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Madrasa burns pupils' smartphones in Ctg



Students' mobile phones are set on fire by the authorities of Darul Ulum Moinul Islam Madrasa in Chittagong's Hathazari upazila on Sunday evening after those were seized from the dormitories of the institution. Photo: Collected

Our Correspondent, Ctg **TOP**

The authorities of Darul Ulum Moinul Islam Madrasa, a Qawmi educational institution in Chittagong's Hathazari, seized around 500 smartphones from its students and torched them.

They raided madrasa dormitories on Sunday afternoon and burnt them in the evening.

Some students said it was absurd in this age to impose a ban on the use of mobile phones, while the madrasa authorities said mobile phones hamper the concentration of students on their studies and prayers.

“Earlier, mobile phones were seized several times, but those were later given back. But this time, the authorities set those ablaze,” said a student, adding, “We had nothing to do but to watch the burning of phones.”

“Mobile phones were also seized when we were students, but those were not set on fire ... may I know the reason behind this move?” commented MK Alamgir Khan, a former student of the madrasa, under an image of burning mobile phones on Facebook.

In reply, another former student of the madrasa Rizwan Arman said this time the seized mobile phones were torched as it had earlier been alleged that some madrasa officials took away some of the phones.

Asked, Nasir Uddin, a student of the madrasa, said there are 9,000 students in the madrasa. Of them, around 500 students, whose phones were set ablaze, might be aggrieved, but the remaining students were happy.

“We cannot let the atmosphere of madrasa be polluted for such a small number of students,” he said.

The madrasa authorities do not allow the students to use mobile phones on campus and in dormitories, and all the students have been briefed about it at the time of their admissions, said Ashraf Ali Nizampuri, a teacher of the madrasa.

Besides, the authorities warned the students several times not to use mobile phones inside the madrasa and dormitories.

The authorities were compelled to go for a tough action, he added.

The students use Facebook, take photos and capture videos with their phones, which is unacceptable as madrasa students, he said.

Asked, if the students were barred from using mobile phones, how they would contact their families when it was necessary, Ashraf said there is a mobile in madrasa so that students could communicate with their families.

Another teacher said only smartphones were seized from the students.

“Some students have been found using smartphones to watch videos and vulgar contents and so the authorities decided to seize all smartphones and destroy them.”

AFP adds: pupils at the seminary were ordered to hand over their cellphones Sunday to school administrators who then tossed the devices en masse into a fire in a nearby field.



"These devices are ruining their character," said Azizul Hoque, a spokesman for the Darul Ulum Moinul Islam Madrasa.

"The students use internet [on their phones] throughout the night and then doze during classes the next morning. Their parents are concerned."

Azizul said the seminary -- a 123-year-old institution -- was not against technology "but the negative results of mobile phones far outweigh its positives".

"We are flooded with letters seeking fatwas [Islamic edicts] from Muslims against the use of mobile phones, as many complained that the gadgets were frequently used for extramarital affairs."

The madrasa in Hathazari, outside the port city of Chittagong, is headed by Ahmad Shafi, the head of hardline Islamist group Hefazat-e Islam.

Hundreds of thousands of Hefazat supporters marched to the capital in 2013, demanding implementation of religious laws, including criminalising blasphemy and segregating genders in the workplace.

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