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Endless misery: man loses pregnant wife

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Riot-affected carpenter accuses three city hospitals of denying her treatment

A 26-year-old carpenter's sufferings seem endless. He went out of work after the communal riots in February, and then he lost his eight-month pregnant wife and unborn child in June due to negligence at medical healthcare facilities.



visited where his wife was not given the attention she needed.

Recalling the day, Amir, a resident of north-east Delhi's Mustafabad where he stays in a rented accommodation, said that after a gap of over three and a half months, he had started going out to look for work. "Arifa was absolutely fine. I fed her breakfast and tea. My younger brother was at home when I left and told her I'll be back soon," he said.

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Arifa called him again around 1 p.m. asking him if he had eaten and by what time would he be back. "I hadn't eaten but I lied because I knew she would have waited for me to eat. I told her I'll be back by 4 p.m.," he said. That was the last conversation between the two.

Around 3 p.m., he received a call from his brother that Arifa had fallen unconscious. The brother said that she had showered, eaten lunch and then lay on bed. The brother realised that she was unconscious when he tried to wake her up. "I called my cousin who lives nearby to take Arifa to a hospital till I reach," said Amir.

Inadequate facilities

At a private hospital in Mustafabad, the doctors allegedly denied her admission saying they did not have adequate facilities. "We then took her to a hospital in Shastri Park where again they denied to attend her and told us that they don't have oxygen facility," he said, adding that they were then asked to take Arifa to Lady Hardinge Medical College.

literally cried in front of the staff, begging them to take my wife. She was lying unconscious on a stretcher for over an hour,” he said.

Subsequently, Arifa was admitted. Half an hour later, the family was informed that she and the unborn child were dead. Amir was numb. He asked the staffer a reason for her death.

“I am an illiterate. I just asked the staffer what had happened to my wife and child. What will I tell my family?” he said. He believes that if the hospital had acted in time, she might have been saved.

Amir claimed that the staff told him that if he kept the body in the hospital to know the cause of death, the hospital will conduct a post-mortem which Amir was apprehensive about.

“I didn’t know how long it would have taken for us to get the body after the formalities, so I just held her in my arms from the stretcher and walked out,” he said. The ‘admission receipt’ given to him was taken back, he said.

Will enquire

When contacted, Lady Hardinge’s medical director N.N. Mathur said that he would enquire into the matter.

Despite the riots and later, the COVID-19 lockdown, the couple stayed back in Delhi for better and accessible healthcare facilities during Arifa’s pregnancy. “During the lockdown, I told her we should also go back to our village in Aligarh, but she said that we should stay here because hospitals and doctors are accessible here. But that’s what took her life,” he said.

For Amir, life took a turn on February 23 when riots broke out in his area and he was subsequently out of work. The carpenter said that though his house was not effected, living in the area for months was “tough”. Owing to the lockdown, absence of work continued and he took loans from family and friends to survive and also depended on relief material coming in from different corners.

Over 10 days later, on Monday, Amir said he wished he had informed the police about what had happened at Lady Hardinge College but he was scared of not getting Arifa’s body. “But then, what will happen? I have lost both my wife and my child”.



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