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CANCER TREATMENT

JU professor gives Rs 15 lakh for cancer treatment of colleagues

A JU official said the money donated by Bhandari would be put in a fixed deposit and the annual interest from it will be spent by the employees' welfare committee of the university for those who need help

SUBHANKAR CHOWDHURY | PUBLISHED 08.02.24, 05:45 AM

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Jadavpur University

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A Jadavpur University professor who lost his wife to cancer in June 2020 has contributed Rs 15 lakh in his wife's memory so the university can extend support to employees undergoing cancer treatment.

The endowment fund has been named after Mitu Bhandari, wife of Gupinath Bhandari, a professor of civil engineering at JU.

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The professor, who walks with prosthetic support following an accident, said the endowment had been created to bear expenses for the part of the treatment that is not covered by JU's group insurance policy.

A JU official said the money donated by Bhandari would be put in a fixed deposit and the annual interest from it will be spent by the employees'

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welfare committee of the university for those who need help.

“My wife was diagnosed with cancer in May 2020 amid the (Covid-induced) lockdown. She died just in a month. I did not get the time to get her treated as her disease was in an advanced stage. Which is why I wanted to do something to help those suffering from cancer,” said the professor who lives in Dhakuria, close to the campus.

The self-effacing man was initially reluctant to speak. Once he agreed, he requested not to be photographed.

“My wife used to help whoever was in distress, be it for treatment or for any other requirement, selflessly. So I thought creating an endowment with the intention to help would be a good way to remember her,” he said on Tuesday.

JU joint registrar Sanjay Gopal Sarkar said well-to-do former students pitching in to help their university is common, but “an in-service teacher making a donation on this scale” is rare.

Bhandari, who has been teaching at the university since 2000, said initially he had thought about contributing the sum in three instalments of Rs 5 lakh each.

“But later it struck me that if I donated Rs 15 lakh at one go, the university would earn a substantial amount as annual interest from it. On January 8, I gave the university a cheque for Rs 15 lakh,” said the professor, who completed his BTech from the erstwhile BE College (Bengal Engineering College, now christened IEST) in Shibpur.

He did his MTech from Jadavpur University.

According to him, there are employees whose group insurance coverage is nothing substantial. “I want to help this segment of the university community,” he said.

A bond that he signed with the university says: “The amount of support is to be extended to the employees’ welfare committee for the purpose of providing financial support to the cancer-affected Medclaim-members of Jadavpur University. The quantum of support is to be decided and distributed by the Jadavpur University’s employees’ welfare committee. This financial support would be in addition to the policy benefit of the concerned employee.”

JU registrar Snehamanju Basu, who signed the bond on behalf of the university, said: “The teacher’s daughter, Mehuli Bhandari, came with her



father to hand over the cheque. She was so keen to help employees of the university. This help, I hope, will set a precedent.”

The professor, who works in the field of disaster management, said he also wanted to do something for the university whose employees supported him overwhelmingly when he met with an accident in 2013 and lost his right leg.

“I still remember how the teaching and non-teaching staff selflessly stood by my family during those trying times. Today, I am happy that I could help them in my own way,” he said.

LAST UPDATED ON 08.02.24, 05:46 AM

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