

## WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY TODAY

## Around 2.25 cr people over 18 yrs suffer from mental disorders

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Around 2.25 crore people over 18 years are suffering from mental disorders while there is only one psychiatrist for every 1.40 lakh people in the country.

Worse still, there are only 900 beds in government hospitals for the patients with mental illness.

The statistics paint a gloomy picture of the country's mental health care, as the World Mental Health Day is being observed across the globe today with the theme 'Mental health in a changing world: The impact of culture and diversity'.

There are only 10 or 15 beds for mental patients in the government medical colleges while most private medical colleges do not have any beds for such patients. The Pabna mental hospital has 500 beds while the National Institute of Mental Health has 150 beds.

"But many poor patients cannot afford the treatment at the institute, as only 40 percent of beds in the institute are non-paying ones," Director of National Mental Health Institute Dr AH Mohammad Firoz said, adding that 60 percent of beds

in the medical colleges are free. Even the medical colleges, except one or two, do not have any posts for professors of mental health. As a result, the patients remain deprived of specialised treatment.

Also, in the absence of a mental health policy, the patients cannot enjoy legal rights. But the neighbouring countries such as India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan have such a policy.

"The Lunacy Act of 1912 is still valid in the country, but it needs to be updated. A draft proposal in this regard was prepared by the National Institute of Mental Health a few years ago, but it is gathering dust," said psychiatrist Dr Mohit Kamal.

Most countries have national mental health programmes. Some of them have integrated mental health with the general health delivery system, while some have separate mental health programmes. Some countries even have a separate budget for mental health care, according to experts.

Bangladesh spends only 0.5 percent of the total health budget on mental health, according to the World Atlas 2005.

A survey conducted by National Institute of Mental Health in association with World Health Organisation (WHO) from 2004 to 2006 found that 5.67 percent of mental patients are suffering from acute and complex mental disorders and 4.61 percent of the patients with complex mental disorders are suffering from depression.

Referring a study conducted in 2003, psychiatrist Dr Mohammad Ali of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) said around 65.4 percent of people who intended to commit suicide were suffering from psychiatric disorders.

The total number of mentally ill people in South Asia is 150 to 200 million, according to the experts.

The United Nations secretary general in 2001 asked all the governments to make mental health a priority, to allocate resources, develop policies and implement reforms needed to address this urgent problem. Similarly, the WHO director general called on the member states to address the same issues. However, significant changes are yet to take place in this area.

A new research published in the medical journal, The Lancet, has highlighted the extent to which the mentally ill are neglected in the developing world. Scientists say mental illness makes up about 14 percent of global disease, more than cancer or heart disease. Up to 800,000 people commit suicide each year, mostly in poorer countries.

Despite this, the authors say, 90 percent of sufferers in developing countries receive no care. In some cases they are chained to trees or kept in cages.

Health officials called for new strategies and more funds for treatment of the mentally ill in the developing world in a special series published by The Lancet.

They warned that as more people suffer from mental problems as a result of war, poverty and disease, unless widespread treatment becomes available, poor countries would be further handicapped in the future.

In some countries, mental illness is seen as a stigma. But many experts say basic mental health services can be provided cheaply and simply, especially if they are made a part of general healthcare.



Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh M Asif Ali calls on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday. PHOTO: PID

## Make govt audit transparent, accountable

President tells auditor general

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday urged the Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh to take steps for making government's audit management more transparent and accountable.

The president said this when Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh M Asif Ali met him at Bangabhaban.

He also asked the authorities concerned to remain careful so that no government employee faces any harassment in getting their pension and other financial benefits after their retirement.

M Asif Ali apprised the president of the activities of his office.

## 15-km tailback on Dhaka-Tangail Rd

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A 15-kilometre tailback clogged the Dhaka-Tangail highway after an eight-ton truck broke down near Latifpur Bridge yesterday.

Hundreds of vehicles remained stranded on the highway from 3:00am to 8:00am, causing untold suffering to passengers.

