

Kolkata rape and killing: SC asks Centre, states to take urgent steps for safety of doctors

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: A tough talking Supreme Court on Thursday termed "extremely disturbing" the Kolkata Police's delay in registering the unnatural death of the woman doctor raped and killed at the RG Kar Hospital, and also asked protesting doctors to get back to work.

Justice and medicine cannot be stopped, the court said while hearing a suo-motu case on the Kolkata doctor's horrific end and directed the Centre and the states to take urgent steps to institutionalise the safety of medics across the country.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud issued a slew of directions on the safety of doctors, norms for protests, rights of protesters as well as the West Bengal government.

It said the National Task Force (NTF) formed by the apex court will take note of the suggestions of all the stakeholders while formulating a national protocol for the safety of healthcare professionals, including the associations representing resident doctors.

"We direct the secretary of the Union Ministry of Health to engage with the chief secre-

taries of the states and directors general of police to ensure the safety of healthcare professionals," the bench said, while ordering that the exercise be completed in a week.

Appearing in the court on behalf of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Solicitor General Tushar Mehta alleged that senior doctors at the Kolkata hospital as well as the victim's colleagues had asked for videography, which means even they felt that there was a cover-up.

"The (victim's) father insists on the registration of an FIR. The hospital does not register the FIR. The father insisted and got the FIR registered. The FIR is lodged after the cremation. This is an attempt to cover up. We entered the probe on day five, everything was altered by then," Mehta said.

He said the first FIR in the incident was filed only after the victim's cremation at 11:45 pm.

"Initially, the authorities told the parents that it was suicide but later, it was classified as death," he added.

As the hearing commenced after lunch, the court asked what was the reason for a 14-hour delay in lodging the FIR in connection with the incident.

"Who was in touch with the principal of the RG Kar Medical College? Why did he delay the FIR? What was the purpose?" the bench asked.

Questioning the sequence and timing of the legal formalities conducted by police, the court said it is very surprising that the post-mortem was conducted between 6:10 pm and 7:10 pm on August 9, even before the case of unnatural death was registered.

"How was it that the post-mortem was conducted at 6:10 pm on August 9 and yet the unnatural death information is sent to the Tala police station at 11:30 pm on August 9? This is extremely disturbing," the bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said.

It directed the Kolkata Police officer, who registered the first entry about the incident that has shocked the country, to appear in the next hearing and disclose the time of the entry.

Mehta told the court that the most shocking fact is that the FIR was registered at 11:45 pm, after the post-graduate medic was cremated.

"The state police told the parents it was suicide. Then they said it was murder. Victim's

friends suspected a cover up and insisted on videography," Mehta told the bench.

The bench said peaceful protests over the Kolkata incident shall not be disturbed or disrupted by the West Bengal government. The court, however, clarified that it has not enjoined the state government from exercising such lawful powers.

"When we say peaceful protesters will not be disturbed, we also mean proper protocol will be followed," the top court said.

It said there shall be no coercive action against doctors for protesting.

The court also asked the parties in the case not to politicise the issue and said law will take its course after Mehta pointed to an objectionable statement of a West Bengal minister.

The bench directed the secretary in the Union health ministry to launch a portal where the stakeholders can submit suggestions to the NTF on the safety of doctors.

As the hearing commenced, the top court asked the protesting doctors to resume work and assured them that no adverse action will be taken against them after they rejoin duty.

The court was told by the

counsel for the resident doctors of the AIIMS-Nagpur that they are being victimised for protesting over the Kolkata rape-murder case.

"Once they get back to duty, we will prevail upon authorities to not take adverse action. How will public health infrastructure run if the doctors do not work?" the bench asked.

"If there is difficulty after that, come to us.... But let them first report to work," it said.

The court said its heart goes out to all patients visiting public hospitals.

It assured the doctors' associations that the NTF will hear all the stakeholders.

The brutal assault and murder of the junior doctor has sparked nationwide protests. The victim's body was found with severe injury marks inside the seminar hall of the state-run hospital's chest department in the morning of on August 9. A civic volunteer was arrested by the Kolkata Police in connection with the case the following day.

On August 13, the Calcutta High Court ordered the transfer of the probe from the Kolkata Police to the CBI, which started its investigation on August 14.

