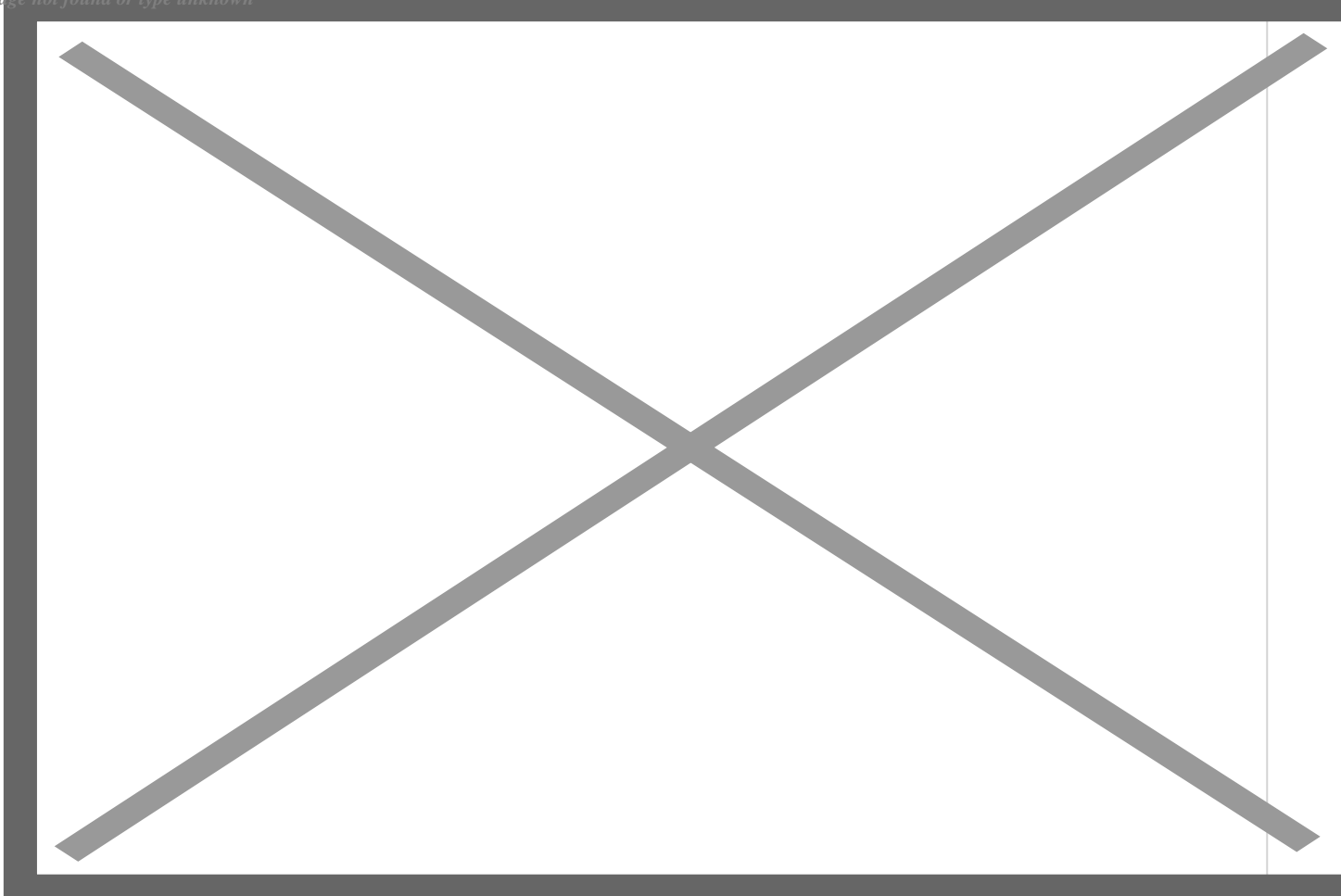


Outrage in Pakistan after woman gang-raped on moving train

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Officials said the woman was lured to an empty compartment by a ticket checker [File: Akhtar Soomro/Reuters]

Islamabad, June 1 (RHC)-- A young woman has been raped by three men on a moving train in Pakistan, in another incident that has shocked the South Asian nation witnessing a rise in sexual violence.

The 25-year-old mother of two children was on board the train last week when she was lured to an empty compartment by a ticket checker and three men raped her, Railways Police chief Faisal Shahkar said on Tuesday.

Police arrested two suspects on Monday when the incident came to the light and a third one was captured on Tuesday, Shahkar said. Local reports said the security and administration of the Bahauddin Zakaria Express, heading to Pakistan's largest city of Karachi from Multan, was in the hands of a private company.

The incident has drawn anger from rights bodies, activists and the public as most people called for stringent punishment to the culprits. "I wish to see those behind this cruel act hanged by their throats," a man told Pakistani broadcaster Geo.

In an editorial on Wednesday, prominent Pakistani newspaper Dawn called the incident "a ghastly crime" and questioned why proper security arrangements were not made in the train.

"Another horrific incident of sexual violence has come to light, underscoring how a cavalier approach to security arrangements can embolden criminally inclined men to indulge their worst instincts," it said. "[Women's] safety is the barometer of a nation's values," said the editorial.

More than 14,000 women have been raped in Pakistan – nearly 11 a day – over the past four years, according to official data, but fewer than three percent of the offenders were convicted.

Faulty investigations, a flawed justice system and social taboos that discourage victims from seeking justice are the factors behind the low conviction rate. "This figure might be a tip of the iceberg because most cases aren't reported," said the National Bureau of Police, which compiled the statistics.

Pakistan's parliament passed a new anti-rape law last year that allows courts to order the chemical castration of offenders in some cases, but very little has been changed since.

The new law was enacted in response to the gang rape of a Pakistan-French mother in front of her children on a highway in the eastern city of Lahore.

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