

JU hall at risk of collapse

*Why have the authorities
ignored the danger?*

AROUND 200 students of Jahangirnagar University are living in fear that the dorm they live in might collapse on them at any time. Large cracks formed after the January 4 earthquake, have been left unattended, making the damaged extension of Al Beruni Hall ominously vulnerable. It is beyond comprehension why the university authorities have not bothered to ensure the necessary repairs to make it safe again. On the contrary, despite their assurances of either repairing the hall or evacuating the students, the authorities have chosen to ignore the warning signs of a possible disaster in the future.

Lack of funding has been cited by the chief engineer of the university for this gross inaction. This is unacceptable when the lives of staff and students living in this risky building, are at stake. What could be more important than ensuring the safety of students and staff? If there were fund constraints why have the authorities not taken steps to procure them from the relevant ministry for an emergency situation as this? This paper reported on January 6, the formation of around 40 cracks in the building. Till date no measures have been taken, leaving the lives of its residents in a precarious state. We are eerily reminded of the 1985 building collapse of Jagannath Hall that killed 39 students. The tragedy occurred because the authorities did not pay heed to the students' concerns regarding the cracks in the building formed after an earthquake that were left unrepairs.

The Jahangirnagar University's administration should first evacuate the students and staff living in the building and then take the necessary maintenance measures to make the building safe again.