

JU suspends 16 students over ragging allegations

JU CORRESPONDENT

The Jahangirnagar University (JU) authorities yesterday suspended 16 second-year students of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology for allegedly ragging freshers at a dormitory.

The decision was confirmed in an office order signed by Acting Public Relations Director Mohammad Mohiuddin and issued on the instruction of Vice-Chancellor Prof Mohammad Kamrul Ahsan.

According to the order, the incident occurred on Sunday night in Room 403 of Male Hall 2, where students of the department's 53rd batch allegedly ragged juniors from the 54th batch.

A three-member investigation committee, headed by Mowlana Bhashani Hall Provost Prof Md Kamruzzaman, has been formed to probe the incident. The committee has been asked to submit its report within 21 working days.



Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at a meeting with President of Brazil Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on the sidelines of World Food Forum (WFF) in Rome, Italy, yesterday (local time).

PHOTO: FACEBOOK/CHIEF ADVISER GOB

Man hacked to death in Noakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A man was hacked to death in Noakhali's Subarnachar upazila yesterday.

The deceased is Subrata Chandra Das, 46, of Char Bojlul village, said police.

The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately, said Char Jabbar Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Md Shahin Miah.

The victim's father, Chiru Ranjan Das, said Subrata was currently unemployed.

Subrata's wife, Rikta Rani Das, works as a field inspector at the Char Jabbar Union Health and Family Welfare Centre (UH&FWC) under the same upazila, said Iftekhar Ahmmed, deputy director of the Noakhali office of the Directorate General of Family Planning.

His father said, like every other day, Subrata went out on his motorcycle around 1:00pm to bring his wife home from work.

"Around an hour later, my younger son Sanjib Das told me over the phone that Subrata was injured in a motorbike accident," Chiru Ranjan told The Daily Star.

"Hearing this, I rushed to the spot and found Subrata's bloodstained body lying on the ground adjacent to the road near Polowan Bari area on Haris Chowdhury Bazar-Pariskar Bazar road in Char Jubilee village. Many gathered around his body. His throat was slit," he said.

"My son was a very calm and quiet person. As far as I know, he had no enemies. I want justice for his murder," Charu added.

50% women don't know

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Meanwhile, 8.3 percent of women experienced some forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence related to sexual blackmail, image-based abuse, and controlling behaviours. This is the first time technology-facilitated gender-based violence was included in the survey.

At the same time, a culture of silence continues to dominate. Two in three women (64 percent) never shared their experience with anyone. Among those who did, parents (78.8 percent) were most often told, followed by in-laws (35.2 percent) and siblings (32.8 percent).

When survivors sought help, most turned to local leaders (58.4 percent), showing preference for community-level resolution over formal systems. Only 36.2 percent approached the police, and 15 percent went to the courts.

The main reasons for not reporting included the normalisation of violence (38.8 percent), along with fear of losing family honour and fear of public disgrace – barriers that continue to keep women silent.

Only 14.5 percent of women sought medical treatment after violence in the past year. Among them, 93 percent sought help for physical injuries, while 15.5 percent addressed emotional trauma.

The financial toll is severe. On average, survivors spent Tk 2,512 on medical treatment – higher in rural areas (Tk 2,672) – and Tk 4,104 on legal expenses, with urban survivors paying slightly more (Tk 4,341). Combined, the average out-of-pocket cost stood at Tk 2,676, rising to Tk 2,878 in rural areas.

MOST VICTIMS ABUSED BY HUSBANDS

In the survey, "intimate partners" refer to current or former husbands, while "non-partners" include anyone else. It confirmed that husbands remain the main perpetrators of violence against women.

Controlling behaviour was the

About 26 percent reported being forced into sex by their husbands, and over half (55.9 percent) of these survivors said such assaults occurred repeatedly.

Even during pregnancy, 7 percent of women reported physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, and 4 percent in the past 12 months.

The survey found married adolescent girls aged 15-19 years face the highest risk of violence, accounting for 62 percent of all intimate partner violence survivors in the past year.

Women living in city corporations were 35 percent more likely – and those in slums 47 percent more likely – to face violence compared to women in rural regions.

Regional variations were stark. Khulna recorded the highest physical violence (57.2 percent), while Sylhet had the lowest (33.5 percent). For sexual violence, Barishal topped the list at 36 percent, while Mymensingh had the lowest rate (23 percent).

The survey also identified risk factors. Husbands' extramarital relationships increased the likelihood of violence by 2.3 times, drug addiction by 1.7 times, and marriages involving dowry by 1.8 times.

On the other hand, education acted as protection. Women whose husbands completed secondary school faced a 17 percent lower risk, while those with university-educated partners faced a 32 percent lower risk.

Divorced, separated, or widowed women were 92 percent less likely to experience violence than those living with their husbands, while women married more than once faced a 42 percent higher likelihood.

