

# Therapy undone by poor follow-up

Most addicts seeking help end up on self-destructive path

By Naimul Haq

Absence of efficient and effective follow-up programmes pushes most of the drug addicts in the country who seek counselling and therapy to rid themselves of the fatal addiction back to the path of self-destruction, say experts at the Institute of Community Mental Health.

The institute at the city's Tejgaon area, which began operations in August 1989, is the only detoxification centre in the country still functioning. There are three more establishments but those five-bed centres are virtually non-operational.

Since its inception in August 1998, the thana health complex turned detoxification centre in Tejgaon has so far attended 6,000 patients and a survey on them has found a huge majority relapsing to pre-therapy conditions.

The length of rehabilitation varies from individual to individual. For some it may be six months while for others it might take up to two years. But a minimum of six-month recuperation period is required for an addict to return to normal life.

"Without proper follow-up all our efforts could go down the

drain. This is the major problem we experience here," said Dr Morsheed Mahboob, a medical officer at the 40-bed centre run by the home ministry's Department of Narcotics Control (DNC).

Most of the people who come at the complex are at the final stage of drug addiction but can still be completely cured provided that they go through special recovery programmes, experts at the centre said.

Rezwan Ahmed (not his real name), a 33-year-old patient who comes from a rich family, has spent some five lakh taka on meperidine, commonly known as pethidine. He lived in Japan for two years. Separated from his wife and family, he wants to get out of the 'amazing world' his Choudhury, director and chief consultant of the institute.

"I want to go back to a normal life," Iqbal said. "I want to earn and have a family again."

After two weeks of strictly supervised symptomatic treatment, patients like Rezwan and Iqbal are released but are advised to continue follow-up services at the clinic.

"On an average about 60 per

cent of the treated cases returns for a follow-up for the first time. Interestingly, only 10 per cent pays a second visit. At least 70 per cent of the previously treated takes readmission. The relapse rate, as you see, is quite high," said Dr Shamim Matin

Choudhury, director and chief consultant of the institute.

"At present, our daily outpatient attendance is about 60, and roughly 120 people attend follow-up clinic services every week," Dr Shamim said. "People from all walks of life come here but the ratio is slightly tilted towards the lower class."

"We don't have any urine testing kit. Without dope tests it is

impossible to determine whether someone has restarted using drugs," said Dr Shamim.

"Detoxification is a difficult task. With no backup, no security, no ambulance and little assistance from the government, the Institute of Community Mental Health is in a constant struggle to survive."

learnt more about treatment and the number of doctors increased. Regrettably, the number of drug users has also risen but the facilities have not quite improved," she complained.

"For example, we don't have enough beds. In 1989 we used to attend about 12 to 15 patients a day but now we receive more than 60. We are forced to keep a large number on the waiting list," she added.

No sophisticated instrument is needed for detoxification; however, a well-equipped pathology department is of crucial importance. The centre doesn't have a pathology section. There are no provisions for ECG, X-ray and, most importantly, dope testing.

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"Detoxification is a difficult task. With no backup, no security, no ambulance and little assistance from the government, the Institute of Community Mental Health is in a constant struggle to survive."



A cultural function was organised at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city yesterday to mark the prize giving ceremony of the Bangladesh Cricket Board. Noted artistes Shakila Zafar and Shuvra Dev rendering songs in the function.

- Star photo

## Gen Mustafiz's tenure

### PM asks Army

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safeguarding national independence and sovereignty.

Earlier, the Prime Minister reviewed the parade on board an open jeep. She formally handed over two National Standards to the 'Rising tigers' and 'Shaswata Shashash' as recognition to their meritorious services to the nation.

The ceremonial parade was conducted by Lt. Col. ATM Ziaul Hasan.

Earlier on her arrival at the Shaheed MR Chowdhury Parade Ground, the Prime Minister was received by Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen. Mohammad Mustafizur Rahman, Bir Bikram.

The Prime Minister also addressed the Commanding Officers of the East Bengal Regiment on the occasion. She visited the Quarter Guard and laid wreath at 'Ajantha Shaheed Samadhi.' She also visited the Papa Tiger's office.

