

SEXUAL HARASSMENT Viqarunnisa teacher placed on remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed a teacher of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College on a two-day remand in connection with a case filed over the sexual harassment of a student of the school's Azimpur branch.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Zaki Al Farabi placed math teacher Murad Hossain Sarkar, 48, on remand after investigation officer Fayaz Hossain, a sub-inspector of Lalbagh Police Station, produced him before the court with a seven-day remand prayer, said a staffer of the court.

Police arrested Murad at his home in Kalabagan area early yesterday.

Meanwhile, the teachers of Viqarunnisa school have been barred from providing private coaching or tuition.

The school made the decision at a meeting and passed an order in this regard yesterday, acting principal Keka Roy Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Keka said, "The incidents of sexual harassment in our school happened in the teacher's private coaching centres. We need to ensure the safety of our girls."

On Monday, the victim's mother lodged the case with the police station against Murad under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

In the case statement, the complainant stated that her daughter started going to the teacher's private coaching centre in 2023.

On March 10, 2023, Murad kept the victim at the centre after classes, then groped and forcibly kissed her.

He also groped and sexually abused her on several other occasions, read the case statement.

On November 16, 2023, he followed the girl to the prayer room after class and attempted to rape her there, it also said.

When she resisted, he threatened her with expulsion from school and said he would tell everyone and humiliate her parents.

Several complaints were also lodged with the school against the teacher.

The first information report (FIR) added that the school authorities caught the wind of the allegations and called several parents on February 3, 2024.

On Sunday, students of Viqarunnisa's Azimpur branch demonstrated, demanding removal of the teacher and his exemplary punishment.

After receiving the complaints, the school authorities formed a probe committee and Murad was attached to the principal's office on Saturday.



Craftsmen are making a wooden boat which will be used to bring brine from the islands to the refineries in Chattogram. Owners say 95 feet long and 35 feet tall boat costs over Tk 2 crore to make at the dock in Kalurghat area of the port city. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

SENDING TROOPS TO UKRAINE

Europeans rule it out as Russia rebukes Macron

REUTERS, Berlin/ Moscow

Germany, Britain and other European countries said yesterday they had no plans to send ground troops to Ukraine, after France hinted at the possibility, and the Kremlin warned that any such move would inevitably lead to conflict between Russia and Nato.

French President Emmanuel Macron had said on Monday that Western allies should exclude no options in seeking to avert a Russian victory in Ukraine, though he stressed there was no consensus at this stage.

"Nothing should be excluded. We will do everything that we must so that Russia does not win," Macron told reporters at a hastily convened gathering of European leaders in Paris to mull how to bolster support for Ukraine against Russia's invasion.

Macron's comments come amid battlefield gains by Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces in eastern Ukraine and growing shortages of ammunition and manpower on the Ukrainian side.

However, Germany, Britain, Spain, Poland and the Czech Republic distanced themselves on Tuesday from any

suggestion they might commit ground troops to the Ukraine war, now in its third year.

"...There will be no ground troops, no soldiers on Ukrainian soil sent there by European countries or Nato states," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on the sidelines of an event.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius was equally adamant.

"Boots on the ground is not an option for...Germany," he told reporters during a visit to Vienna.

"I'm glad if France is considering how to support Ukraine more strongly, but if I can make a suggestion, then send more weapons," German Economy Minister Robert Habeck said.

"Do what you can do now and give Ukraine the ammunition and tanks that can be sent right now."

After Monday's talks, Scholz said European leaders now appeared willing to procure weapons from countries outside Europe as a way of speeding up military aid to Ukraine.

Germany has become the second biggest supplier of military aid to Kyiv since Russia launched its full-blown invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, but

is extremely wary of steps that would draw the Nato alliance into direct conflict with Russia.

The Kremlin issued a prompt warning about what was at stake.

"The very fact of discussing the possibility of sending certain contingents to Ukraine from Nato countries is a very important new element," spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked about Macron's remarks.

Asked about the risks if Nato members did send troops to fight in Ukraine, Peskov said: "In that case, we would need to talk not about the probability, but about the inevitability (of a direct conflict)."

He said Western countries should consider whether such a scenario was really in their interests.

Russia and the United States - the big power behind Nato - have the world's largest arsenals of nuclear weapons. President Joe Biden has cautioned that a conflict between Russia and Nato could trigger World War Three.

