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# Traumatised boarders bare souls, talk about nightly 'intro' torture

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KOLKATA: Teachers who visited the Main Hostel on Thursday recounted how first-year students were traumatized and tense and had seen tell-tale signs of ragging with all of them sporting crew cut after being forced to chop off their hair.

Horrific accounts of “introduction” sessions at the Main Hostel — initiation of freshers into hostel life through ragging by seniors and outsiders who resided there — surfaced after the death of Bengali first-year student Swapnodeep Kundu on Thursday. Some of the things that teachers had seen and heard when they visited the Main Hostel are what probably prompted the urgent decision to shift freshers out of the Main Hostel next to the Jadavpur police station outside the campus to the New Boys’ Hostel on the

campus.

TOI learned on Friday that it was the “intro” sessions that had forced multiple students to shift out of the hostel and seek costlier options outside because they could not withstand the ragging. The experiences throw light on the toxic culture at the hostel.

Jadavpur University Teachers’ Association general secretary Partha Pratim Ray, who was among the teachers who had visited the hostel on Thursday after learning about Swapnodeep’s death, said: “We noticed a group of seven students sitting on a bed in a room. They had a particular hairstyle like paramilitary personnel. They looked scared.”

The teachers have no doubt the freshers were forced to cut their hair in a particular style. Swapnodeep's family had also recounted how he had in a call to his mother said that he had been forced to get a close-cropped haircut.

TOI has reported on Thursday about a first-year geology student Arpan Maji's traumatic experience at the hostel where he had to cut his hair, shave off his beard and moustache and stay awake the whole night for the "introduction" session. "A structure of oppression is vehemently perpetuated by the powerful seniors (along with the lenience allowed by union leaders) of the hostel upon their juniors," Maji wrote in a letter submitted to the dean of students on Friday.

A third-year comparative literature student Sayan Sengupta's post has gone viral where he has made some revelations about what he faced at the Main Hostel in his first year and what "intro" session looks like.

"I could relate to Swapnodeep because we both came to JU to study literature from Nadia. In my first year, I was staying at the same block where Swapnodeep was, and I could understand what he faced," said Sengupta. He added that he left the hostel and chose to stay at a nearby mess.

A second year IR student, who requested anonymity, also recounted similar experiences at Main Hostel last year, which also forced him to shift to a mess. "The seniors treat the freshers almost like slaves. They make us do 'insulting' things at 'intro' sessions that can't be explained in words. Cutting hair in a particular style, wearing full pants, asking juniors to get cigarettes and alcohol at midnight are common in hostels and compared to other forms of harassment that I have undergone, this feels like nothing at a certain point," he said.

Another third year IR student shared that for a long time he was mentally depressed, could not talk to friends and suffered from anxiety attacks after facing ragging at the hostel. He said, "When I checked-in at the hostel, I was the only one belonging to the first year. My roommate was a 'dada' who did a job in Salt Lake."

Bidu Chanda, MPhil research scholar, said, "It has been a tradition that seniors who have passed out continue to

stay at the hostel. They maintain the hierarchy, are influential and have a stronghold in campus politics.”