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THE TIMES OF INDIA

JU fresher death: Police slap Pocso section on all 12 accused

TNN | Sep 9, 2023, 07:54 AM IST



KOLKATA: Kolkata Police has slapped Pocso charge against all 12 accused who had earlier been arrested for their direct involvement in the death of a Jadavpur University fresher. Cops also claimed that they have enough evidence to suggest that ragging at Main Hostel was nothing short of "organized crime".

Public prosecutor Sourin Ghosal said they have prayed before court for the addition of Section 12 of the Pocso Act (Whoever, commits sexual harassment upon a child shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine).

All 12 accused will now be produced at Special Pocso court on Monday. The accused may seek bail in that court on Monday,

defence lawyers indicated. Friday was the first day that all 12 accused were produced in the court together.

The accused - both present and former JU students - also face murder charges under IPC 302 and Section 4 of the West Bengal Prohibition of Ragging In Educational Institutions, 2020.

West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) chairperson, Sudeshna Roy, who had spoken to the victim's parents and visited the hostel, was the first to ask the police to slap Pocso charges. "We have sent three letters to cops to impress on the need to slap Pocso in this case. We have been pursuing this case from the first day," said Roy on Friday.

Cops said there was no delay in slapping Pocso charges. "We have recorded enough evidence that attracts this clause. Not only was the minor stripped, he was made to act and speak in a manner that was sexually exploitative," said a joint CP.

Explaining their "organized crime" claim, a police source claimed that alumnus Sourav Chowdhury - one of the first to be arrested - was the mastermind. "He had tried to divert cop attention and claim innocence by creating a WhatsApp group with four members, initially. He had floated the idea that he was no longer at the hostel, but would stay only when he needed to bring his mother to Kolkata for treatment. This attempt to throw cops off track can only happen when the crime is organised or planned," he said.

Sourav told the court that he was innocent and was being framed. "There is nothing new left to seize from my client, neither is there anything new against him," argued his lawyer.