The truck broke down as its entire chassis collapsed on the road after its front axle had broken due to overloading.

The situation became normal at around 8:00am after the truck loaded with gas cylinders was removed from the road.

## ACC boss seeks help of all to free country from corruption

UNB, Dhaka

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Lt Gen (Retd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury yesterday said it is not possible to free the country from corruption without cooperation from all.

"Only government and ACC can not solve the problem. I think it is the responsibility of all," he said this while he was addressing a function marking the launching of a study report on "Good Governance and People's Freedom" at the National Press Club.

Society for Bangladesh Development Strategy (BDSS) Chairman Dr Md Osman Gani made the report. Former water resources and information minister Mizanur Rahman Shelley and former Ambassador Maj Gen (Retd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury were present.

Former Awami League chief whip vice-principal Abdus Shaheed, JP (Manju) Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam and former director general of Health Department Dr A Latif Mallick also spoke at the function.

Chaired by Justice M Gholam Rabbani, the function was moder-

ated by BDSS Co-Chairman Md Kutubuddin.

The ACC chairman hoped new generation would be involved in ongoing anti-corruption movement. "We have to work together if we want to establish good governance and corruption-free country," Mashhud said.

Amin said politicians have to acquire capacity to govern the country.

Shelley said people don't know what is flawless politics as they have witnessed so much faulty politics. Good politicians are sine qua non for establishing good governance and for its sustenance, he said.

Shelley said, "We should remember that politics does not mean wicked politics and corruption."

Osman Gani in his study report said there is no last word in politics. Rather, it's a pretext of deviating from principle of politicians.

On economics, he said the government and concerned key government officials should adopt caution prior to take any important decision that may adversely affect the economy.



A delegation of Bangladesh Bar Council calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at the latter's office in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1) PHOTO: PID

## Goalpara Power Plant again out of order for tech glitch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The 110 megawatt power plant of Goalpara Power Station (GPS) again went out of order at 9:20am on Monday for the 11th time in last eight months due to major technical faults. The power plant is yet to go into production to meet severe power outage in the district under the West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited (WZPDCL).

GPS Chief Engineer Abdul Khaleque said the power plant went out of order due to various reasons and also as its burner tripped. Besides, leakages have developed in the fuel pump, making the power plant inactive for generation, he said.

The power plant will never be able to go to production unless authorities stop using fuel mixed with water in which a section of officials are involved, reliable sources said.

The sixty megawatt power plant and one of the two barge mounted plants have been out of order for long.

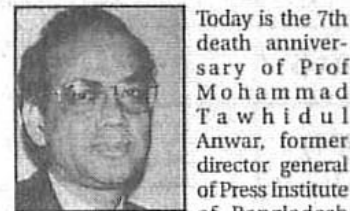
## Obituary



Asadul Hoque, deputy managing director of Oman Bangladesh Leasing and Finance Limited, passed away due to a massive cardiac arrest on October 6 at the United Hospital in the city at the age of 57, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, one son, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death. He was buried at his village home at Gaibandha.

## Death anniversary



Today is the 7th death anniversary of Prof. Mohammad Tahmid Anwar, former director general of Press Institute of Bangladesh and Professor of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Dhaka University, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at his village home at Hathajari in Chittagong.

Relatives, friends, colleagues, former students and admirers are requested to pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.

## Security to be beefed up ahead of Durga Puja

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 14170 puja mandaps will be set up across the country to celebrate the upcoming Durga Puja, the biggest festival of the Hindus.

With the five-day festival beginning from October 17, the government has planned to beef up security measures for smooth celebration of the festival.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) will be deployed at different puja mandaps, senior Rab officials said at a view exchange meeting yesterday.

Among 14170 puja mandaps, 831 will be set up in Dhaka, 5255 in Rajshahi division, 1491 in Khulna division, 1231 in Chittagong division, 2722 in Barisal division and 2640 in Sylhet division.

The Rab officials said their forces would be deployed across the country from October 15 till the immersion of idols on October 21. The members of the elite force will also set up temporary check posts on roads, conduct block raids in hotels, slums and other places.

