

# Dilapidated DU halls pose risk to residential students

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*Students study at a vulnerable room of the DU Salimullah Muslim Hall on Tuesday. | Md Saurav*

The residential students of a number of halls at Dhaka University are living in constant risks as the decaying buildings need major repairs.

Following the fall of plaster onto a student's bed at Room 142 of Salimullah Hall on October 19, students staged a protest, after which the authorities removed the most vulnerable plaster sections and assured a temporary repair.

University officials said that the hall had its last plaster work 4–5 years ago, while the students said that such temporary patchwork repairs were of no use.

University pro-vice-chancellor (administration) Sayema Haque Bidisha agreed with the students, saying that the administration was moving towards a permanent solution.

When asked about the risky condition of the dormitories, she told New Age that several halls required major renovation.

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Under a Tk 2,840.39 crore government allocation for the university's development, the repair work would proceed in phases, she said.

'We are trying to secure the funds as soon as possible. Even if we receive a partial amount, we will start work immediately. Our main target is to construct new buildings,' Professor Sayema Haque said.

A visit to at least five residential halls of the university revealed cracks on walls and ceiling, while plaster was falling from the ceilings in several buildings.

Deep cracks in the buildings of these halls exposed rods in many rooms, corridors, and staircases.



*A student of the SM Hall walks on the risky staircases of the hall on Tuesday. — Md Saurav*

Students alleged that the authorities had failed to take effective measures to address the long-standing problem despite repeated assurances of repairs and renovation of the risky buildings.

At Salimullah Muslim Hall, one of the university's oldest residential halls, crumbling plaster and cracks were seen throughout the corridors and in many rooms.

Md Hira, a student of the 2024–25 session staying in the hall's Room 168, said, 'We know it's risky, but we have to stay here as this is where we have been allotted. Pieces of plaster fall from time to time.'

In Room 318 of Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall, the plaster of the ceiling near the window was found largely missing as its occupant Amirul Islam, a student of Islamic Studies, said, 'Living here is dangerous, but we have no alternative.'

'The administration said a new building will be constructed, so we are just waiting for that,' said Amirul.

At the canteen of the hall, where several hundred students eat every day, a large portion of the ceiling plaster was also found missing with the students expressing fear a major accident might happen any time.



At Surja Sen Hall, a severely decrepit old building which has no student residents, were found occupied by workers of shops situated in the hall compound, apparently in absence of any move from the authorities to bar them from living in the risky building.

At Dr Muhammad Shahidullah Hall, Shezanur Rahman Kanan, a student of the Robotics Department residing in a fifth-floor room of the hall's Shahid Sharafat Ali Bhaban (Extension Building-1), said a large portion of his ceiling plaster was missing.

'The administration has started repairing the washroom area, but the rooms have yet to be fixed. We are still living in risky conditions,' he said.

Director of the Planning and Development Office, Mohammed Zabed Alam Mrida, told New Age on October 21 that the full renovation work of the university would take at least 10 more months to begin.

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The tender process would begin this month, he said, adding that the initial work would be funded by the university, and by then the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council allocation was expected to arrive, he added.



*A residential student of Dr Muhammad Shahidullah Hall looks at the dilapidated ceiling of the hall at Dhaka University on Tuesday. — Md Saurav*

Dhaka University Central Students' Union vice-president Abu Sadik Kayem told New Age that they earlier informed the university administration about the deteriorating condition of the halls.

'The authorities told us that there were no funds. We said, if needed, suspend the teachers' salaries. Students' lives must come before everything else,' he said.

He alleged that the treasurer's office was not co-operating with the DUCSU in this regard.

'We also warned that they would be held responsible if another October tragedy occurs,' he said.

Currently, around 22,000 out of the university's around 40,000 students are housed in its 23 halls and hostels.

On October 15, 1985, the roof of Dhaka University's Jagannath Hall collapsed, killing 40 people, 26 of whom were students and the rest 14 were guests, stamping the day as one of the saddest memories in the university's history.