ITBP gets cadre officer as ADG in rare appointment



■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Sanjeev Raina, a 1987-batch ITBP officer, has been appointed Additional Director General (ADG) in the India-China LAC guarding force, only the second time when a non-IPS officer has been elevated to this post in the force. An order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday said Raina, serving as an Inspector General (IG) at the force's central sector headquartered in Bhopal, is being elevated to the ADG rank apart from another officer, IG Jaspal Singh, for the panel year 2024. However, Raina, 59, will serve in the new post for just over a

month as he is scheduled to retire next month.

A rank piping ceremony was held at the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) headquarters on Lodhi Road here on Thursday in the presence of DG Rahul Rasgotra and other senior officers. Raina has now been posted as the ADG (western command) of the ITBP headquartered in Chandigarh, the order said. The formation looks after the

deployment of the force along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh apart from supervising units located in Punjab, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir.

As per officials who spoke to PTI, this is only the second time in the 1962 raised ITBP when a cadre officer has been elevated to the ADG post, the second highest rank in the force after the DG. The ADG post in the ITBP and other central armed police forces (CAPFs) is essentially occupied by officers who come on deputation to these organisations from the Indian Police Service (IPS). "This appointment also came late as the departmental promotion committee meeting was delayed. Jaspal Singh will be appointed ADG after Raina's retirement and he too will retire in a few months in December," a senior officer said.

IGP Telecom honours 19 officers of Telecom Wing with Ranks



■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The Inspector General of Police (IGP) Telecom Services, Jammu & Kashmir, Bhim Sen Tuti, presided over a piping ceremony on Thursday at the Police Headquarters Auditorium, where he conferred the rank of Sub-Inspector upon 19 recently promoted officers of the Telecom Wing. The officers from the Telecom Kashmir Zone and ACS Zone Kashmir who were honored during the ceremony include Bashir Ahmad Reshi, Nazir Ahmad Mir, Aushum Ahmad, Gulzar Ahmad Naikoo, Gh. Ahmad Peer, Gh. Mohd Ganai, Shri Fayaz Ahmad Mir, Nasir Ahmad, Javid Iqbal Pir, Bashir Ahmad Lone, Manzoor Ahmad Zargar, Mohd Shafi Ganie, Fayaz Ahmad Bhat, Mohd Ashraf Wani, Mehraj-ud-din Malla, Ab. Rouf Shah, Gh. Nabi Bhat and Mohd Yousuf Tantray. In his address, IGP Telecom B.S. Tuti extended heartfelt congratulations to the newly promoted officers and their families. He underscored the critical role of the Telecom Wing in the effective communication operations of the J&K Police and highlighted the ongoing efforts to upgrade and modernize the telecom infrastructure.

The ceremony was also graced by the presence of Director of Police Telecommunication J&K, Manoj Kumar Pandith, JKPS, SP Telecom Kashmir Zone, Fayaz Yaseen, SP Telecom ACS Kashmir, Akhtar Buch, ADO PHQ, Siraj-ud-Din, along with other officers from the Telecom Headquarters.

JNU students boycott classes as hunger strike enters day 12

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Students at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi observed a complete university strike on Thursday, marking the 12th day of their hunger strike as they continued to demand action on various unresolved issues.

Scores of students boycotted classes to put pressure on the university administration, the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU), which led the protest, said.

Only a small section of students in a few schools, particularly the School of Sanskrit and Indic Studies (SSIS), attended the classes, while all the other classes remained suspended.

According to Rajeshwar Kant Dubey, president, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) JNU unit, the organisation did not participate in the uni-

versity strike.

The RSS-affiliated student body has, however, been sitting on a separate strike on the campus since the past 31 days regarding various student-related issues.

The JNUSU has called for the strike to continue until Friday, after which they plan to lead a long march to the Ministry of Education.

They have urged the ministry to intervene in the matter and address their concerns.

The JNUSU's indefinite hunger strike started on August 11 near the Sabarmati T Point against the university's alleged unresponsive attitude to their various demands, including increasing scholarship amounts.

Their demands also include a caste census, lifting ban on protests on campus and withdrawal of proctorial inquiries initiated

against students for participating in protests on campus.

