

“Blasphemous” novel by NSS honorary associate leads to arrest of headteacher in Bangladesh

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A book by NSS honorary associate Taslima Nasreen, which is banned in her native Bangladesh on grounds of "blasphemy", has led to the arrest of a headteacher.

Headteacher Yunus Ali was arrested from the KC Technical and Business Management College in Bangladesh this week after police discovered a copy of Nasreen's novel *Lajja (Shame)* in the college library.

Taslima Nasreen is an honorary associate of the National Secular Society and her book is regarded by Islamist extremists to be blasphemous. She was forced to flee Bangladesh in 1994 after radical Muslims objected to the novel, which depicts the life of a Hindu family persecuted by Muslims in Bangladesh.

The novel was banned a year after publication in 1993 under legislation in Muslim-majority Bangladesh that outlaws "inflammatory statements".

Taslima now lives mostly in Europe and India, where she has also been hounded into hiding by death threats from Islamic extremists.

"*Lajja* is a banned book. Still, the principal had it in the college library," police inspector Abdul Malek said, adding Ali faced prosecution and could be jailed up to three years if found guilty. Ali said he was a victim of conspiracy, according to mass-circulated Bengali daily Prothom Alo.

Pirated copies of *Lajja* are widely available in local book shops and markets in Bangladesh.

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