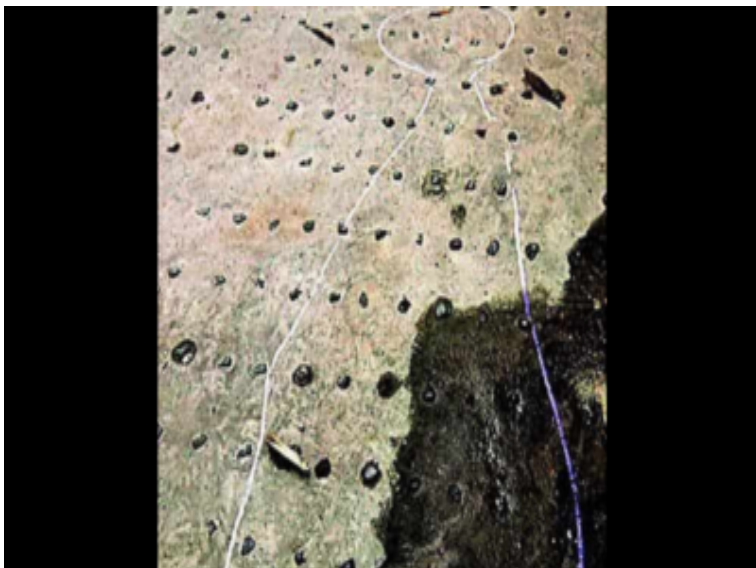


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JU hostel boarders had tried to wash off bloodstains: Panel report

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KOLKATA: Several boarders at the JU boys' main hostel - both current and former students - had tried to wash bloodstains off the spot where a first-year student had landed, presumably after a fall from the hostel balcony, late on August 9, hours before he died in hospital the following day, the university's probe panel has said in its report.

The police said their action amounted to destruction of evidence, a cognisable offence under Section 201 of the IPC.

According to the report, the instruction to wash off the bloodstains was given by Himangshu Karmakar, a former student, now arrested. The report also found that after the victim was taken to a nearby private hospital, security persons on duty were

instructed by a group of boarders to shut the main gate. Thereafter, a series of meetings were held between 12.24am and 9am at the hostel with Sourav Chowdhury, Satyabrata Roy, Dipsekhar Dutta - all three also arrested - and others, in which participants decided on what they, and other boarders, would tell the authorities, when questioned.

During its inquiry, the probe panel has noted that a third-year mechanical engineering student had issued an instruction at 5.56am on a WhatsApp group - named 'A2-Hostel all 3rd year' - to "close the hostel gate immediately to prevent the media persons and police from entering". Around 6.15am, Roy confirmed in the group that the gate was shut.

Ex-Fetsu members face debarment

A meeting was convened by Gourav Das, who was Fetsu general secretary, on the hostel campus around 10am on August 10. The death was discussed and students were told the version to stick to. Aritra Majumdar, who was Fetsu chairperson, and Saikat Sit, an ex-civil engineering student and former ex-office bearer of Fetsu, were present, but stood at a distance. The panel's report said Das, Majumdar and Sit were part of "the conspiracy to suppress facts", apart from other ragging instances.

The report found Sit, an ex-boarder of A2 Block, was "controlling the conspiracy to suppress the facts... over calls and students who were leading the GB meetings held in the hostel and campus premises...." He had deposed to the panel he had been alerted to the incident around 11.50pm by boarders... The report found over 25 ex-students stayed at Main Hostel on or before August 9. Dean of students Rajat Ray told the panel the number of unauthorised boarders at Main Hostel had gone up following a 'Safe Home for Covid Patients' at the hostel by Fetsu.

Das, Majumdar and Sit had told the panel they were aware of ragging at the hostel but failed to provide any proof that Fetsu did anything to stop it. None had visited the hostel the day of the incident, or after. The report recommends Sit's debarment from JU campus and hostel. Das and Majumdar are also debarred once they finish their courses. Das, Majumdar and Sit did not respond to TOI.