



18 March 2012

**Press Release**

**High Court Directs Government and Education Ministry to Show Cause re Failure to Prevent Disability based Harassment in Schools and Colleges**

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The High Court today directed concerned Ministries and others to show cause as to why their failure to investigate allegations of harassment against persons with disabilities, and to adopt guidelines to prevent disability based harassment in educational institutions should not be held to be a violation of the fundamental rights to equality, to equality of opportunity, and to be treated in accordance with law. The Court also directed the authorities – including the Ministry of Education, and the National Disability Welfare Coordination Committee – to report to the Court on steps taken by them to date to protect persons with disabilities from harassment in educational institutions.

The petition was brought in the context of the authorities failure to take effective action to inquire into the death of a promising medical student, Modhusudon Chakrabarty, 21, who committed suicide reportedly after being subjected to persistent harassment for his speech disabilities at the Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College in Bogra. Though Modhushudon's father later filed a criminal case, the police have filed no investigation report yet, nor has the College taken any action against any person, or to put in place preventive measures. In these circumstances, and in the context of other complaints from persons with disabilities facing harassment in schools and colleges, several rights and disabled people's organisations, together with Modhushudon's father, filed this writ petition in the public interest on 12 February 2012.

Shankar Chakrabarty, father of Modhushudon commented on hearing of today's order "*I want to see proper compliance with the Court's order. Perhaps then another unfortunate father like me will be spared the horror of bearing his own son's corpse. This is my hope*".

Najrana Yasmin Hira of the Manusher Jonno Foundation stated "*Teachers need to be far more sensitive to persons with disabilities. We hope that those responsible for Modhushudon's death will receive appropriate punishments. Everyone needs to work together to create more awareness on this issue.*"

**Background:**

The petitioners were Shankar Chakrabarty, the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), and several disability rights organisations and advocates, including Tanzim Al Islam Reporter, Center for Disability and Development, Manusher Jonno Foundation. The Respondents are the Secretaries of the Ministries of Home Affairs, Education, Ministry of Health, and Social Welfare, Rajshahi University and its Officials, and the Principal, Shahid Ziaur Rahman, Medical College, Bogra.

A Division Bench comprising Mr Justice Farid Ahmed and Mr Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif issued the Rule and Order. The petition was moved by Ms Sara Hossain, Advocate, with Adv. Qazi Zahed Iqbal and Adv. Khondoker Shahriar Shakir.

For Further Information, please contact:

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