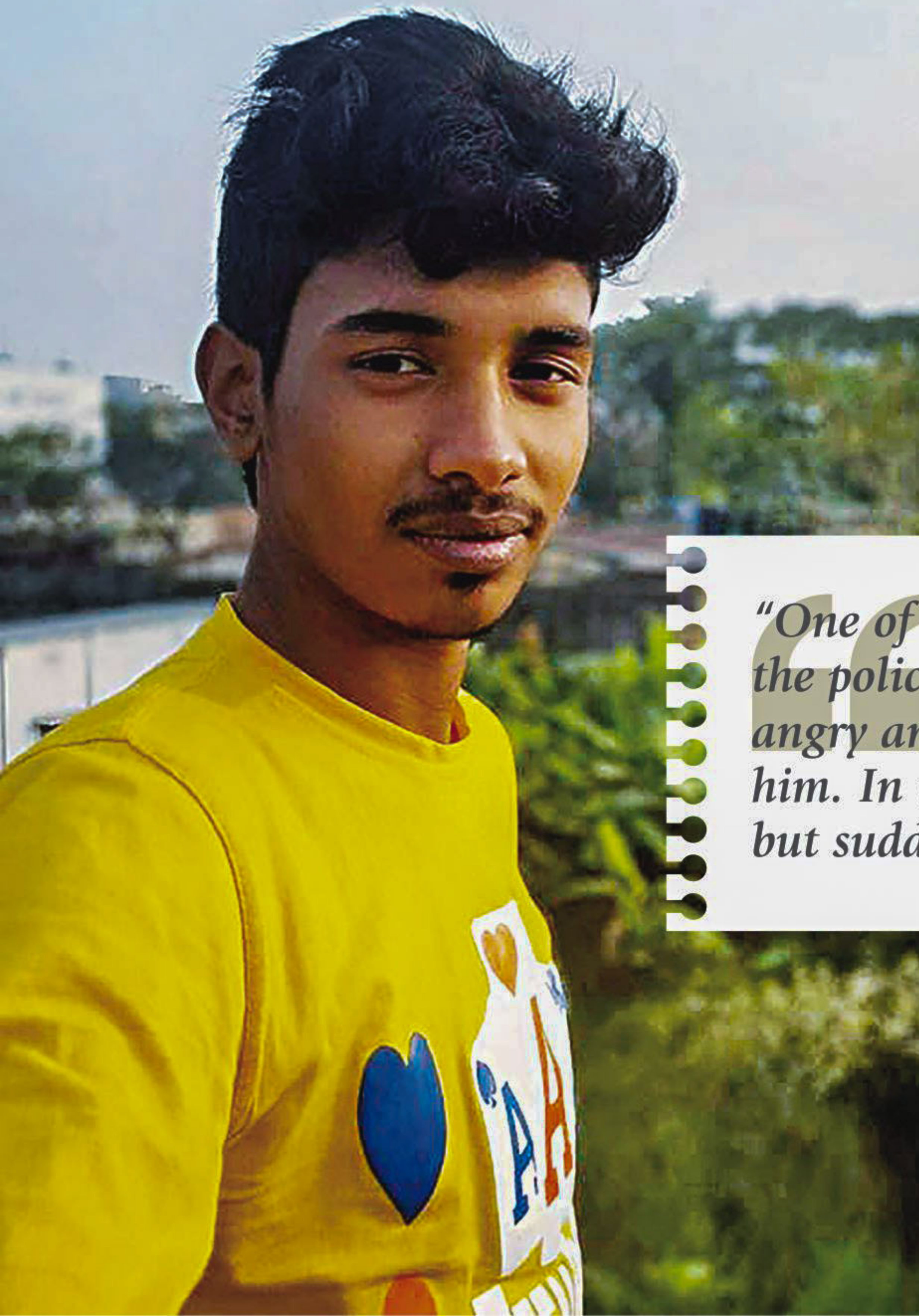


DISPENSABLE DEMANDS, DISPOSABLE LIVES

SUSHMITA S PREETHA

ADDITIONAL REPORTING
BY AKASH MAHMUD



Shotgun shell found near the murder scene



The sandals Sumon was wearing the day he died

"Look, just look how happy and innocent he was," says Hashi Begum as she hands me a mobile phone and points to the photo gallery. A young man stares back at me, sometimes smiling, sometimes pouting, sometimes posing with a V sign, in the endless stream of selfies on his now abandoned phone. "He loved taking selfies wherever he went. He was such a good-natured boy, always making friends, always loved by everyone. Who would have thought they'd take him away in the prime of his youth?"

On January 8, 22-year-old Sumon Mia, a worker of Anlima Textile of Kornopara area in Savar, was shot dead during a "clash" between workers and law enforcers over demands for fairer wages. As we sit on what was once his bed, his sister-in-law Hashi explains that Sumon was on his way home on his lunch break when the incident happened. "There were no demonstrations in his factory and he was doing his regular duty. Usually he takes his lunch with him, but since he

to the police and explain that he wasn't involved in any way, but they shot him anyway," claims Hashi.

Mahmudul Hoque, chairman of Anlima Textile Ltd, confirms that Sumon had, indeed, done his duty that morning. "We didn't have any issue in our factory and Sumon was on his lunch break, so we don't know what happened or why it happened."

Eye-witnesses to the event claim that Sumon did not aggravate the police in any way, or engage in vandalism or violence. One worker who says she was just behind Sumon when he was attacked, alleges that the area had already been cleared by firing of tear gas, when suddenly someone hurled a brick towards the police from behind them. "One of the protestors must have thrown a brick but the police thought we had done it. They got really angry and surrounded Sumon and started hitting him. In the chaos, I don't know what was happening but suddenly I saw he was bleeding," she

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had just recovered from jaundice and was taking a lot of medications still, he had been coming home for lunch for the last few days," says Hashi, showing us his black lunch bag and packets of medicine.

"It was the workers of Standard [garments] who were protesting when the police fired [tear] gas and bullets," adds Sumon's brother, Shopon Kha, explaining that the factory in question is situated between Sumon's factory and his home. "The people who saw him die came to us and told us that he tried showing his ID

says, trembling at this point.

Hashi interjects, "It [the bullet] went right through his chest." A photo of his dead body shows the bullet went through the left side of his chest, right where his heart is.

We try to retrace Sumon's steps, a week after the fateful incident. Witnesses in the area, in hushed tones, tell us that he had dragged himself in his wounded position to a nearby goal ghor (cow shed).

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