

## AUTISTIC CHILDREN'S WELFARE FOUNDATION

# Coming to aid of autistic children

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

Autistic Children's Welfare Foundation that started its journey at a three-storey building in the port city in October last year has expanded its activities in the capital on April 11 in an effort to provide support to the autistic children.

Its activities started temporarily at a building of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) at Mirzapole in the port city to help the autistic children lead a normal life amid manifold problems.

The Foundation, a non-profit organisation, is now taking care of 28 autistic children under the supervision of 22 teachers, three parent teachers and two helping hands, sources said.

Success in the endeavour has inspired the organisation to launch its branch at Mirpur-12 in the capital on April 11, said

Foundation Director (Admn) Lt Col Tofael.

While visiting the foundation office at Mirzapole on Thursday, all the teachers and staffs were seen busy in guiding the autistic children on all the floors of the building with patience and tenderness.

Foundation Principal Tahmina Zarin said the autistic children come here with multiple problems like belated development of speaking ability, stereotyped or repetitive use of language, little or no eye contact, lack of interests in relationships, persistent preoccupation with parts of objects and inflexible adherence to specific and non-functional routines or habits.

Besides, they usually are habituated to avoiding crowd or interaction that force us to engage one teacher for one child and use separate and rare



Autistic children are being taken care of at the Autistic Children's Welfare Foundation School in the port city.

training equipments and therapy, which are expensive, she said.

"The teachers here are to show patience and serve with motherly love as these children need special care," she said.

Child Specialist Dr Basana Muhuri, a life member of the foundation and mother of an autistic child, said the building is small and congested.

"In fact, more space and further improved atmosphere are required to provide proper support to the autistic children and bring change in their behaviour," she said.

She said number of patients are increasing everyday, but the foundation is not able to provide them treatment properly while some so-called autistic centres are just cashing on the situation and making money in the name of training and rehabilitation.

She said she visits the foundation every Saturday and train the teachers and mothers with her experiences. She said children develop autism genetically while abnormal formation of brain and some other abnormal chem-

ical activities in brain are responsible for this.

She waved aside link of love or care with the development of autism while emphasising specialised training, education and rehabilitation to help such children lead a life like other normal children.

Referring to the service at the foundation, General Secretary Mahbubul Haque Khan said they receive only Tk 56,000 from 28 students as fees a month against the expenditure of around Tk 1.58 lakh.

He said they are unable to accommodate more autistic children here since the foundation runs in a building that we are bound to vacate at any time if CCC wants. "But, we are under pressure to increase number of children and their facilities" he added.

Mahbubul said the Foundation runs on donation on different organisations and individuals. He said it needs its own land, modern equipment, specialised training for the teachers and government patronisation for its smooth functioning.

## Muggers reign in port city again

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Muggers in Chittagong have made a fear-some comeback in the last few days after letup between October 2007 and February 2008, much to the anguish and anger of the city dwellers.

The muggers robbed businessmen, a college student and a journalist in a span of only seven days until Monday. Of the incidents, one was gruesome that shook the entire city and its people in complete horror during the period - the murder of a young madrasa student on April 5 night.

What was most appalling for Chittagong people was the fact that the killing took place in Jamal Khan area under Kotwali Police Station where a patrol team of police is always seen and on that night the on-duty cops did virtually nothing to prevent the mugging leading to the murder or chase the killers.

"I have lost my beloved brother. I know I won't get him back. But what is most shocking for us to bear with is the total indifference and lack of aptness of the on-duty policemen on that night," said Enamul Hoque, elder brother of slain madrasa student Ziaul Hoque Jewel.

"Should the patrol team act sensibly, the murder of my brother might not be happened," he said.

Witnesses said Jewel was returning his home at Shaheed Saifuddin Khaled Road adjacent to Jamal Khan with a friend named Saadi from Anderkilla after buying some notes. They both were classmates at Darul Ulum Alliya Madrasa at

Chandanpura.

They got separated at the Jamal Khan Intersection at around 10:30pm. As Jewel approached only few metres, a gang of three muggers on board a CNG auto-rickshaw intercepted him. They snatched his Nokia N73 mobile set. The muggers stabbed Jewel indiscriminately and shot when he tried to resist them.

Hearing a hue and cry, Saadi rushed to the scene only to see his friend lying unconscious. Jewel succumbed to his injuries on the way to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

"I just can't believe that Jewel would no more be alive in a stroke of few seconds," Saadi burst into tears while reacting to the murder of his close friend.

Police could not arrest any of the killers until filing of this story on Monday afternoon.

Ataul Hakim, former president of Chittagong Press Club (CPC), was fortunate enough to be unharmed, albeit he was robbed of cash and kind at broad day light on April 3.

A gang of four muggers intercepted his rickshaw while he was returning to his home at Nasirabad from the CPC, in front of a refuelling station near District SP Office at Nasirabad Road at around 1:30pm.

"One of the muggers identified himself as top-notch Islami Chhatra Shibir cadre Sajjad Khan and ordered me to give everything I have. Fearing physical attack I instantly gave them my mobile set and Tk 1,000 but they became angry and asked for more. Then I gave them Tk 4,000 more I had in my another pocket," Hakim said.

Hakim said the office of the district police super is just 15 metres off the mugging spot. He said this incident in fact proves how hapless the innocent city dwellers are.

