



Students of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College demonstrate at its gate demanding punishment of the principal yesterday for what they said was instigation to suicide. Arित्रy Adhikary, a student of the school, died by suicide on Monday after teachers reportedly told her father that she had been expelled from the school for cheating in exams. Photo: Prabir Das

**Staff Correspondent**

Viqarunnisa Noon School and College yesterday suspended its under-fire acting principal Nazneen Ferdous, morning shift in-charge Zinat Akhtar, and class teacher Hasna Hena over the suicide of ninth-grader Aritry Adhikary.

Late last night, the Detective Branch of police arrested Hasna Hena in a case filed in connection with instigating the suicide.

“She [Hasna Hena] was held in Uttara area around 11:00pm. We are taking her to the DB office [on Mintoo Road],” Khandoker Nurunnabi, deputy commissioner of the DB (east) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star.

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The teachers were suspended following an education ministry order and with students' protest gaining momentum.

In a letter, the ministry also ordered the chairman of the Dhaka Education Board and the director general of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education to cancel the teachers' Monthly Payment Order (MPO), stop payment of their wages, and take departmental action against them.

It sent separate letters to the Rab and the police, urging them to take legal action against the three.

The school management committee also postponed yesterday's annual exam to Friday and said today's one would be held later.

In another development, a Dhaka court directed police to submit on January 9 its investigation report on the incident. Metropolitan Magistrate Sadbir Yeachir Ahsan Chowdhury passed the order after accepting a case.

Yesterday, agitating students, mostly ninth-graders, took position near the main entrance to the institution on the capital's Bailey Road, saying the handling of the incident by teachers was responsible for the tragic death of their classmate Arirtry Adhikary.

Throughout the day, the students protested holding placards and chanting slogans like "It's not suicide, it's murder", "We want justice".

One of the placards read, "You could've helped her. But you pushed her to death".

The parents and other guardians kept the students surrounded, apparently to protect them from any untoward situation.

The agitators were pressing for a six-point demand, including resignation of the school's governing committee. Asked, Golam Ashraf Talukder, president of the body, said no decision was made in this regard.

The students also demanded removal of the acting principal and her trial for what they said was instigating the suicide. They said she should publicly apologise for her behaviour.

The other demands included prevention of mental and physical torture on students, stopping threat of expulsion and introduction of student counselling at the school.

Although one demand of the students -- suspension of the teachers -- was met, they vowed to continue their demonstration until the others were realised.

The Daily Star correspondents talked to at least 10 parents and all of them claimed that many of the teachers misbehave with students and their guardians.

"There are some teachers, including the principal, who look down upon us whenever we try to talk to them," said Bashir Hossain, one of the guardians.

On Tuesday, Aritry's father Dilip Adhikary filed a case with Paltan Police Station accusing Nazneen, Zinat and Hasna Hena of provoking the suicide. It was handed over to the DB yesterday.

About the ministry's investigation into the incident, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said, "It's clear to the probe committee that she [Aritry] had to choose the path of suicide after not being able to tolerate her parents' humiliation."

So, those three teachers cannot avoid responsibility, he said.

The investigation has already unearthed many other irregularities at the school, he said. "This institution does not have a principal. It's an irregularity. Students are admitted and [different] sections are opened [at the school] without following the rules. There is no approval of opening a branch. Yet they have opened [a] branch."

Aritry was found hanging from the ceiling of her home in the capital's Shantinagar on Monday hours after she and her parents were allegedly insulted by some teachers of the school.

Talking to The Daily Star on Tuesday, Dilip said Zinat, the morning shift in-charge, told them that Aritry had been expelled after she was caught cheating in the annual exam on Sunday. Zinat also said Aritry would not be allowed to take the rest of the tests, he said.

The death and the subsequent agitation, joined by parents, rocked the 66-year-old institute and prompted the education ministry and the school authorities to form two probe committees.

Besides, the High Court directed the education secretary to form another five-member committee, headed by an additional secretary of the ministry, to look into the matter.

Meanwhile, at a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, Child Right's Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh made some recommendations to the government for stopping physical and mental abuse of students at educational institutions.

According to rights body Ain o Salish Kendra, a total of 171 students were abused by teachers at different educational institutions from January to November this year. Among the students, two died by suicide, said Sheepa Hafiza, executive director of ASK.



## FOOTAGE

Yesterday, the school authorities handed over footage of a CCTV installed at the principal's room to journalists.

According to the footage, Aritry and her parents enters the room at 11:18am on Monday. Apparently, Dilip tries to convince the acting principal time and again but fails.

Nine others were seen inside the room, shows the footage with no audio. After sometime, Nazneen is seen showing Dilip the door. At 11:22am, Aritry leaves but her parents stay. It appears that Dilip again tries to talk to Nazneen but the acting principal talks to others instead.

The parents leaves the room at 11:25am, shows the footage which was doing the rounds on social media.

Meanwhile, one of Aritry's family friends said a prayer for her would be held at Siddeshwari Kali Mandir this evening. He requested everyone to prayer for her departed soul.

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