They will also conduct dog and bomb sweepings in sensitive puja mandap areas.

The view exchange meeting held at Rab headquarters was

attended by Rab officials and businessmen.

Rab officials said that although they could not control the prices of essentials up to the expected level, their drives kept the prices stable.

## Mahalaya today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahalaya, the auspicious occasion that heralds the advent of goddess Durga, will be celebrated today.

This auspicious occasion is observed seven days before the Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of Hindus.

Devotees will celebrate Mahalaya at different temples and puja mandaps in the early morning.

On the occasion, special puja will be held at Ramkrishna Mission at 5:00am and at Dhakeswari National Temple at 10:00am where devotees will chant mantras and sing devotional songs.

Official sources said a total of 14170 puja mandaps, including 151 in the capital, have been set up to celebrate the Durga Puja.

The five-day puja festival will begin on October 17.

## Chuadanga outlaw leader killed in encounter with police

UNB, Chuadanga

A leader of an outlawed party was killed in an encounter with police at Pragpur village in Alamdanga upazila early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Amirul Islam alias Amlu, 27, son of late Mukter Hossain of Uttar Laxmipur village in the upazila.

Amlu, also the second-in-command of infamous Amir Chan Group of the region, was wanted in a number of cases, including of six murder cases, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Alamdanga police cordoned off the house of Ismail Hossain in the area at about 1:45am where Amlu and his associates were holding a clandestine meeting.

Sensing police presence, the criminals started firing that triggered a gun-battle. The miscreants and the police traded fire for an hour.

"Amlu was caught in the crossfire and died on the spot," a police official said.

Police recovered a shutter gun and three bullets from the spot.

Amlu's leader Amir Chan was killed in a "crossfire" few months ago, police said.

## 6 officials with joint secretary status transferred

UNB, Dhaka

Six officials with status of joint secretaries were transferred yesterday in a reshuffle in the administration.

Nikhil Ranjan Mondal, Director of Jute Department, was made Director of Public Library Department; Chowdhury Mohammad Babul Hasan, Director of Public Library Department, made Additional Director General of Narcotics Control Department, and Siraj Uddin Mia, Joint Secretary of Environment and Forest Ministry, made Director of Jute Department.

Mohammad Alaiddin, Additional Director General of Bangladesh Water Development Board, was made Chief Executive Officer of Dhaka City Corporation, Saifuddin Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer of Dhaka City Corporation, made Additional Director General of Bangladesh Water Development Board and Mohammad Kamar Munir, former project director of Institute and Policy Support Unit (attached with Environment and Forest Ministry) made Joint Secretary of Environment and Forest Ministry.

## Railway engr suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Sub-Assistant Engineer Abdur Rouf of Bangladesh Railway (West) now posted in Jessore has been suspended for negligence in duty.

Divisional Manager of Bangladesh Railway (West) Anwarul Kabir issued the suspension order on Monday.

Earlier on Sunday, a four-member committee was formed to probe into the tragic death of three persons of a family who died in a train accident at Phulbari gate rail crossing in Khulna city on last Saturday.



Visitors are seen at the launching ceremony of newly designed furniture made by Jalal Furniture Company Ltd in Dhaka yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

## DHAKA TODAY

## Roundtable

Left Democratic Front organises a roundtable on price hike of essentials and ways to control it. Venue: CPB central auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

## View exchange meeting

Bangladesh Puja Uddjan Parishad organises a view exchange meeting on the upcoming puja preparation. Venue: Dhakeswari Mandir. Time: 11:00am.

## Discussion

River Re-Formation Water Rule and Use Revolution Council of Bangladesh organises a discussion on 'save river, save country'. Venue: Colonel (Retd) Taher auditorium, Bangabandhu Avenue. Time: 3:00pm.

## New furniture designed by Italian expert launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka-based furniture maker, Jalal Furniture Company Ltd (JFCL), yesterday launched a new line of furniture designed by an Italian expert.