Economically, women earning cash income were 28 percent more likely to face partner violence – a possible backlash against shifting gender roles.

NON-PARTNER VIOLENCE

Outside marriage, mothers-in-law (35 percent), mothers (20.5 percent), brothers- or sisters-in-law

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Highest in Khulna (57.2%)
Lowest in Sylhet (33.5%)

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Highest in Barishal (36%)
Lowest in Mymensingh (23%)

WHO DO SURVIVORS TELL?

Parents: 78.8%
In-laws: 35.2%
Siblings: 32.8%
No one: 64%

HOW AWARE ARE WOMEN OF SUPPORT SERVICES?

Aware of where to report: 48.5%
Aware of OCCs: 2.2%
Aware of helpline 109 (overall): 15.7%
Aware of helpline 109 among survivors: 9.3%

'Far from reaching the level needed'

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"Manufacturers would benefit from clearer guidelines, consumers would be better protected, product quality would improve, and we'd be in a stronger position to compete internationally and grow our exports," he added.

Although BSTI has set standards for thousands of products, implementation and monitoring are weak, said AHM Shafiquzzaman, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh.

Relying solely on government agencies with outdated processes and limited manpower will hold back progress, he said, while calling for allowing competent private institutions to participate in quality testing and standardisation.

"Ultimately, the goal is to protect consumers and build trust in Bangladeshi products at home and abroad through a more accountable, collaborative quality control framework," he added.

Businesses complained about the lower standard of the BSTI in the global market, said Abdul Hasib Chowdhury, pro-vice chancellor of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

"We are still far from reaching the level we need – achieving that height will take much more time and effort," he added.

Most consumers don't pay much attention to whether a product carries the BSTI logo, said Khurshid Ahmad Farhad, general manager of Bombay Sweets.

"For the local market, BSTI standards are adequate, but for

global operations, we must also meet international standards."

A product may meet all ten parameters under BSTI, but only six or seven might align with global benchmarks such as those in Japan, the US, Europe or Australia.

"Higher benchmarks boost quality and global competitiveness. Ideally, there should be at least 10,000 products under BSTI's standard list to improve consumer confidence and product quality," he said.

However, Pran's Mridha said the BSTI's standards are generally aligned with international benchmarks.

"While some areas may still be weak or outdated, regular reviews and updates are helping us move closer to global norms," said Mridha.

For instance, under a bilateral agreement, India accepts some of Pran's products based on BSTI certification, even though additional lab tests and inspections are sometimes required on their end, he added.

"Our laboratories are strong and meet international standards, as recently confirmed by experts from the Royal Danish Embassy," said Md Saiful Islam, director (Certificate Marks) at BSTI.

There is a dedicated Halal laboratory to test imported food products for Halal compliance, which is especially important in a Muslim-majority country.

Islam said they are establishing district-level labs tailored to local industries, such as textile labs in Sirajganj and heavy industry labs in Bogura, under a project.

"We are developing an app so consumers can verify product

AT A GLANCE

➤

BSTI sets national standards for 4,574 items

➤

Made compliance mandatory for 315

➤

Certification process ongoing for 14 more

SUGGESTIONS

➤

Increase lab facilities in rural areas

➤

Strengthen law enforcement

➤

Reduce certification fee

➤

Enhance awareness among consumers

licensing easily and with confidence. Even if a product has the logo, consumers can call or check online to confirm the license and authenticity."

Currently, 315 products are under compulsory standards, chosen based on public importance and industry need, while 14 more products, including energy drinks, are being considered for mandatory certification, he added.

Gaza war is over: Trump

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In exchange, Israel released 1,968 mostly Palestinian prisoners held in its jails, its prison service said.

"From October 7 until this week, Israel has been a nation at war, enduring burdens that only a proud and faithful people could withstand," Trump told lawmakers during an address to Israel's parliament, where he received a lengthy standing ovation upon his arrival.

"For so many families across this land, it has been years since you've known a single day of true peace," he continued.

"Not only for Israelis, but also for Palestinians and for many others, the long and painful nightmare is finally over."

In Tel Aviv, a huge crowd that had gathered to support hostage families erupted in joy, tears and song as news broke of the first releases, though the pain at the loss of those who had not survived was palpable.

In the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, huge crowds gathered to welcome home the first buses carrying prisoners, with some chanting "Allahu akbar", or God is the greatest, in celebration.

And at a similar gathering in the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis, residents climbed the sides of slow-moving Red Cross buses carrying the prisoners to welcome home their loved ones with a hug or kiss.

"Welcome home," Israel's foreign ministry said in a series of posts on X, hailing the return of the hostages.

On Tel Aviv's Hostages Square, Noga shared her pain and joy.

"I'm torn between emotion and sadness for those who won't be coming back," she said.

Under the ceasefire agreement, Hamas is also due to return the bodies

of 27 hostages who died or were killed in captivity, as well as the remains of a soldier killed in 2014 during a previous Gaza conflict.

