

# Political fallout brings relief to JU dormitories, improves campus life

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Students enjoying better accommodation, improved canteen services



Photo: Sakib Ahmed

The 2024 mass uprising that toppled the fascist regime has also brought a significant shift to campus life at public universities, ending the long-standing accommodation crisis and leading to notable improvements in quality of food at hall canteens.

For years, first-year students at several public universities were forced to live in severely overcrowded dormitories — known as Gono Rooms — with as many as 20 students crammed into rooms designed for only four. This lack of space compromised students' privacy, disrupted their studies, and made it difficult for them to adjust to university life.

Many have blamed the now-banned student organisation, Chhatra League, which reportedly manipulated dormitory allocations to maintain political control and often compelled freshers to participate in its activities.

Several leaders of the organisation were accused of occupying multiple rooms and continuing to reside in the halls years after graduation, worsening the artificially created seat shortage.

Following the regime's fall on August 5, 2024, university dormitories have been freed from political occupation, bringing an end to the Gono Room culture — a system that symbolised years of student exploitation.

At Jahangirnagar University (JU), every fresher is now provided a single bed from the very first day. "When I got admitted, I was worried about being forced into a Gono Room and coming under political pressure," said KM Jadid Bin Khalid, a first-year journalism student and resident of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam Hall.

"But I was pleasantly surprised to be assigned a spacious four-seater room with all necessary facilities available."



Photo: Sakib Ahmed

Aminur, a second-year International Relations student, recalled his experience, saying, "Despite JU being declared a fully residential university, we were packed into Gono Rooms during our first year."

"Each fresher now receives a proper seat and essential amenities. We are happy with the changes and hope this culture continues."

He also noted that canteen food quality has improved significantly under the new administration.

"The food is good, and I take my meals from our hall canteen every day."

Canteen owners also acknowledged improvements in both food quality and business. Many had previously blamed Chhatra League members for eating for free by force, which hurt their business and prevented them from maintaining standards.

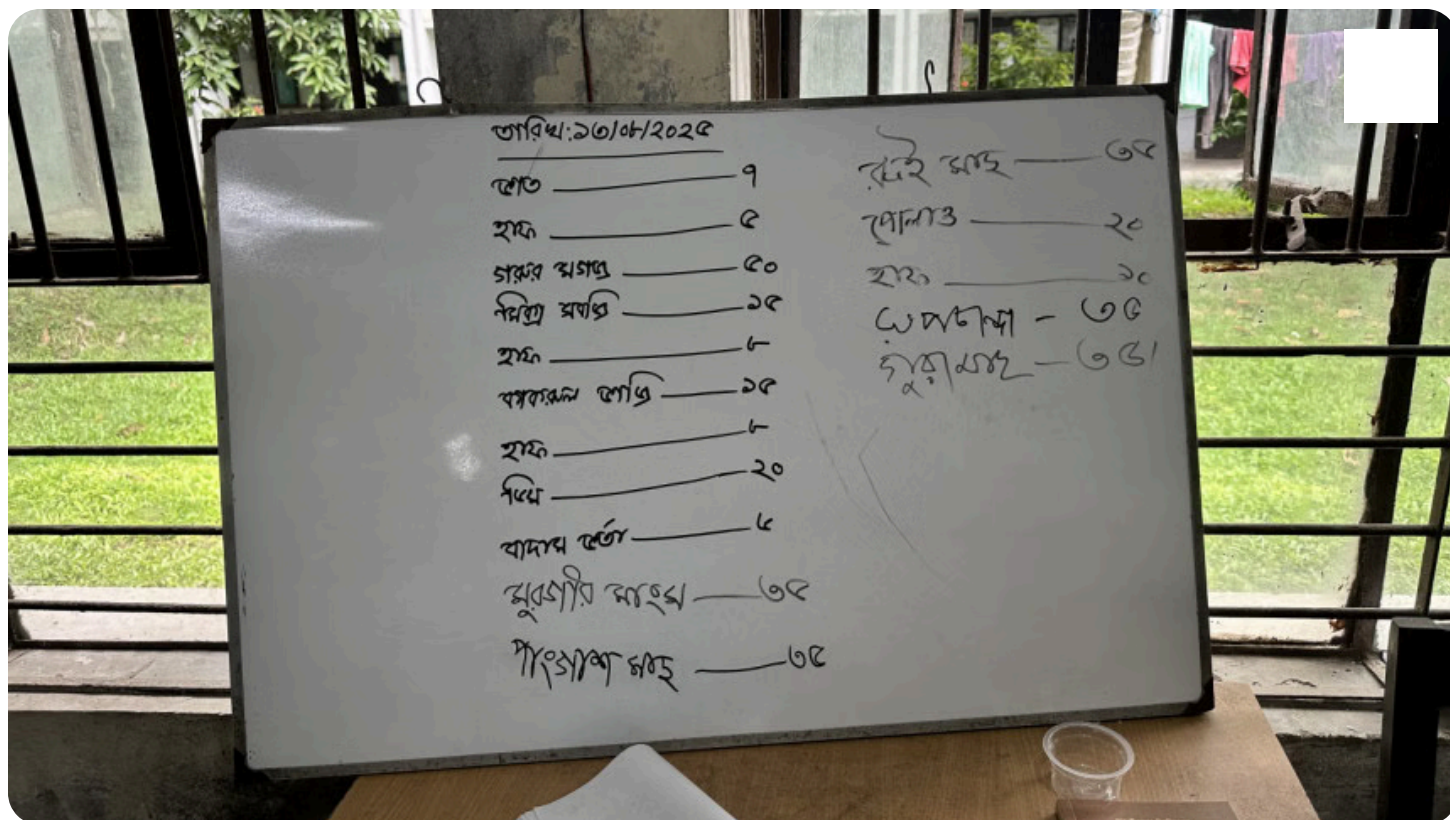


Photo: Sakib Ahmed

"When they were here, we had to provide free meals to their members," said Mohammad Zewel, owner of the Mowlana Bhashani Hall canteen. "I still have Tk 40,000 in unpaid bills from them. Now, with no political interference, we can buy better ingredients and prepare quality meals."

Zewel added that the number of daily customers has more than doubled, rising from 100 to over 200–220 students per meal. Outside the dorms, local eateries near Bot Tola also reported similar grievances.

"I still have dues of at least Tk 50,000 from Chhatra League members," said Mohammad Ripon, owner of Radhuni Hotel. "Now that there's no political pressure, our food quality has improved. However, since hall canteens have also become better, more students now eat there."

Most canteen and hotel owners at JU said they no longer face extortion or interference from political groups and are now running their businesses peacefully.

"Earlier, I used to buy groceries worth Tk 25,000–30,000 a day. Now, it has dropped to Tk 10,000–15,000," Ripon added.

Yet, despite the positive changes, dormitories still house a significant number of illegal occupants. There are 21 halls at JU and around 13,000 regular students. According to data provided by JU Proctor Prof AKM Rashidul Alam, around 1,100 former students — who have already graduated — still reside in the halls, with 900 in male dorms and 200 in female ones.

"This data was collected three months ago. We will soon conduct an updated survey and take steps to evict these non-students before the new batch arrives," said Prof Rashidul.

Contacted, JU Pro-Vice Chancellor (Administration) Prof Sohel Ahmed told The Daily Star that the administration is planning to take action against individuals who have completed their studies but are still occupying dorm rooms.