

# Students protest actions against female peers



Photo: Collected

Chittagong University students demonstrated on campus yesterday, protesting the expulsion of a female student and the suspension of nine others.

At a human chain in front of the Shaheed Minar, they also condemned the proctor's "offensive and misogynistic" Facebook posts directed at those demanding cancellation of the punishments meted out to the female students.



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They demanded the resignation of Proctor Prof Tanvir Mohammad Haider Arif.

Late at night on February 5, a group of male students entered the premises of Jananetri Sheikh Hasina Hall, a women's dormitory, to vandalise a sculpture of a boat, because the boat is the Awami League's electoral symbol, the protesters said.

The group of male students and the dorm residents engaged in a heated argument when the latter tried to stop the men from entering the premises and demolishing the structure.

Students say that the proctor and two assistant proctors then went to the scene and took the side of the men.

At one point, a female student slapped an assistant proctor, not knowing his identity, demonstrators said.

On February 13, she was expelled, and nine others were suspended.

As the action drew backlash, Prof Arif made a Facebook post questioning whether the participants of the July uprising had fallen into a "honey trap".

Leaders and activists from various student organisations expressed solidarity by joining the demonstration.

Addressing the programme, Joglul Ahmed, spokesperson for the Students' Alliance for Democracy, said, "The entire university is ashamed of the proctor's Facebook posts. The university's reputation has been tarnished because of you. Apologise or resign now."

## **SUSPENDED STUDENTS MAKE DEMANDS**

At a press conference held at Sholoshahar Railway Station in the afternoon, five of the 10 students facing punishment demanded holding the proctorial body responsible for failing to prevent vandalism at the dorm.

Their demands also include the immediate resignation of the proctor, withdrawal of the punishments, and a fresh investigation to identify who was at fault.

They also called for action against students who entered the dorm premises on February 5 and journalists who allegedly filmed female students without their consent and made offensive remarks during the argument, reports our staff correspondent from Chattogram.

Sumaiya Shikdar, a student of marketing, said when male students attempted to break into the Sheikh Hasina hall, the university administration failed to intervene.

When female students sought the vice chancellor's help, the proctorial team members arrived, scolded them, and called them "agents of fascists", leading to an altercation, she said.

Campus journalists did not identify themselves and started filming, ignoring requests not to do that.

Jannatul Mawa, Umme Habiba Bristy, Maisara Jahan Esha, and Rowjatul Jannat Nisha were present at the press conference.

## **ALUMNI OUTRAGED**

Some 108 former CU students issued a statement, expressing outrage over the matter.

The proctor's "derogatory" comments towards female students had "crossed the line", reads the statement.

"We firmly believe that such remarks from a person holding a responsible position in a higher education institution are unacceptable. Female students at the Chittagong University can never feel safe under such a misogynistic proctor."

The administration's clear bias was evident when it expelled a female student and suspended nine others for two years without asking them to explain their conduct or giving them an opportunity to defend themselves, it adds.

"We strongly condemn the entry of a frenzied male mob into the female dormitory premises near midnight.... Such an environment raises serious concerns about women's safety on campus and exposes administrative failure."

The former students demanded a fresh and impartial investigation.

## **PROCTOR CLAIMS MIX-UP**

Proctor Prof Tanvir MH Arif told The Daily Star that the decision to punish the students followed a thorough investigation.

"They were found guilty. The [probe] committee, headed by Prof Ismat Ara Haque, submitted its report, and all of them were given time to defend themselves."

About his Facebook post, he said his use of the term "honey trap" did not refer to any female students or any women.

"I have 20 years of experience as a teacher and have witnessed many governments and people who have changed their stances for personal benefits. I used the term about them. Yet, being in a responsible position, I should be more conscious of my choice of words, and I have apologised and given an explanation," he said.