Israel has said it does not expect all of the dead hostages to be returned on Monday, though the army said it had received the bodies of two captives that were handed over to the Red Cross by Hamas, and that it was still expecting the remains of two more.

Of the prisoners it freed in return, around 250 were security detainees, including many convicted of killing Israelis, while about 1,700 were taken into custody by the Israeli army in Gaza during the war.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian groups seized 251 hostages during Hamas's unprecedented attack on Israel, which led to the deaths of 1,219 people, most of them civilians.

All but 47 of those hostages were freed in earlier truces, with the families of those who have remained in captivity leading lives of constant pain and worry for their loved ones.

In Gaza, too, the ceasefire has brought relief, but with much of the territory flattened by war, the road to recovery remains long.

"The greatest joy is seeing my whole family gathered to welcome me," Yusef Afana, a 25-year-old released prisoner from north Gaza, told AFP in Khan Yunis.

"I spent 10 months in prison – some of the hardest days I've ever lived."

In the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, meanwhile, Palestinian prisoners released by Israel were met by a cheering crowd so dense that they struggled to get off the bus that delivered them from jail.

"It's an indescribable feeling, a new birth," newly released Mahdi Ramadan told AFP, flanked by his parents.

Trump's visit to the Middle East aims to celebrate his role in brokering last week's ceasefire and hostage release deal – but much remains to be negotiated.

Among the potential sticking points are Hamas's refusal to disarm and Israel's failure to pledge full withdrawal from the devastated territory.

The US leader, however, repeatedly signalled he was confident the ceasefire will hold, saying at a joint appearance with Sisi in Sharm el-Sheikh that talks on the next steps of the plan were underway.

"It's started, as far as we're concerned, phase 2 has started," he said.

"The phases are all a little bit mixed in with each other," he added.

World leaders welcomed the move. However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Trump's plan to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict only dealt with Gaza and was not specific enough on Palestinian statehood.

"We have noted that Donald Trump's peace plan only addresses the Gaza Strip. It mentions statehood, but in rather general terms," Lavrov told reporters from Arab countries.

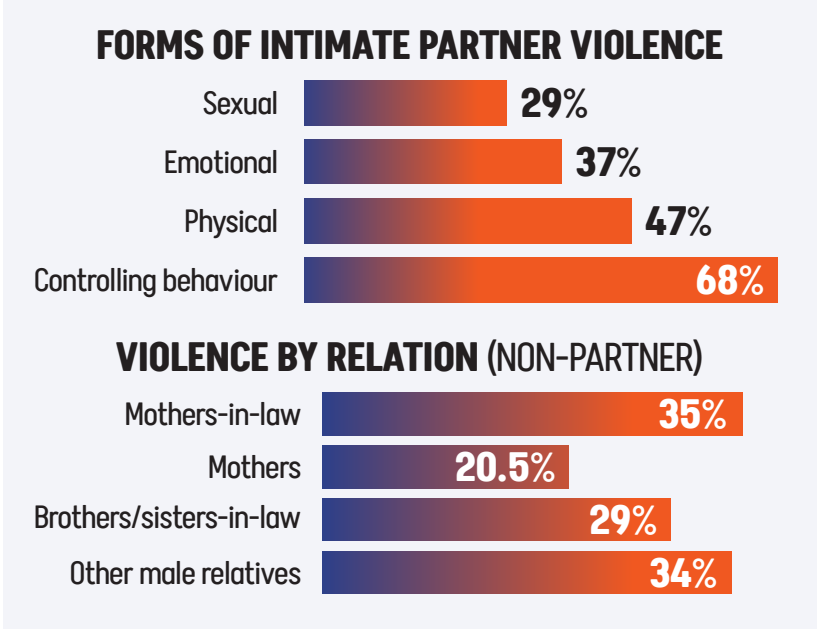
"It's imperative to flesh out these approaches, including defining what will happen in the West Bank."

Speaking to reporters on Air Force One at the start of the "very special" visit, Trump brushed off concerns about whether the ceasefire would endure.

"I think it's going to hold," he said of the ceasefire.

"The war is over, you understand that," Trump told reporters.

Trump announced in late September a 20-point plan for Gaza, which helped bring about the ceasefire.



most common form of intimate partner violence, affecting 68 percent of women, followed by physical violence (47 percent), emotional violence (37 percent), and sexual violence (29 percent).

Women were three times more likely to be physically abused and over 13 times more likely to suffer sexual violence from their husbands than from any other person.

Physical violence is often repeated, with 29.4 percent of women experiencing it six or more times.

(29 percent), and other male family members (34 percent) were the most frequent perpetrators of physical violence.

Most non-partner sexual violence was committed by male relatives, friends, or acquaintances. More than half of women with disabilities reported non-partner violence, while 44.5 percent of survivors of non-partner physical violence were harmed by more than one perpetrator.

Rajshahi, Chattogram, Rangpur,