A White House official told Reuters on Monday that the United States had no plans to send troops to fight in Ukraine, neither were there plans to send Nato troops to fight there.

Rohingya man stabbed to death at Teknaf camp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya man was stabbed to death by unidentified criminals at a refugee camp in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar yesterday morning.

The incident took place at the Nayapara registered camp around 10:00am.

The deceased was identified as Noor Mohammad, 30, a resident of the camp's Block-D, said Teknaf Model Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Mohammad Osman Gani.

Nur Mohammad was on his way home in the morning when a group of unidentified criminals ambushed him in front of the water tank adjacent to the camp and stabbed him before fleeing the scene.

Later, locals rescued the victim and took him to the IPD Hospital adjacent to the camp.

As he was critically injured, the duty doctor of the hospital referred him to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital for better treatment after first aid.

Noor Mohammad died on the way to the hospital. His body was sent to the hospital morgue for an autopsy, the OC said.

The process of filing a case in this connection remained pending when the report was written last night at 7:30pm.

Temporary gas outage in parts of capital today

UNB, Dhaka

Gas supply in different areas of Dhaka city will be suspended for 15 hours starting 9:00am today for emergency replacement and relocation of gas transmission lines under the Dhaka Elevated Expressway.

According to Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited, the areas include Moghbazar, Madhubagh, Tejgaon, Hatirjheel, Gabtoli, Greenway, Payarabagh, Eskaton, and Dilu Road.

The gas supply will remain off for all kinds of consumers in these areas, while consumers in adjoining areas may experience low pressure in gas supply, said Titas Gas, regretting the inconveniences during the period.

Gas supply remained suspended for three hours from 11:00am to 2:00pm in the same areas yesterday for emergency repair of gas transmission lines.

In addition, Titas stated that gas supply will be suspended for five hours today from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in East Jurain, Postgola, Kadmatoli Cantonment, Jatrabari, Muradpur, High School Road, Madrasa Road, Keraniganj and Jinjira.

Consumers in the adjoining areas will experience low gas pressure during that time, the gas company added.

150 duped Bangladeshis stranded in KL building

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his agricultural land to manage the Tk 5 lakh broker's fee to come to Malaysia.

"My family sent me here hoping that I would be able to support them better. I don't know what will happen next. We don't know whether we would find any work here."

Shihab went on to appeal to the Bangladesh government to help them find a job. Otherwise, they would be left with no choice but to face dire consequences.

According to the government's count, a worker can go to Malaysia with only Tk 78,000. However, most of them paid between Tk 3.5 lakh to

Tk 5.3 lakh to go there, but they still did not find any work.

Amid the situation, fifty people were taken to Malaysia on calling visas by a recruiting agency named Catharsis International on February 22, without any cost, which, according to migration experts, may exacerbate the crisis among migrant workers in Malaysia.

"The entire process of sending migrant workers to Malaysia is flawed. There is a large syndicate operating at both ends, leading to the deception and suffering of thousands of migrant workers for years," said Shariful Hasan, associate director at BRAC Migration Programme and

BRAC Youth Platform.

He suggested establishing an independent recruitment commission to identify those involved and take appropriate action, while also streamlining the process with lower costs to ensure all workers secure jobs according to their skills.

Some people from both Malaysia and Bangladesh are involved in the process, said Ali Haider Chowdhury, secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira).

"With the Malaysian government now imposing fines on employers who fail to provide jobs, we hope these workers will soon find employment."

Pvt univs have to pay income tax

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and its observations could not yet be known."

Omar Sadat, a lawyer for the private universities, told this correspondent that the implication of the Appellate Division verdict cannot be specifically said at this moment as its observations were not disclosed yet.

"Therefore, it cannot be said right away that the private universities and private medical, dental and engineering colleges must pay income tax."

Following 46 separate writ petitions, by 12 private universities and a student, the HC on September 5, 2016, delivered the verdict declaring illegal the 15 percent income tax on the educational institutions in question.

The HC had earlier scrapped three orders on the imposition of tax issued by the government on these private institutions in 2007 and 2010.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin, Additional Attorney General Sk Md Morshed and Deputy Attorney General Samarendranath Biswas represented the state, while senior lawyers AF Hassan Arif and Probr Neogi, Barrister Omar Sadat and Barrister Khairul Alam Chowdhury appeared for the writ petitioners.

