

Addict rehab centres

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received treatment from drug addiction treatment clinics five times already, but he has also been slipping a couple of days into the completion of each treatment course of 10 to 15 days.

"Although I came out after completing my treatments, my body was still craving the drug after each of them, accompanied by body cramps, which led me to take heroin a couple of days into the completion of every course of treatment," a trimmed beard Mohor, who looked a bit older than his age of 35, told The Daily Star.

Mohor said he was treated in Hadi Madakata Raash Complex at Dayangjan twice, in a clinic at Eskaton twice, and once in a clinic at Tejgaon.

Neither DNC nor any non-governmental organisation has any statistics on how many heroin addicts relapse into the deadly habit even after receiving treatment. DNC also has no statistics on the number of drug addicts in the country. However, DNC officials and a number of doctors said almost all the addicts who receive treatment in substandard clinics, end up relapsing into the addiction.

Around a dozen of addicts, with whom these correspondents talked, said many drug addiction treatment clinics do not even have any full-time doctor and trained nurse. Doctors attached to the so-called treatment centres visit those only once or twice a week, although it is mandatory by law for the centres to appoint a sufficient number of full-time doctors. A full-time psychiatrist is also a must according to government guidelines for all drug addiction treatment centres, but hardly any clinic complies with the government edict.

A top DNC official said they have allegations that some substandard rehabilitation centres are carrying out heroin trade under the cover of treating and rehabilitating addicts.

To check whether the allegations are true, The Daily Star correspondents and a photographer visited at least five such treatment and rehabilitation centres, with the result of not being allowed to enter four of them -- Natun Jibon Drug Addict Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre at West Jatrabari, Al Amin Madakashtha Niramoy Kendro at Suprapur, Dihari Madakashtha Niramoy Kendro at Jatrabari, and Shah Jalal Hospital at Mohammadpur.

Former patients of at least two of the clinics, which denied The Daily Star access, said those clinics even supply heroin to their patients who have sufficient money to pay for the illicit drug under cover of treating them.

Only Hadi Madakata Raash Complex allowed these correspondents to enter the premises and showed a permission from the Ministry of Health to run the clinic.

The clinic's manager Zakirul Alim Liton said although they do not have any full-time doctor, they do meet all the other government guidelines.

He said they charge only Tk 3,500 from general ward patients and Tk 5,000 from patients who live in cabins for a 10-day treatment course, making it a losing concern. The owner considers the establishment a social work, he added.

Usually reputed drug addiction treatment clinics and rehabilitation centres charge Tk 15,000 to Tk 30,000 from a patient while the substandard ones charge Tk 5,000 to Tk 8,000, to lure in clients.

Treatment centres supposedly treat addicts helping them to recover from the addiction while rehabilitation centres claim to rehabilitate former addicts to normal life after curing them of the addiction, while some centres masquerade as the providers of both services.

RISKY MALTREATMENT
A number of drug addicts said substandard treatment centres inject high doses of sedatives into the patients to keep them sedated sometimes even for three days. "As soon as the effect of the sedative wears off in six hours the clinic staff push injections again," said Suruj Miah, a heroin addict.

He also said Mukta Chhaya Drug Addiction Treatment Centre at Kachukhet in the capital where he had undergone treatment, used to administer 'bath therapy' -- meaning keeping patients 'cool' through repeated baths. Such a 'therapy' often causes patients to catch cold. Patients are often also forced to massage each others bodies in the treatment centres when someone's body cramp starts due to withdrawal from the drug. "Often the clinic staff beat patients if any of them behaves rowdily," Suruj told The Daily Star.

After three days of such treatments if a patient still behaves violently due to the withdrawals, the treatment centres often keep the person confined in a separate room and beat him or her mercilessly.

The Daily Star investigation revealed that many treatment centres are visited by doctors only twice or thrice a week. General employees, having no training, run the treatment centres during the

Kenya opposition calls for more rallies

AP, Nairobi

rest of the week.

Lured by the advertisements of the unsupervised treatment centres, which are usually full of promises and descriptions of mostly non-existent services, the guardians and friends of the addicts put their loved ones under their care. But, a majority of the patients treated by the so-called rehab centres and treatment clinics relapse into the addiction after a short while, experts said adding that the practices of such clinics are dangerous to the society.

