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## 9 schoolgirls accuse teacher of harassment during exam

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Arun Bikash Dey

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An allegation of “deliberate harassment” was raised by nine female tenth-grade students against a teacher of their school in Chattogram city.

On October 6, Prasanta Barua, a teacher of Krishnakumari City Corporation Girls' High School, withheld answer sheets of the nine students after one hour of starting the Mathematics test examination for the upcoming Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exams, according to the complainants.

Prasanta later returned the answer sheets to the examinees only “15 minutes” before the test ended, they.

In their complaint filed with the mayor of Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) on Tuesday and the chairman of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Chattogram on Wednesday, they claimed that they all failed in the subject due to the time they lost during the test they took on October 6.

The school authorities had earlier withdrawn Prasanta Barua from the academic activities of tenth grade after the same nine students accused him of soliciting phone numbers and Facebook IDs from them, the complainants said.

Angered by the action taken against him, Prasanta had threatened the girls to “teach a good lesson”, said a guardian of the students quoting the formal complaint.

“The teacher took the answer sheets of my daughter and [that of] eight other examinees after one hour of starting of the examination without any reason,” said the guardian.

“I didn't know about the matter... but when the results were out last week, I found out that my daughter has passed all subjects except for math,” said the guardian, adding, “When asked, she told me what had happened on the exam day.”

The guardian claimed that her daughter and the other eight students scored good marks in mathematics in their pre-test and first terminal examinations at the school.

Contacted, Ahmed Hossain, acting headteacher of the school, said Prasanta has denied the allegation brought against him.

“I advised the guardians to go to the mayor of CCC and the chairman of the education board,” he also said.

The headteacher, however, admitted that he had withdrawn Prasanta several months ago from teaching the tenth grade students after receiving complaints from students.

Mohammad Shamsuddoha, chief executive officer of CCC, told this correspondent that they would form a probe-body to investigate the allegation brought against the teacher.

When asked about the fate of the students who failed in mathematics in the test exam, he said, “Since the result has been published, we have nothing to do at present... the education board only can decide about it now.”

Prof Shaheda Islam, chairman of Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Chattogram, told The Daily Star that she has also received a complaint from the students.

“As per a rule of the High Court, a student cannot sit for SSC examination if she or he fails any subject in the test examination,” she said.

However, the authorities of that school may consider the result of pre-test exam, in case of an urgent solution, she added.

When contacted, Prasanta Barua said the allegation brought against him was “baseless” and “motivated” and he never asked for phone numbers or Facebook IDs from any student before. “I took answer sheets of two students for just 15 to 20 minutes, as they were talking in the exam hall... I warned them several times, asking not to talk, but they didn't listen,” he claimed.

“There's a CCTV camera in every classroom. The authorities may check the footage,” he said, adding, “The students didn't pass maths in their previous exams either... some teachers in the school are instigating them.”