Cabinet ministers, MPs, diplomats, chiefs of the Navy and Air Force, the Defence Secretary, civil and military officers were present at the function.

### AL plans tours

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The entire dry season starting from November up to the end of February would be a good time to visit countryside in a bid to reach out to the voters well ahead of election time," said a member of ALCWC, preferring anonymity.

Another ALCWC leader said the party chief might also resume her half-finished 'Meet-the-Party Units' programme after her next tour abroad billed for November 11. Hasina had earlier met exclusively with leaders of 33 district units.

"Resolving organisational disputes is a big task in hand before the party gets fully prepared to take up the 2001 election challenge," said another AL leader.

Besides, tonight's ALCWC would also take stock of the latest political developments in the country, especially the BNP-led opposition alliance's move centring November 7.

"We (central AL) have no programme on the day (November 7). However, party's front organisations may have their respective programmes to mark the 'Sepoy Killing Day,'" said an AL leader.

Opposition parties are observing November 7 as 'National Revolution and Solidarity Day'.

Today's ALCWC meeting will also discuss party programmes to celebrate the Victory Day on December 16.

### Over 1000 plcs

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three months of investigation.

Earlier, the accused lawyers filed a petition with the High Court Division of the Supreme Court seeking anticipatory bail.

After hearing both sides, the court granted them anticipatory bail for 10 days from the date of order and asked police not to harass the lawyers during the bail period.

The 20 lawyers further submitted a petition for bail.

After hearing, a Bench of the High Court Division comprising Justice Mohammad Ali Asgar Khan and Justice S. K. Sinha allowed the accused lawyers to surrender before the trial court within 7 days after submitting the charge sheet.

He said the companies seeking to raise funds from the market are full of loopholes due to lack of supervision and monitoring at the primary stage. The sponsors of these companies treat those as their family companies, which lack corporate management."

These companies, he went on, "only approach us when they lack money and raise funds from the market by submitting doctored balance sheets to impress the investors. The companies then fail to keep their commitments, affecting investors and capital market at large."

Another SEC official said the proposed new policy will help SEC to keep the companies under strict monitoring as these will be required to submit audited balance sheets time to time along with other documents.

He also said SEC now does not have the required strength to monitor such a large number of companies and is likely to hire consultants for addressing the issue.

to the post of Lieutenant General were either sent into retirement after promotion or continued to serve as Chief of Army Staff.

Legal experts told The Daily Star that there is no constitutional binding regarding the appointment or duration of service of the Chief of Army Staff. The constitution says that parliament by law should regulate the appointment and terms and conditions of the chiefs of staff of the three services.

Article 62 (2) of the constitution says that until parliament by law provides for the matter specified in Clause (1), i.e. the appointment of Chiefs of Staff of the Defence Services and their salaries and allowances, "the President may by order provide for such of them as are not already subject to existing law."

Since parliament has not enacted any law in this regard during the last 28 years since the adoption of the constitution, the matter can be decided by the president on the advice of the prime minister, the experts said.

The appointment, tenure or extension of the Chief of Army Staff will, therefore, be done by

the president as per the advice of the prime minister.

Incidentally, President Shahabuddin Ahmed extended the services of his previous Military Secretary Major General A M Siraj by one year.

In case the government decides to appoint a new Army Chief, the names that are expected to be in contention are Major General Harunur Rashid, now serving as Chief of General Staff (CGS) and Major General Fazlur Kabir, GOI, Chittagong. The latter acts as the acting chief, while the Chief of Army Staff is out of the country. Both are freedom fighters.

Among other senior serving generals who should also be in the fray are Major General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, Commandant, National Defence College, and Major General Munaim Mansur, Commandant, Staff College.

There are two other senior generals who are now on deputation as ambassadors abroad. They are Major General Amin Ahmed Chowdhury, ambassador to Oman, and Major General Anwar Hossain, ambassador to Morocco.