Lipi Nath, a student of Chittagong College, was another victim of muggers in the busy college road area on April 5 morning. Two muggers in a motorcycle snatched a Nokia N Series mobile set from her, who was on a rickshaw, and ran away. Many pedestrians and commuters saw the incident but none of them came forward.

A gang of four miscreants on March 30 mugged Jewel Rana, a soldier of 24 Infantry Division, at around 8:30pm at Olonkar Intersection under Pahartali Pplice Station. They took away his mobile set, ID card and Tk 16,000 in cash. The joy of the muggers, however, was short-lived this time as on-duty police reacted promptly and arrested all the four miscreants in less than two hours with the booty.

On March 29, businessman Jafar Sadeq came under attack of the muggers at Momin Road in the afternoon. The gang stabbed him before fleeing the scene.

The Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) in September last year detected 14 ringleaders, including four CNG-run auto-rickshaw drivers, and arrested 12 of them. The actions had brought some relief and sense of security among the city dwellers.

But the criminals began to reign in again to rob the sleep of the city dwellers due to the laxity of the law enforcement agencies these days.



Local artistes perform dance at a cultural function marking the Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bengali New Year, at DC Hill on Monday.

## theweekthatwas

### Prof Dil Monowara principal of City College

Prof Dil Monowara Begum took office as the new principal of Chittagong Govt City University College on Sunday.

Prof Dil Monowara is the first female principal of the college.

Before joining as Principal she had been serving as the vice-principal of the college.

Prof Dil Monowara, wife of former Bangladesh Correspondent of Asia Week and former Chittagong bureau chief of Bangladesh Observer Syed Murtaza Ali, started her government service on February 1, 1978.

She was promoted to professor and joined the economics department at Chittagong City College in 2005 and became the vice principal of the college the following year.

### Cop-media relation stressed

Speakers at a meeting emphasised the need for developing better relationship between police and media persons for welfare of the society.

They were addressing a view exchange meeting titled 'Police-media relationship' at Chittagong Circuit House on Thursday.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police in Chittagong Range AKM

Shahidul Hoque was the main speaker at the meeting with Superintendent of Police (SP) Kamrul Hossain in the chair.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (Commissioner) M Akbar Ali, Additional DIG Manjur Kader Khan, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mostafa Kamal spoke at the meeting.

Resident Editor of Prothom Alo Abul Momen, The Kamaphuli Editor Afsar Uddin Chowdhury, Bhorer Kagoj bureau chief Omar Kaiser, Jugantor bureau chief Jasimuddin Chowdhury Sabuj, People's View chief reporter Samir Barua, Prothom Alo Chief Reporter Mamun Abdullah, Chittagong Metropolitan Union of Journalists (CMUJ) General Secretary Md Shahnewaj and New Age Bureau Chief Nurul Alam also participate in the discussion.

The speakers said police and media are dependent on each other in addressing corruption and crimes as well as social injustice.

### Call to try war criminals

Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Sangsad leaders called upon the government to begin the trial of war criminals and their collaborators in special tribunal.

Addressing the executive committee meeting of Coordinated Association of Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Sangsad Chittagong on Tuesday they condemned Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, former parliamentary adviser to prime minister, for

his recent behaviour disregarding the court.

Speakers at the meeting urged the freedom fighters to work for the development of the country imbued with the spirit of liberation war.

Sangsad Wasa unit commander AKM Jainul Abedin, Sonali Bank unit commander Ahmad Chhafa, Railway unit commander Dhilon Kanti Dhar,

Coordinated Association commander Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, TSP commander Ishak Ali, T&T Md Abul Bashar, Osmany Glass Factory commander Md MA Malek, Education unit commander Md Abdul Khalek Mazumder, Railway finance secretary Md Borhan Uddin, Coordinated Association addressed among others.

### Workshop on social arbitration held

Speakers at a workshop here on Wednesday said social arbitration might be an effective alternative to the

traditional lengthy judicial process to settle disputes over enmity or family feud.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) organised the workshop titled 'Salish and Family Law' at its office.

Prof Christine Richardson, Advocate Khaleda Jahan Siddika and Advocate AFM Salah Uddin moderated the work-

shop.

Students of Chittagong University law department participated in the workshop.

Speakers at the workshop thoroughly discussed and shared basic ideas and different aspects of traditional law including marriage, family law, divorce, dowry and child-marriage.

Engineer Nasrin Rahim presented the keynote paper at the seminar where Prof Shucharu Bikash Barua of City College and DoE Deputy Director Ashrafuzzaman were the main speakers.

### Congenial atmosphere in educational instts underscored

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) acting Mayor M Manjur Alam underscored the need for establishing congenial atmosphere in educational institutions to ensure quality education.

He was addressing as the chief guest the annual prize giving ceremony of Alkaran Sultan Ahmad City Corporation Girls High School on Saturday.

CCC Chief Education Officer Prof Raushan Akhter Hanif, school governing body vice president Md Yusuf, local ward commissioner Jahirul Alam Dobhashi, headmistress Tamia Khatun Nesa spoke with CCC Chief Executive Officer AKM Lhailul Alam in the chair.

Manjur said CCC has taken plans to develop and extend facilities at the educational institutions to provide students with better academic atmosphere and arrangements for sports, physical exercise and other extra curricular activities.



Participants pay homage to the late journalist and researcher Malik Sobhan at a citizen's condolence meeting at Chittagong Press Club auditorium on Friday.