

Action against teachers

SAIDUL KHAN

Tura, Oct. 3: Yogesh Joshi and Deepjyoti Das — two teachers who had been arrested for allegedly raping two teenaged students of the school they were teaching in — have been suspended and fired from service respectively.

The school's chairman, Pravin Bakshi, who is also the deputy commissioner of West Garo Hills district, has taken up the matter. In a release issued here today, Bakshi said: "All teachers and faculty of the school have united to very strongly denounce and condemn the incident and they have expressed their solidarity with the victims."

The teachers submitted a letter, addressed to all the students of the school, to Bakshi today, where they expressed remorse and sorrow for the act

One rape-accused tutor suspended, another dismissed

of the two teachers and vowed to take corrective steps so that such an incident is never repeated.

Bakshi said the District Child Protection Unit, led by the district child protection officer, had been activated and the team had taken the statements of the students.

He said the district child protection officer had also carried out counselling for the victims and also recommended that they consider temporarily shifting to a shelter home for women and children in difficult circumstances.

Bakshi said a women's police station was investigating the case and the inquiry was being conducted as per the

provisions and guidelines of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

The deputy commissioner had called an emergency meeting and strongly condemned the incident. All the teachers were also directed to prepare a joint statement severely and unequivocally condemning the incident that had tarnished the image of the school.

In the meeting, it was stressed that nobody had been absolved in the case and all the teachers must cooperate fully with the police inquiry. All the teachers were also told to not go out of station without the

chairman's permission.

Bakshi has also directed all schools to immediately constitute child protection committees with women comprising at least 50 per cent of its members. The Childline toll free number should be displayed inside the schools and awareness and sensitisation programmes conducted, he added.

It was also suggested that all schools should install CCTVs on their campus. The police arrested Joshi, a native of Rajasthan, and Das, who hails from Assam, after the parents of the victims filed an FIR at Tura police station on September 29. Both the teachers had been teaching in the school for the past three years. Joshi was acting principal and chemistry teacher while Das was a computer teacher.

Officer denies charges

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Tura, Oct. 3: A CRPF commandant who has been charged in a rape case here today denied his involvement.

The commandant of 120 battalion of the CRPF, R.K. Behara, said he had no role to play in the rape of schoolchildren for which two teachers have been arrested.

On September 30, a group of parents had filed an FIR against Behara for his role in whisking away the rape-accused teachers from the school premises.

"I got a call from the acting principal around 12:10pm. He said he was in trouble. Thinking that it could be some issue related to the school, I rushed to the school," said Behara whose daughter is also studying in the same school. CRPF official S.K. Yadav, inspector G.D. Rajkumar, head constable Dinesh and driver Rajeev accompanied Behara to the school in a commercial vehicle which was provided by Tura police," stated the commandant in a release issued

here today. "The teacher told us that students have framed him and another colleague. I immediately informed SP Mukesh Singh and sub-inspector B. Thapa, who reached the spot. The students had by this time closed the gate and I explained to them that I did not come to help the accused but as a concerned guardian," Behara said.

The commandant said the black-taping on the number plate was done to keep the plate in place. "The front of the car had no tape and the numbers were visible," he clarified.

He rubbished claims that he was a close friend of one of the teachers. He stated that he had visited the school on two or three occasions, always accompanied by his wife, and that, too, to check the progress of their daughter. According to him, the only other time he went to the school was to deliver a lecture on Swachh Bharat.

"There was no such incident where the children were forced by the accused teacher to massage my head as al-

leged. As a guardian myself, how can I support or encourage such heinous acts?" he said.

Tura MLA expresses shock: Expressing shock and anger South Tura MLA, John Leslee K. Sangma today shot off a letter to the DC of West Garo Hills, Pravin Bakshi, condemning the incident and sought justice for the victims.

Leslee also sought action against the commandant of the CRPF, who was present at the start of the incident. "While I agree with the prompt and positive action taken by the district administration, I am not satisfied with the proceedings against another guilty person (CRPF commandant). I have not heard of any FIR being filed by the administration against the commandant," said Leslee.

"The commandant was accused of compelling students to massage, which raises a very serious question on how he got access to these children. His role needs to be investigated to find out the truth of the allegations," he said.