



PHOTO STAR

Jahangirnagar University (JU) acting Vice-chancellor Mohammad Moniruzzaman, left, coming out of his office under police escort after being confined by students demanding a policy against sexual harassment of female students. A procession, right, of the protesters.

JU heats up over sexual harassment

Acting VC, 7 others confined for 16 hours demanding dismissal of accused teacher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jahangirnagar University (JU) students kept eight syndicate members including the acting vice-chancellor confined to the university administrative building for 16 hours demanding dismissal of Associate Prof Sanowar Hossain Sunny on charge of sexual harassment.

The students also demanded formulation and implementation of policy against sexual harassment. At least four students fell sick during the demonstration.

The demonstrators, however, withdrew their programme and set an ultimatum to meet their demands by August 5. The syndicate members were confined at 8:00pm on Tuesday and released at 12:30pm yesterday.

The students also had heated debate with members of Jahangirnagar University Teachers' Association when the teachers tried to pursue them to withdraw the confinement.

The students besieged the administrative building on Tuesday after the syndicate sat to discuss formulation and imple-

mentation of policy against sexual harassment at 5:00pm. Soon the students locked all the entrances to the administrative building.

The VC came down at 8:00pm and told the students the syndicate decided to implement the policy in principle and it would take time as the draft includes some contradictions. But the students demanded a fixed date of implementation.

Around 500 students staged demonstration all night long keeping the syndicate members confined.

The confined members include acting VC Mohammad Moniruzzaman, former VC Kazi Saleh Ahmad, Treasurer Sayed Abdul Hye, Science Faculty Dean Prof Mahmuda Ghani Ahmed, Prof AFM Obaidur Rahman, Prof Swapan Kumar Dhar, Prof Amin Mohammad Ali, and acting registrar Abubakar Siddique. Around 25 officials were also trapped during the demonstration.

"There is discrepancy between the draft policy and the law of the country. So it needs to be amended by a legal expert," said VC Moniruzzaman.

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"The syndicate sat on implementation of policies against sexual harassment. I do not know anything more about the incident and trial procedures have begun against me. I have replied to the queries of the investigation committee, sent my representative to it and I also gave written statement regarding the allegation brought against me," said Associate Prof Ahmed Sunny.

Meanwhile, a notification issued by the acting registrar yesterday afternoon banned processions and meetings on the campus. The confinement has led to law and order slide, it reads.

The notification says law enforcement agencies can take action if anyone is found ignoring the ban.

The campus burst into protests after four female students of drama and dramatics department brought allegations of sexual harassment against Chair Prof Sunny.

In an unusual move, the authorities formed separate probe bodies like a 'fact-finding committee' and 'stronger fact-finding committee.'

In the wake of further agitation the authorities were forced to form a high-powered probe-body headed by the VC. The committee is investigating the allegations now.