Beef up efforts to eradicate graft, drug abuse

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and corruption will persist. The police must play a proactive role. The peace and stability of our country are paramount for achieving our developmental goals," the Prime Minister stated.

This year's Police Week, with the theme "Smart Police Smart Country, Bangladesh of Peace and Progress," will continue until March 3, reflecting a commitment to modernising the service to better serve the nation.

The PM also called on the police to bolster their image as "friends of the people" through professionalism, sincerity, and competence, emphasising the long-standing principle of the police as a beacon of hope and assistance for the public in times of need.

"When the country's citizens face danger, they turn to the police. It is crucial to reinforce this bond of trust," she remarked.

Hasina recalled the patience and professionalism demonstrated by police in tackling arson violence, vandalism, and killings unleashed by BNP-Jamaat during the 2013-2015 period and towards the end of 2023.

"Police tackled the situation with utmost patience. I sincerely thank them for the patience they demonstrated," she said.

Appreciating their role in the United Nations peacekeeping

missions, the premier thanked the Bangladesh Police for their contribution to maintaining world peace.

Focusing on her government's measures and success in modernising Bangladesh Police since 2009, Sheikh Hasina said the government formed the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) and Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit (CTTC) to eradicate militancy and terrorism.

She also recalled that her government formed the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), Highway Police, Industrial Police, Tourist Police, Naval Police, Special Security and Protection Battalion, and MRT Police to address crimes.

DNA labs, modern forensic labs, automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS) and chemical labs have already been set up for police, she said, adding that all these labs and resources are functional in some divisional cities.

"We plan to set up such labs in every division in the future."

She said that the Cyber Police Centre has been set up to tackle cybercrimes and related crimes like financial crimes and money laundering.

Besides, the CTTC of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and other units are also working to combat cybercrime. "We also have plans to set

up a full-fledged cyber police unit," she added.

He also called for collaboration with the ministry of expatriates' welfare and overseas employment and the Malaysian embassy to alleviate the problem.

"The Bangladesh Embassy in Malaysia is working to address the migrant workers problem," said Shofiqur Rahman Choudhury, the state minister for the ministry of expatriates' welfare and overseas employment.

The embassy's labour wing is actively addressing the workers' issues. "Officials from our embassy are conducting investigations, and appropriate actions will be taken based on their findings," he told journalists.

Hefty power bill to weigh on consumers

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"Subsidies this year will be around Tk 43,000 crore for electricity and around Tk 6,000 crore for gas."

The government is making price adjustments to gradually withdraw subsidies from the power sector, he said.

"Such adjustments will be made slowly but gradually in the next two to three years."

Contacted by this correspondent, Golam Rahman, chairman of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), said people were already struggling with rising prices of essentials and the move would make it worse.

"The initiative of bringing the entire country into the electricity network is praiseworthy. But consumers are bearing the brunt of many wrong choices, like over capacity," he said.

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, said the government's ability to subsidise power has been shrinking due to low revenue.

"But the concern is, the raised power tariff will put pressure on inflation. Businesspeople often use Ramadan as an excuse to increase commodity prices. Now they have another excuse," he said.

CAB Vice-president M Shamsul Alam said the government increased power prices, bypassing the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), an independent regulatory body.

This is unfair to consumers because the BERC public hearing was a process in which people could raise questions against such moves.

A 2022 amendment to the BERC act now allows the government to fix energy prices under "special circumstances" without BERC

involvement.

GAS PRICES RAISED FOR POWER GENERATION

Prices of gas used in households and vehicles have not been increased, said Nasrul.

According to the energy ministry, 37 percent of gas is used for power generation while captive power consumes 18 percent of the gas.

About the introduction of automated pricing for petroleum, Nasrul said, "We are going towards dynamic pricing with the finance ministry's consent."

Energy division officials said petroleum prices would be adjusted every month in line with the fuel prices in the global market.

BBC apologises to family at centre of news anchor allegations

AFP, London

The BBC Tuesday said yesterday it had apologised to the family of a man who they claimed was paid for sexually-explicit pictures when he was a teenager by the broadcaster's star news anchor.

Huw Edwards, 62, had been the BBC's lead presenter in key events such as the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, but was suspended in July 2023 when the allegations broke.

The man's family complained to the BBC about Edwards in May 2023 but it was only two months later, when The Sun newspaper was ready to publish a story detailing the allegations, that senior leaders were informed of the issue, according to a report commissioned by the broadcaster.