

The Daily Star

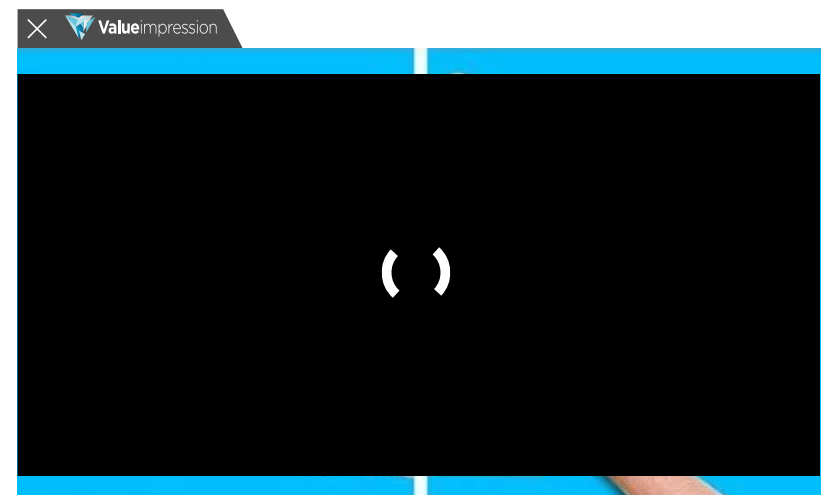
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BCL Reign of Terror: Univ admin did nothing

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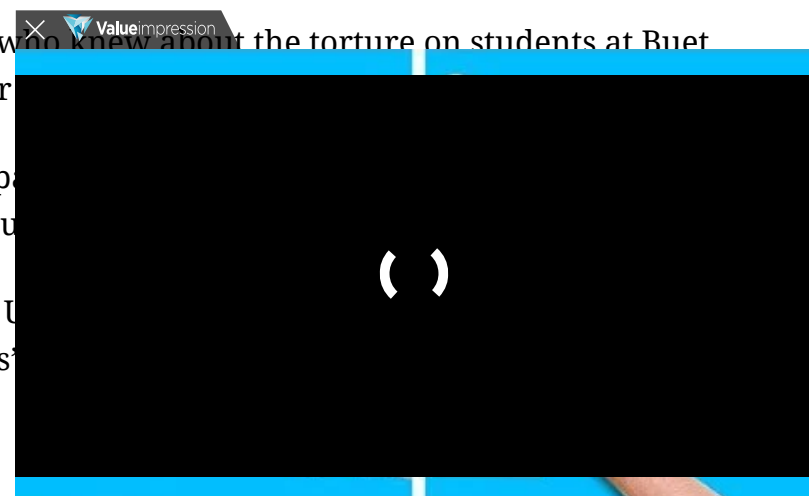
Mohammad Al-Masum Molla

Buet authorities knew that Chhatra League activists were bullying, verbally abusing and physically torturing students but they rarely took action against the perpetrators.

The Daily Star talked to at least 10 teachers and three assistant provosts who knew about the torture on students at Buet dormitories. They said if the administration had acted accordingly, Abrar

Fahad, a second-year student of electrical and electronic engineering department, was beaten by Chhatra League men at a dormitory on Monday, sparking countrywide outrage.

“This has been going on for a long time and it did not happen overnight. University authorities and also the teachers,” AKM Masud, president of Buet Teachers’ Association, said.



He said the teachers' association had a meeting yesterday where representatives of dormitory authorities said they were aware of the abuses but could not act properly as they did not get the necessary support from their higher authorities.

Masud said, "Why do meritorious students become unruly after getting admission here? It is a matter of worry. Another issue of concern is that the authorities go into denial mode because of political pressure."

Masud mentioned the director of students' welfare (DSW) as one of the higher authorities tasked with looking after the students.

A number of teachers said the dorm authorities had reported the matter to higher authorities but was asked to "manage the situation".

Most of the teachers said students were scared of making formal complaints because of backlash. Even after formal complaints, perpetrators have hardly ever been punished or the punishments meted out.

Around 1:00am on July 25, some Chhatra League leaders called Abhijeet Kar to the common room of Ahsanullah Hall. When Abhijeet went there, he saw 14 other students in the room. All of them were asked to stand in a line and then Chhatra League leaders beat them up.