Student organisations from various other educational institutions, including Jamia Millia Islamia, Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, have expressed solidarity with those participating in the hunger strike.

On Wednesday, Vice-Chancellor Santishree D Pandit met the protesting students and urged them to end their hunger strike. The students, however, continued the strike and have called for a march to the Ministry of Education on August 23.

Several students had to end their hunger strike after their health deteriorated, with two students being referred to AIIMS by JNU's health centre on Monday. Despite their condition, the two students refused treatment to continue their protest.

Dharmarth Trust to organize 'Rath Yatra' on Shri Krishna Janmashtami on Aug 24



Brig R.S Langeh (Retd), President of the Trust talking to reporters at Jammu on Thursday.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The J&K Dharmarth Trust, in association with the Sanatan Dharm Sabha and Dharnik Youvak Mandal, is set to host a grand Rath Yatra on August 24, 2024, to celebrate Shri Krishna Janamashtami. Announcing the event, Brig R.S Langeh (Retd), President of the Trust, described the Rath Yatra as a major spiritual and cultural event that will see devotees from across the Jammu region coming together to honor Lord

Krishna, the eighth avatar of Lord Vishnu.

The festivities will begin with a vibrant Rathiyatra, where a magnificently decorated chariot carrying idols of Shri Krishna and Radha will traverse the streets of Temple City. This procession will feature participants of all ages, singing devotional hymns and promoting messages of love, compassion, and unity.

The celebrations will kick off with the Shobha Murti Poojan ceremony at 3:30 PM at Shri Raghunathji Temple,

followed by the Rath Poojan and Dhvajarojan ceremony at 4:00 PM. These events are seen as a way to reconnect with cultural roots and heritage.

Ashok Kumar Sharma (IPS Retd), Secretary of the Trust, detailed that the Rath Yatra will follow a traditional route with minor adjustments this year, including passages through Veer Marg, Shahidi Chowk, and other notable areas, culminating back at Shri Raghunathji Temple.

Additionally, a Bhajan Sandhya, organized by Subash Shastri, will take place at the Shri Raghunathji Temple on the evening of August 26. The Trust expressed gratitude to the Sanatan Dharm Sabha, Dharnik Youvak Mandal, and local authorities for their support. Sanjay Gupta, Anil Magotra, and Nischal Anand were also present, urging the Jammu community to engage deeply in the festivities.

NDRF teams arrive in Tripura with relief materials, disaster management equipment: CM

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AGARTALA: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said NDRF teams along with relief materials and disaster management equipment have arrived to assist the state government in flood relief operations.

At least 10 people were killed and one was missing in landslides and flood-related incidents in Tripura since Sunday. Over 32,000 people have taken shelter in 330 relief camps due to heavy rainfall.

The entire state government machinery has been working round the clock to tackle the unprecedented natural calamity, he said.

"NDRF team along with relief materials arrives in Tripura. Relief materials & disaster management equipment have landed at Maharaja Bir Bikram



Manikya Bahadur Airport, Agartala & are being swiftly dispatched to flood-affected areas. Bringing hope & aid to those in need," Saha posted on Facebook.

"Spoke to Hon'ble Home Minister Shri Amit Shah Ji on the current grim flood situation in the state. He informed that a total of eleven NDRF teams would be sent to Tripura... Arrangement would also be made for choppers for airlifting of the stranded people in the flood affected areas.

More number of boats would also be sent along with the NDRF teams. I thank Hon'ble HM for providing instant assistance to the people of Tripura," Saha said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday called up Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha to take stock of the flood situation in the state and assured him of all assistance from the Centre.

Shah also said the Central government is rushing teams of the National Disaster Response Force as well as

boats and helicopters to the state to assist the local government in relief and rescue operations.

"Spoke with CM Tripura, @DrManikSaha2 Ji, and took stock of the flood situation in the state. The Centre is rushing teams of NDRF, apart from boats and helicopters to the state to assist the local government in relief and rescue operations," he wrote on 'X'.

Assuring the chief minister of all possible assistance as and when required, the Union home minister said the Narendra Modi government firmly stands with "our sisters and brothers in Tripura during this hour of crisis".

"Due to excessive rainfall since Sunday, the water level in all major rivers has already crossed the danger mark flooding several areas.

