

Students, staff allege sexual abuse by headmaster

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Multiple complaints of sexual abuse against the headmaster of Bandarban Government High School have been filed with the district's deputy commissioner.

Victims -- including both students and staff -- allege that he exploited his position of authority to prey on vulnerable members of the institution.



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Confirming the complaints, Bandarban DC Shamim Ara Rini said she received a written complaint signed by two students and their guardians on February 10, accusing the headmaster, Md Sirajul Islam, of sexual abuse.

The complainants alleged that Sirajul sexually assaulted them by threatening to fail them in examinations, the DC told The Daily Star at her office on February 16.

She also said that some temporary staff of the institution alleged that the headmaster sexually abused them, promising to make their jobs permanent.

The DC yesterday said a three-member committee, headed by Senior Assistant Commissioner (Revenue) Foyzur Rahman, was formed to investigate the matter on February 10.

“If the allegations are proven, this would constitute a grave offence for a teacher, and appropriate legal action will be taken,” she said.

Contacted, Foyzur yesterday told The Daily Star that the committee had recorded statements of another seven students, one guardian, and seven to eight teachers of the school so far, and all of them substantiated the allegations against the headmaster.

He also said that the accused headmaster appeared before the committee on February 17.

“He, however, refuted all the allegations, terming them a conspiracy against him,” Foyzur said, adding that the committee will submit its report next week.

Earlier, on February 10, the accused headmaster told The Daily Star over the phone that he was busy and would call back later. However, he has not responded to repeated phone calls since then.

Shah Mohammad Rezaul Karim, assistant headmaster of the school, on February 16 said the headmaster has been absent since February 10 and has not delegated any responsibilities during his absence.

He said he heard some students had filed complaints with the DC but was unaware of the details.

The issue came up on February 10 when four to five alleged victims and their guardians approached a local human rights organisation with the allegations of sexual assault by the headmaster.

Human rights activist Dow Nai Pru Neli said they took the victims to the deputy commissioner’s office, where a written complaint was submitted.

The Daily Star talked to a number of complainants and their family members, who alleged that the headmaster exploited poor and vulnerable students by misusing his power.

An eighth-grade student, requesting anonymity, alleged that he was called to the headmaster’s room where he was sexually assaulted. Out of fear and shame, he initially kept silent but later informed his grandmother and a local human rights activist before filing a written complaint with the district administration.

A ninth-grade student made similar allegations, adding that at least 15–20 other students may have suffered similar abuse.

One guardian alleged that after his son failed eighth grade and was readmitted, the headmaster offered to “guide” him privately and asked him to attend evening sessions. Months later, the boy refused to visit the headmaster and displayed signs of fear before eventually disclosing the alleged abuse.

A temporary computer operator alleged that he was called to the headmaster’s room after office hours and was subjected to forced inappropriate conduct. He claimed he was threatened with dismissal if he resisted.

Muhammad Faridul Alam Hossaini, deputy director of secondary and higher education for the Chattogram region, said his office had not yet received any formal complaint. He also said the headmaster had not applied for leave.