

A MOTHER'S cry for JUSTICE



Nipa Begum aka Sohagi, the mother of six-year-old Alif, who was allegedly hit by a bus in their residential quarters in Mirpur.

PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

NILIMA JAHAN

Sitting in the cafeteria of The Daily Star, Nipa Begum aka Sohagi was taking her first meal of the day nearly at three in the afternoon. The dark circles beneath her eyes bore testament to her sleepless nights and exhaustion. When she was served a fish curry, she cried out loudly, saying "I cannot have this Pabda fish. My son would love this. I cannot eat anything that my son would love to eat."

The news of the murder of Sohagi's six-year-old son Alif, after being hit by a bus of Paristhan Paribahan in the playground of Mirpur Paikpara A-type government staff quarter, on May 8 was not covered widely in mainstream media. Today, Sohagi fears that she might not get justice, because she is poor and powerless.

Sohagi, a former garment worker, started living at a rented room of the staff quarter with her only son and daughter for Tk 5,000 just two months ago. On May 8 (the second day of Ramadan) during the Taraweeh prayer, her 13-year-old daughter Chandni asked for money to buy ice cream from a nearby shop inside the quarter and left along with her brother Alif. After buying the ice-cream, Chandni went back to the house, but Alif stopped at the field where the children always play. Mohiuddin Turjo, a resident of the quarter who is a peon of the Public Works Department (PWD), was allegedly learning driving from the driver of his bus at the playground at the time. Suddenly, the bus hit Alif, leaving him wounded in the left side of his forehead. After that, Turjo allegedly

took him outside the quarter near a microbus parked by the road. He left him there and fled the scene.

The other children informed Sohagi about her son's accident. She ran out to the spot and took an injured Alif to a few nearby private hospitals, with the help of locals. But doctors referred him to Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, where the duty doctor declared him dead.

"It's a murder. The other children kept asking Turjo not to take my son anywhere while he was dragging him out after hitting him with the bus. One even took a photo when he left him in front of the microbus. If my son had been taken to the hospital immediately, he might have survived," Sohagi cried out loudly.

What was a bus doing in a residential quarter to begin with?

According to the locals, Turjo owns several buses that run under Paristhan Paribahan, and he used to park them at the quarter at night. The president and secretary of the Paikpara A-type staff quarter welfare association were informed about the illegal parking, but nobody took action against

him, as he holds a power of position at the quarter.

When asked why Turjo was permitted to park buses in the quarter field, Mizanur Rahman, the secretary of Paikpara A-type staff quarter welfare association, says, "Turjo has parked his buses in this quarter for the past eight years because he is an allotted employee. But no previous accident had occurred during these eight years."

But when asked about the legality of parking public transport at the residential quarter, or training to drive in the open field of the quarter, he argues, "His mother was once the women's affairs secretary of this association. I've asked him several times to move his buses somewhere else, as have two other committees before me, but it hasn't worked."

However, Mizan says he is not sure whether Turjo was driving the bus, since he was not personally present at the scene. Insisting that he is shocked at the untimely death of the child, he proceeds to add that the boy's mother was equally responsible for his death. "What was the boy was

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