Ten people killed in landslides and flood-related incidents since Sunday. The state witnessed as many as 1,900 landslides causing disruption in road connectivity," a government release said on Wednesday.

A red alert has been sounded in West Tripura and Sepahijala districts for heavy rainfall on Thursday, it said.

State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), NDRF, central paramilitary forces including Assam Rifles are engaged in rescue and relief operations in affected areas.

Saha while speaking to the media on Wednesday evening said the flood in the state was "unprecedented".

"Unprecedented flood in the state. We are monitoring the situation closely. District Magistrates have been asked to render all possible help to the affected people," he said.

HC: Badlapur sexual assault shocking, there cannot be a compromise on safety, security of girls

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

MUMBAI: The Bombay High Court on Thursday called the sexual assault on two minor girls at their school in Badlapur "absolutely shocking" and said that there cannot be any compromise on the safety and security of girls.

A division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan said that action ought to be taken against the school authorities for not reporting the incident despite being aware of it. It also blasted the police over the delay in registering the FIR.

The court had taken suo motu (on its own) cognisance of the incident where two four-year-old girls were sexually assaulted inside the school's washroom at Badlapur in Thane district by a male attendant on August 12 and 13.

The FIR in the case was lodged on August 16 and the accused was arrested on August 17, as per court documents.

The bench said the police machinery had not moved till the public hit the streets with a protest and outburst.

"Unless there is strong public outburst, machinery won't move. Won't the state move till public outbursts like this," the court asked.

The bench said it was appalled to note that the Badlapur police had not probed the case properly.

"Such serious matters where girls as young as three and four-year-olds have been sexually assaulted...how can the police take it so lightly," the court questioned.

"If schools are not a safe place what is a child supposed to do? What did a three and four-year-old child do? This is absolutely shocking," the court said.

The bench said it was not at all "happy" with the manner in which the Badlapur police handled the case.

"We are only interested in seeing that the victim girls get justice and this is exactly what the police should have also been interested in," HC said.

The bench directed the police to ensure all support is given to the victims and their families.

The victims should not be victimised further; it said.

"In this case, the girls complained, there might be so many cases which may have gone unnoticed," the bench said.

The court said the families of the girls ought to have been shown some support by the police but it was not done in this case.

"First thing, the police should have filed FIR. School authorities were silent. This discourages people from coming forward," the court said.

"People should not lose faith in the police system or the judicial system. If public had to come to the streets then think about the future," the HC said.

It also called for steps within the police machinery to sensitise cops.

The bench directed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the government to probe the case to file a report by August 27 stating what steps it has taken about the recording of girls' statements and their families.

The report will also have to state why there was a delay in registering the FIR by the Badlapur police and in recording the statement of the second victim, the court said.

"We are appalled that the Badlapur police has not taken any steps to take the statement of the second girl till date," HC said.

The court said if it comes to know that there has been an attempt to hush up the case then it won't hesitate to take action against the police officer concerned. "Also tell us what steps is the state government taking to ensure the safety and security of girls. There can be no compromise on this," HC said.

The bench further said that the school authorities were aware of the incident but kept silent and did not inform the police.

Under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, non-reporting of a sexual assault is also an offence, said the court.

"This should have been done even before SIT was constituted. It was incumbent on the police to take action. Non-reporting of such incidents is also an offence," the court said.

Advocate General Birendra Saraf assured the court that action would be taken against the school authority concerned on Thursday itself.

"You will be taking action against school for not

reporting. School authorities had not come forward. Whosoever is responsible for the delay, action will be taken. No one will be spared," the court said.

Saraf informed the bench that the statement of one of the girls has been recorded before a magistrate and the statement of the second victim girl would be taken on Thursday.

The court sought to know why there was a delay in doing that.

The bench directed the SIT to also submit the original case diary maintained by the Badlapur police, a copy of the FIR and other papers related to the case.

Saraf informed the court that the errant police officials from the Badlapur police station have been suspended.

The bench said the suspension was not enough. The alleged sexual assault on the two kindergarten students by a male attendant had sparked a massive protest in Badlapur on Tuesday. The male attendant, who was arrested on August 17, allegedly assaulted the kids in the school's toilet. A local court on Wednesday extended his police custody till August 26.