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## City commissioners form Nat'l Council

By Staff Correspondent

Commissioners of the country's four city corporations yesterday formed "National Coordination Council of Bangladesh City Commissioner" to mitigate the sufferings of the city dwellers.

The Council, which comprises commissioners from different political parties, was launched at a press conference at National Press Club yesterday morning.

President of the Council and Commissioner of Dhaka City Corporation Habibur Rahman Mizan told the journalists that over two crore people of four city corporations were facing manifold problems.

Emphasising on updating the city corporation laws in a modern and healthy city, he said the long-standing problems could not be solved as "we have failed to bring major changes in the existing Poulisha Act."

Reading out a written speech, Secretary General of the new organisation and Commissioner of Khulna City Corporation Md. Mojibur Rahman said that representatives at the grass-root level were facing serious problems as the "backdated" laws were not

reformed. "Our popularity at the individual level is also reducing day by day due to this."

He hoped that the Council would play an important role in easing the sufferings of the city residents by resolving their problems through implementing various initiatives by the Council.

Claiming the Council a non-political one, he said all mayors and city commissioners would work simultaneously for the betterment of the city residents.

Asked about alleged involvement of the city commissioner in smuggling drugs, and other criminal activities, Rahman said no city commissioner is involved in such activities. "No elected commissioner can involve himself in such business and if any one found involved, stern action will be taken against him."

Among others, Vice-President of the Council Kazi Moinuddin Munir of DCC, Organising Secretary Farid Ahmed Chowdhury of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), Publicity Secretary Abul Khayer Babul of DCC and Shahida Khanom of DCC were present at the news conference.

## 55.8pc think floods were caused by India

By Staff Correspondent

About 55.8 per cent of the residents of Dhaka are of the opinion that the recent floods in the south-western region of Bangladesh is man-made and caused by India while only 33.1 per cent consider it as a natural phenomenon.

The rest (11.1 per cent) feel that it is a curse on people from the Almighty.

An opinion poll conducted by Centre for Sustainable Development (CSD) among Dhaka city residents last month revealed this.

The poll asked four questions on key aspects of the flood and its impact. About 81.5 per cent of the respondents suggested that evicting illegal occupants of river banks and dredging rivers should be the priority of the government to reduce flood hazards. Only 18.4 per cent are in favour of increasing the disaster management of the government.

The poll found that 41.2 per cent of people believe that the authority of cutting dams or roads should vest with government officials, 35 per cent think that the power should vest with local people and the rest think

## Bushra murder

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of twenty people in connection with the incident.

Sources said that the IO of the case was changed three times.

Serajul Islam alleged that on July 4 doctor said that she was not raped. But the autopsy report on July 11 said that she was raped. It also proves that the quarter has been very active to divert the case.

But chemical test of Bushra's clothes proved that she was not raped, Islam said.

According to CID investigation, Abdul Kader is the step-brother of Bushra's maternal uncle M A Samad who died in 1985. Kader along with his family was living in the West Hajipara house of Samad since 1994.

Bushra's family also started living in the same house in 1996 as three sons and one daughter of M A Samad were given the responsibility of taking care of the house.

Relationship between the two families deteriorated as Kader was planning to grab the house, the sources said.

## 'Gandhi' of India's new state snubbed in leadership tussle

NEW DELHI, Nov 5 : Shibu Soren, who has led India's longest campaign for a tribal homeland, was today rejected as the first chief minister of the new province to be carved out from the state of Bihar on November 15, reports AFP.

India's newest state, Jharkhand, comprises the mineral-rich districts of the otherwise impoverished and lawless Bihar.

India's ruling coalition Sunday rejected Jharkhand's chief ministerial post to Soren amid speculation the move will prompt the tribal leader to withdraw his regional JMM party from Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's multi-party government.

Soren, a tribal, is often compared with India's independence hero Mahatma Gandhi for his decades-old non-violent struggle for Jharkhand (Forest Land), which has been created by the partition of 18 of Bihar's 51 districts.

Soren, who met Vajpayee overnight with his demand to become Jharkhand's first elected leader, was rebuffed by the premier's National Democratic Alliance.

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