



Speaking out for **YOURSELF**

MYAT MOE KHAING

We shush girls into acceptance, a reminder for them to know that harassment is only normative and something as fundamental as speaking out against our harasser is a taboo. On October 13, 2015, when Karishma was hurrying to her university, she stopped to help a driver asking her for directions. As she took a piece of paper with an address to read it, the chauffeur threw out his hand and attempted to touch her breasts. She moved back in reflex. He dared to attempt it again. Karishma shouted this time.

He sped away immediately. Karishma noticed the car's colour.

When she came back home, she updated a status on Facebook, still furious.

"My priority was to let people know that there was, there is, and there will be no shame in standing up for yourself. I was angry, wondering why women succumb to social stigmas, despite none of it being their fault," said the 21-year-old.

The status became viral soon. Someone commented on it that on the same day, the exact incident happened to Rounak who noticed the car number: 33-4200. The girls decided to take action.

Karishma asked Moja Losss?, a satirical Facebook page, if they could help her. And they said they would. In a country continuously bombarded by problems, Moja Losss? tries to deal with problems that are considered 'insignificant', but once solved, help the greater masses. Because this case would be labelled a petty crime, 'Moja Losss?' used a different strategy.

At first, they asked the Bashundhara Security to monitor the blue cars at Bashundhara check post. The admins posted links in car enthusiast groups. On October 21, when Ishfaq Ahsan, a second-hand car dealer, informed them that 'Metro Ga 33-4200' was a blue Toyota, they asked him to find out the owner's name, address and chassis number of the car which they

received by that evening. At 5:33 pm that day, Moja Losss? posted about this issue on their page for the first time. The ADC of Ramna DB Police helped in tracing all the information, but the driver Ujjal

Biswas was in Gopalganj. He was arrested the next Thursday. Ujjal was a chauffeur by profession and a pervert by nature.

When she saw her attacker at the court, Karishma was calm and unaffected. Once he started confessing, "Mon chaisilo bole,"

("Because I felt like doing it") her blood started to boil. The maximum punishment an offender can get through mobile

court is two years, but the magistrate ordered for a six month imprisonment. When asked about her reaction to the verdict, Karishma said, "If people want to

change, they will. Some people need more time to get things inside their head, some people need less. Given the current condition of the country, six months might only result as a 'break' for a criminal like Ujjal Biswas. Two years, perhaps, might have left a stronger impact."

To many, Facebook is not just a platform for venting out frustrations, but also a medium that instantly connects everyone (which is what it's supposed to do). Karishma knew how to make the best use of it. To her, punishing the driver might have cost her safety, but not having done it would have cost the security of her friends and family and possibly every girl in her position. It was then or never.

Asked what inspired them to help Karishma, a Moja Losss? representative said, "This is our society: knowingly, unequivocally and ceaselessly telling a girl to live through the trauma of assault, coercing her out of something so logical as the right to confront her harasser. That is why Karishma's story was needed to be told. She raised her voice against the prevalent unjust ways."

Myat Moe is an occasional philosopher whose favourite pastime is confusing people with her nationality. Reach her at 145michelle@gmail.com