They said substandard treatment of drug addiction might even cause death.

Prof MA Firoz, director of the Institute of Mental Health and Hospital, said a full-time psychiatrist is a must in all treatment centres, but most do not have any. He said there are only 40 active psychiatrists in the capital.

He said to rehabilitate a patient the rehab centres must also have job trainers.

"It takes 7 to 15 days to treat an addict, but due to wrong treatment methods many have to undergo a longer period of treatment," he added. "Wrong treatment also increases the risk of death," Prof Firoz went on.

He also said there are allegations that in a bid to earn quick cash many so-called treatment centres have been supplying heroin to the patients for a long time to keep the patients admitted to the centres sometimes for three months to a year in an effort to hike up the bill.

A doctor of a reputed treatment and rehabilitation centre in the city's Panthapath area said keeping a patient virtually unconscious for three days by injecting high doses of sedatives may cause death in cases of patients with high blood pressure, and kidney or liver problems.

He said his clinic first diagnoses the level of a patient's addiction through a urine test and then they administer medicines. "We slowly decrease the volume of the dose," he added requesting anonymity. He said they also test the patients for diabetes, blood pressure, and liver and kidney complications, and keep the patients under round the clock observation during the first 24 hours of their admissions.

The physician also said psychotherapy, entertainment facilities, and proper counselling are also must for complete treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts. He however said it requires around two months to complete treatment and rehabilitation of an addict.

A physician at government-run Tejgaon Drug Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre said keeping a person unconscious by injecting sedatives is not an acceptable method of treatment at all. He said important organs of a patient may collapse and the patient may even die if sedated without any diagnosis.

GOVT'S INDIFFERENCE
In recent years, the capital witnessed mushrooming of substandard drug addiction treatment clinics and rehabilitation centres without any government licence, regulation, or supervision.

A recent survey by the Department of Narcotics Control reveals that there are 115 treatment and rehab centres in the capital. DNC officials said apart from the capital, such substandard clinics also sprouted in large numbers in Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Comilla, Gazipur, Jessor, Sathkhira, Bogra, Mymensingh, Barisal, Sylhet, Naogaon and in many other small towns.

Almost none of them have the 80 square feet floor space per patient required by the government guidelines issued in July 2005, albeit being much delayed.

The guidelines stipulate that a rehab centre must have a full-time psychiatrist, at least one full-time physician with special training on drug addiction treatment, two trained nurses, and a janitor for every 10 admitted patients. Centres having 10 beds are required to obtain licences from the government in exchange for a fee of Tk 20,000, centres with more than 10 but less than 21 beds are required to pay Tk 30,000 for the license, and centres with 21 beds or more are required to pay Tk 50,000 for the license, while yearly renewal fee of the licenses is 50 percent of the license fee itself.

License fee for counselling centres, which only provide out patient treatment, is stipulated at Tk 10,000.

According to the guidelines, a DNC inspector is supposed to inspect a rehab centre following the receipt of any application for a license, but in most cases the inspections never take place.

There are four government run drug addict treatment clinics and rehabilitation centres in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna. The centre in Dhaka is a 40-bed hospital while the rest have five beds each.

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Niko graft cases

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After the files are seized, the investigation officers (IOs) will review them to determine as to whose statements will be required to record.

The IOs, ACC deputy directors Shabbir Hasan and Shahidur Rahman, are also expected to make spot visits in connection with the high-profile cases, filed amid the ongoing purge in the interim period.

5.70 lakh

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metric tons at the cost of Tk 96.8 lakh.

PRICES SITUATION

Wholesalers yesterday said the price of Swarna, a variety imported from India, marked the largest decrease. It came down from Tk 1,250 per maund Thursday to Tk 1,100 per maund yesterday.

But he did not say anything

The price of Guti, another variety, came down to Tk 1,100 from Tk 1,150 per maund while IRII to Tk 1,080 from Tk 1,120. Prices of Nazirshai and Miniket fell by up to Tk 50 per maund.

Wholesalers said they were forced to sell at lower prices because of dwindling number of customers even though price was still high at the rice mills.

In the retail markets, the price of coarse rice dropped by at least Tk 2 per kilogram. Customers continued avoiding the retail outlets even after prices began to come down Saturday.

Retailers said most of the middle income group people have built up a large stock after prices soared every day over the last week.