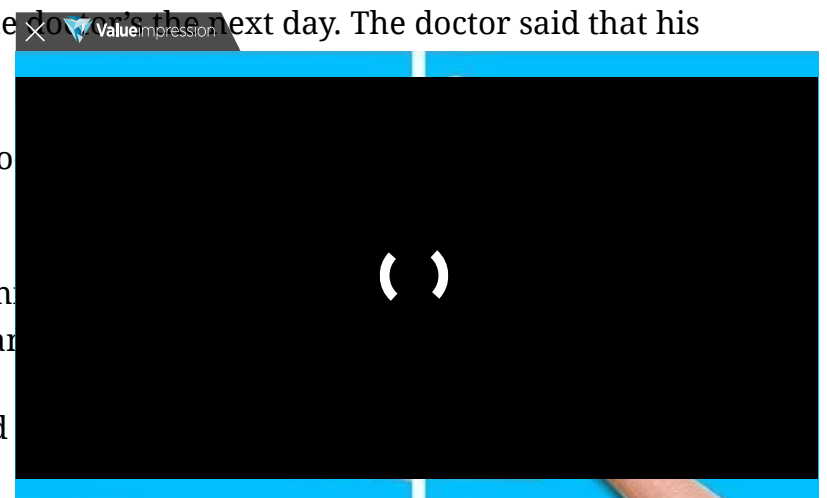
Sowmitro Lahiri of mechanical engineering had slapped Abhijeet. He started bleeding from the ear.

Seeing his condition, Sowmitro sent him to his room. Abhijeet went to the doctor's the next day. The doctor said that his eardrum was perforated and blood had clotted inside the ear.

Abhijeet then lodged a complaint with the DSW which formed a probe board report.

It recommended suspension of Sowmitro Lahiri, Plaban Chowdhury, Nahid Chowdhury and Sabbyasachi Das from Ahsanullah Hall for a year each and

The committee also recommended harsher punishment of Sowmitro and Discipline for the greater interest of the university.



The university authorities last month expelled only Sowmitro and Plaban from the dorm for a year and the rest were sort of let off with suspended sentences.

But in reality, the duo did not leave the dormitory right away, said students and an assistant provost.

Two more students of Suhrawardy Hall faced similar beatings but the university did not take any action.

A final-year student of computer science and engineering said six people attacked him on November 23 last year at MA Rashid Hall.

They beat him with cricket stumps causing a tear in his left leg ligament.

The beating was for refusing to pay the “charge” for a “hall feast” some students organised. The CSE student had refused as he would not be in the dormitory during the feast.

The student could not walk for one month but did not lodge any complaint fearing retribution.

He said even though he did not lodge any complaint, the hall provost and assistant provost knew about the matter.

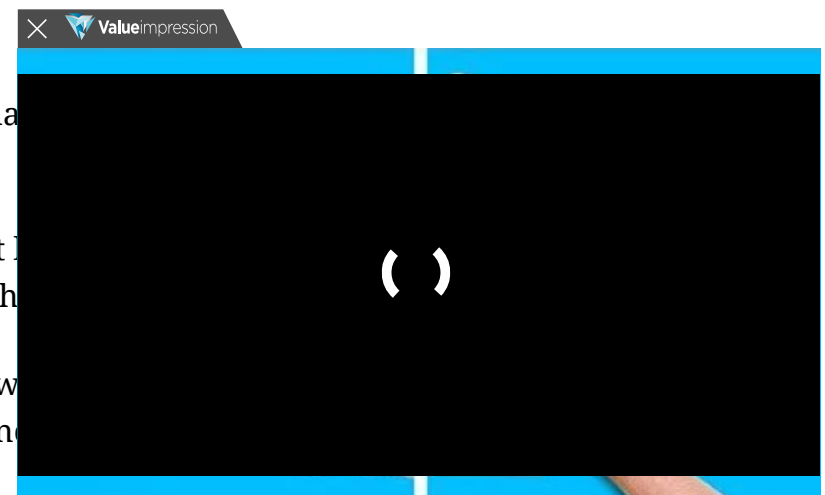
An assistant provost said these were not isolated incidents and that these had been going on for the last five to six years.

“It is a cumulative failure of the university administration. We failed to protect the students,” the assistant provost said wishing not to be named.

Another assistant provost said the situation would have been different had there been proper action of the incidents.

“It is our failure. It was our duty to protect the students but we could not. Whenever we complaint to the DSW, the director always says ‘adjust with the situation’.”

A Buet student said, “If the administration had taken proper action and with proper support from the Chhatra League men could not have gotten the audacity to repeat such incidents.”



Prof Md Mizanur Rahman, director at the office of the DSW, said, “It is not my failure. It may be an institutional failure.

“I took the charge three months ago. If anyone can say in front of me that I asked them ‘to manage the situation’, I will resign right away.”

The Daily Star tried to contact the vice-chancellor and the registrar of the university for comments but they could not be reached.

The CSE department launched a website in 2016 for reporting such incidents online. There were 103 incidents reported as of July. The 103 complaints were printed and submitted to the university authorities but no visible action was taken, said a Bu et teacher.

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