The launching programme styled 'Carlucci Collection' displayed different types of newly designed furniture including chair, table, couch, dining table and bed.

Ayub Quadri, adviser to the education ministry, Kaiyum Khan, chairman of the company, and Paolo Carlucci, designer of the furniture, spoke at the function.

Carlucci, an Italian furniture designer who worked in different countries including USA, UK, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, India and Russia, designed the new line of furniture with the assistance of

local artisans.

"The furniture were made using hundred percent local raw materials and we are hopeful about exporting the furniture in near future as we are already receiving very positive response from an exhibition in India that we attended recently," an official of JFCL said.

Speaking at the launching ceremony as chief guest, the adviser said the country's economy largely depends on the exports of products manufactured by private sector, and the government is sincere about providing them with necessary supports.

He also hoped the newly designed furniture would draw positive responses from foreign markets.

## Trade union rights in EPZ extended up to Oct 2010

UNB, Dhaka

The trade union rights of the workers in the country's export processing zones (EPZs) have been extended up to October 31, 2010.

The Council of Advisers at a meeting yesterday approved a proposal to amend the EPZ Workers and Industry Relations Act 2004 in this regard.

According to the existing act, the trade union rights of the workers in the EPZs will expire on October 31 next year.

The meeting, chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, also endorsed a draft of the Building Construction (Amendment) Ordinance, 2007 in principle to bring further amendments to the Building Construction Act, 1952.

Advisers, cabinet secretary and secretaries concerned attended the meeting.

## GRAFT CASE Mahmudur surrenders, granted HC bail

UNB, Dhaka

The vacation bench of the High Court yesterday granted an interim bail to Mahmudur Rahman, energy adviser to former prime minister Khaleeda Zia, as he surrendered before it apprehending arrest in connection with a corruption case.

The court gave the order on a petition filed by Mahmudur Rahman after the Anti-Corruption Commission lodged the case against him and others on September 30.

ACC Assistant Director Mahubul Alam filed the case with Motijheel Police Station under the Prevention of Corruption Act 1947. The accused are Mahmudur Rahman, also ex-managing director of Shinepukur Holdings Ltd, its chairman Sohnel F Rahman, vice-chairman Salman F Rahman and four others including two former top Sonali Bank officials.

According to the case statement, the accused in collusion with each other embezzled Tk 108 crore from Sonali Bank local branch through a consortium using fake documents.

Sources said the court order will expire one week after the reopening of the court on October 28.

## BOAT CAPSIZE 7 more bodies recovered

UNB, Narsingdi

Seven more bodies of the passengers of an engine boat that capsized in the Meghna on Monday evening were recovered yesterday, raising the death toll to 11.

The boat with 50 passengers aboard capsized in the river at Bheluarchar amid rainstorm triggered by a land depression.

Of the passengers, 17 managed to swim ashore, while the rest went missing. Later, bodies of four were recovered from the river on Monday night.

Local sources said the seven bodies were found floating at Bheluarchar in Rajpura upazila and at adjacent Fakir Char in the morning.

## Citi grants for Bangladeshi community in East London

The Citi Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Citigroup, has made further grant to deliver a series of financial education workshops and one-to-one sessions to up skill British-Bangladeshi young people and women within Tower Hamlets to better achieve their financial goals, says a press release.

The partnership will reach 1,500 individuals, with another 3,000 benefiting indirectly. It is estimated that Brac UK will deliver in 12 months, over 500 one-to-one sessions, and 100 group seminars on financial education.

Earlier in 2006, Citi supported Brac UK to undertake a financial education needs assessment of British-Bangladeshi living in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, United Kingdom.

"We share a common belief that with financial education, the vibrant British-Bangladeshi and other communities of Tower Hamlets will be well prepared to take full advantage of the opportunities associated with financial inclusion," said Robert Annibale, global director of Citi Micro-finance.

Citi and Brac have a long history of collaborating in Bangladesh and the Citi Foundation was one of the first institutions to support Brac UK when it was launched.