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Jadavpur University massacre; Recurring theme, former students in campus trouble

Police arrested Mohammad Sahil Ali, a former student of the construction engineering department who has been working in a software company that has an office in Salt Lake, on charges of being involved in the arson

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Jadavpur University

File image

- f The arrest of a former Jadavpur University student in connection with the alleged
 x arson at a non-teaching employees union office at the varsity during Saturday's
 unrest suggests that many former students, some working with leading software
 companies in India, are still getting involved in campus troubles.

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- G Police arrested Mohammad Sahil Ali, a former student of the construction
 engineering department who has been working in a software company that has an
 office in Salt Lake, on charges of being involved in the arson.

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Ali had graduated last year.

A professor of the construction engineering department said: “We knew that he was associated with ultra-Left student organisations when he was a student. Then he got recruited by the software company during the campus placement drive. As the news of the arrest broke, we realised that one of our former students had been found involved in the fresh campus trouble.”

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Another former JU engineering student, Debabrata Mandal, had been arrested in October 2014 for allegedly molesting a student on the campus, a varsity official said.

“Mandal worked in the same company as Ali,” the official said.

Mandal, the pharmaceutical engineering graduate from the 2011 batch, had been arrested in 2014 after being summoned to Lalbazar, the Kolkata Police headquarters.

Although he was no longer a student at the university, Mandal would sometimes allegedly stay in the New Block Hostel where a girl was allegedly abused and assaulted on August 28, 2014. The incident had triggered the Hakkolorob movement.

Mandal, who was later released on bail, had been suspended by the company.

Ali stays in a rented accommodation in Bijoygarh, near Jadavpur.

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The alleged involvement of former students in campus trouble had also cropped up when Sourabh Chowdhury, a former JU student, was arrested in connection with the death of a first-year student in the JU Main Hostel in August 2023.

It came to the fore that Chowdhury had cleared his master's in mathematics in 2022 but had stayed on in the hostel.

Chowdhury was arrested along with 11 present students who were residents of the main hostel.

The 12 were chargesheeted in the case of ragging that led to the death of the first-year student.

They are still in judicial custody and the case is being heard, the police said on Sunday.

A JU official said it was alarming that former students are increasingly getting involved in campus trouble.

The official said: "Following the death of the first-year student in the main hostel after alleged ragging by senior student and former students — many of whom work in a software company with an office in Salt Lake — it came to the fore that many ex-students stayed in the hostel illegally and free of cost. They stood accused of aiding and abetting the ragging."

A professor of the engineering faculty said since these people are working professionals, they could display their clout in the hostel under the garb of guiding the junior students.

About 50 former students of JU who were still staying at the main hostel had left the hostel following a notice issued by the university on August 11, 2023. The notice said "no passed-out students, as well as outsiders" would be allowed to stay in the hostel.

The notice was issued a day after the first-year student died hours after he was allegedly ragged.

JU's authorised vice-chancellor Bhaskar Gupta told Metro: "I have heard that a former student has been arrested in the case of arson."

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