Some people told The Daily Star yesterday that they would wait for the prices to come down after open market sale (OMS) starts on January 9.

Queues at the BDR-run fair price shops were relatively short yesterday as many people have decided to wait for the OMS, said sources.

Flour prices went up by Tk 2 per kilogram as packs of two kilogram were selling at Tk 86-88, up from Tk 82-84 two days ago.

Recruitment reforms

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by the law ministry, which will send it to the chief adviser and the president for approval.

According to the draft, pass course graduates won't be able to apply, marks would be deducted in the preliminary test for wrong answers, candidates must obtain 50 percent marks on average in written test, and editors of national dailies may be included in the viva committee.

Thousands of jobseekers have been disappointed hearing the news that the quota would remain.

"It's my fate I've not come from a privileged family, for example, a freedom fighter's family. Many candidates, whose educational background is much poorer than mine, have been recruited through the 24th and 25th BCS exams thanks to quota," said Utpal Kumar Das who faced four viva voce.

PSC members said abolishing or curtailing the privilege is the responsibility of the establishment ministry, they can only recommend changes.

Previously, the PSC had made repeated recommendations to that end, but the ministry under political governments had no heed to it, they added.

The immediate past PSC chairman Prof TAHMIDA Begum placed recommendations for cancelling quota system before President Iajuddin Ahmed while submitting the annual report in 2003.

Incumbent Chairman Saadat Hossain said they set a set of recommendations to the establishment ministry to bring back transparency in the commission and in the examination system.

However, incumbents and former PSC members, academics and candidates had suggested that the government immediately abolished the quota system, which apparently allows a bunch of "unskilled" people to enter public service.

PSC member M Abdur Rauf said quota should be curtailed for the greater interest of the nation. "At least 75 percent of places should be on merit, while the rest may be distributed on the basis of gender, ethnic and religious identity."

Former PSC member Prof Dr Mohabbat Khan blamed the quota system for the present "miserable condition" in the civil service.

"The public are now suffering for unskilled or semi-skilled civil service officers. The people will be deprived of government services if the system is not completely removed," he said.

"I think cent percent of the candidates should be recruited on merit. When I was with the PSC during 1999-2004, we had suggested that the government cut the quota to 25 percent."

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al-Qaeda urges

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website usually used by Islamists.

Bush is due to arrive in Israel on Wednesday, the first US president to visit the Jewish state in nine years, in a bid to hasten the search for peace with the Palestinians. He is also due to visit the West Bank as well as five Arab states.

The message strongly criticises Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak and Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah who will welcome Bush to their countries as part of this eight-day tour of the region.

It also contains a renewed attack on Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf over his support for the United States.

Gadaffi recites verses from the Muslim holy book, the Koran, and reviews the "victories" of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Maghreb.

He ends the message with prayers for "the victory of Muslims over the Jews, the Americans and their allies."

Gadaffi -- also known Azzam al-Amriki and Azzam the American -- is a key al-Qaeda propagandist and is originally from California.

He has appeared in several videotapes for al-Qaeda since 2004, praising the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington and threatening new terrorist onslaughts.

In October 2006, he became the first person to be charged in the United States with treason since the World War II era. The charge carries a minimum of five years in prison on conviction and a maximum penalty of death.

Gadaffi, long believed to be in Pakistan, has a one million dollar reward posted for his capture, and he appears along with bin Laden on a US "Wanted" poster featuring 26 "faces of global terrorism."

Gadaffi was born in 1978 in southern California, the son of a 1960s Jewish rock musician who later converted to Christianity and became a rural goat farmer.

His conversion to Islam came after he attended the Islamic Centre of Orange County, California, where he is believed to have come under the influence of two foreign-born Islamists.

Gadaffi is believed to have left California for Karachi in 1998 and gradually lost contact with relatives in the United States.

The treatment is for saving life and there must be no condition in this regard," he added.

"Earlier after the grenade attack on August 21, the doctors also prescribed Hasina to go to America once in three months for checkups, but she is being deprived of that treatment," Shafiq said.

Replies to another question of condition for sending her abroad as all the four specialists on gynecology, eye, medicine and ENT, have recommended better medical treatment for the former premier," barrister Shafiq Ahmed, chief counsel to Hasina, said.

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