, rather they behave roughly with the students. They never think that these girls are alienated from their family."

While, the Students' Counselling and Guidance Office at the Teacher-Student Centre has also failed to attract students since its inception in 1963.

Only 292 students took psychotherapy from there last year.