Public Relations Office University of Dhaka Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh Phone: 55167719 E-mail: publicrelations@du.ac.bd

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জনসংযোগ অফিস ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ঢাকা– ২০০০, বাংলাদেশ ফোন : ৫৫১৬৭৭১১

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The Financial Express

Substandard food still served, even after regime change

ARMAN HOSSEN, DU

"I no longer eat from the hall canteen because the food is unhygienic. It's difficult, but I cook for myself. The condition of the food in the hall canteen is so poor that anyone used to home-cooked meals wouldn't be able to tolerate it. Students only eat there out of sheer necessity," said Umme Habiba Preeti, a student of the Public Administration Department at the University of Dhaka.

Preeti is a second-year residential student at Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall.

Her experience is not unique-students from almost every hall at Dhaka University share similar grievances. For residential students at DU, canteen is the source of daily meals. The university subsidises gas, water, and electricity for these canteens to ensure affordable and quality food. Before the July mass uprising, canteen directors blamed extortion and free meals demanded by Chhatra League leaders for the poor food quality. After the July uprising, influence of Chhatra League has disappeared from halls, for which students hoped newly for better food services.

However, that hope has been crushed as the situation remains unchanged, with inadequate monitoring from the hall administration.

Across halls, students report finding insects in food, unclean kitchen conditions, and repetitive and tasteless meals. Many say they feel sick after eating regularly from the canteens. Falguni Chowdhury Adi, a student of Rokeya Hall, said nothing has changed in price or quality.

"The biggest issue is hygiene. I once found an insect in my food. Rotten



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Unclean canteens increase the risk of disease and irregular or inadequate meals can weaken students physically: Experts

fish and meat are also common," she said, adding many students avoid meals and suffer from malnutrition. Imran Hossain from Dr Muhammad Shahidullah Hall noted a slight improvement in taste but said overall

quality remains poor. Tahzib Adnan, student of Surya Sen Hall, said, "The same food is served every day, and it's rarely fresh. Chicken isn't cleaned properly, and fish often still has scales. But we have no alternative option."

Now free from political pressure, canteen operators point to rising commodity prices as the main challenge. They admit that occasional carelessness also leads to valid complaints. Mohammad Shahabuddin, director of Surya Sen Hall's canteen, said, "Ingredient prices are high, and we can't raise food prices. With 22 staff members to pay and frequent spoilage of bulk items, it's hard to make a profit."

Harunur Rashid, who runs the Shapla Canteen at Rokeya Hall, echoed the same. "We try to serve better food and listen to students, but not everyone is satisfied. I personally monitor shopping and cooking. Still, different students have different tastes, and we can't meet all expectations." He acknowledged that since food is served openly, insects sometimes fall in. "We're trying to be more careful about that," he added.

In response, hall authorities claimed

that they have taken steps. Some canteen directors have been replaced, and house tutors occasionally inspect kitchens. Still, they admit the challenge of balancing cost and quality. Dr Aleya Begum, provost of Bangamata Hall, said regular monitoring is in place, but complaints persist. "You can't expect canteen food to taste like home cooking. Still, we try to act on students' concerns. However, health experts have raised alarms. While speaking with the FE, Dr Abbas Ali Khorshed, associate professor at the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science of the university, warned that students could quickly suffer from vitamin deficiencies due to poor-quality food. Unclean canteens increase the risk of

disease. Irregular or inadequate meals can weaken students physically. He noted, "Excessive salt in food can lead to high blood pressure at a young age. Reusing the same oil repeatedly creates trans fat, which are harmful and can lead to heart disease. Repetitive meals reduce appetite, and the campus lacks nutritious fruits and vegetables These may not cause immediate problems, but they can trigger serious health issues in the near future." Regarding the issue, Professor Abdullah Al Mamun, convener of the Provost Standing Committee, said that in several halls, rent has been reduced and management changed to improve services. "We've told canteen operators to reduce profits if necessary to maintain food quality. Things will improve gradually," he said. He also confirmed that each hall has a food monitoring committee. "If anyone is found neglecting their duties. we'll take further action," he added. armanhossen7971@amail.com

DU in Media

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০৮ আষাঢ় ১৪৩২

কালের কণ্ঠ



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