



Stephen W. Hawking
Stephen Hawking to retire from prestigious post

AP, Cambridge

Cosmologist Stephen Hawking will retire from his prestigious post at Cambridge University next year, but intends to continue his exploration of time and space. Hawking, 66, is Lucasian Professor of Mathematics, a title once held by the great 17th century physicist Isaac Newton. The university said Friday that he would step down at the end of the academic year in September, but would continue working as Emeritus Lucasian Professor of Mathematics.

25 Kurdish rebels killed in Turkey's airstrikes

AP, AFP, BBC ONLINE, Ankara

Turkey's military said Friday that its airstrikes in northern Iraq last week killed 25 Kurdish rebels and wounded many more.

Military spokesman Brig Gen Metin Gurak cited intelligence reports for the casualty figures from the Oct. 17 attacks on Qandil Mountain, an area where Kurdish rebels are said to train and where their leadership is believed to be in hiding.

There was no immediate comment from the rebels, and the figures could not be verified independently.

A further 17 PKK rebels were killed in security operations inside Turkey in the past week, Gen Gurak said.

The Turkish government has intensified its campaign against

the PKK, which has stepped up its attacks in Turkey.

Three weeks ago the separatist group killed 17 soldiers in an attack on a Turkish military outpost on the Iraqi border.

Turkish artillery and air raids into northern Iraq, where the PKK is based, have become more regular events.

The military has staged several cross border air strikes since Kurdish rebels killed about two dozen Turkish soldiers in attacks earlier this month. Turkey also increased pressure on the local Iraqi Kurdish administration to crack down on the group, which carries out attacks from bases in Iraq territory.

Turkish military units on the Iranian border and in the province of Hakkari, bordering both Iran and Iraq, have repelled two

major rebel attacks this week, Gurak said.

He also urged calm after a week of violent protests across the country sparked by allegations that Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan was mistreated in prison. The government has strongly denied the allegations. Ocalan is serving a life sentence on a prison island off Istanbul for leading a separatist war for autonomy in Turkey's southeast.

Police clashed with Kurdish protesters who torched dozens of vehicles and shops, mostly in Istanbul and the Kurdish-dominated southeast, where the rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, have been fighting for self-rule since 1984.

Turkey has carried out several aerial attacks and one major

ground operation against rebel bases across the border with Iraq this year.

Earlier this month, Turkey's parliament also extended by one year the government's mandate to order cross-border military strikes against the PKK in northern Iraq, which has been in effect since October 17, 2007.

The PKK, listed as a terrorist group by Ankara and much of the international community, took up arms for Kurdish self-rule in the southeast in 1984, sparking a conflict that has claimed about 44,000 lives.

Turkish officials estimate about 2,000 PKK rebels are holed up in the mountains of northern Iraq, where they allegedly enjoy free movement and obtain weapons and explosives for attacks in Turkey.



PHOTO: AFP
Iraqi Shia Muslims, supporters of the movement of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, burn an Israeli and US flags whilst waving their own national flag during a demonstration following Juma prayers in Baghdad's Sadr city district yesterday. A top US commander Thursday voiced optimism US troop levels could be cut substantially in western Iraq particularly after provincial elections in the former insurgent stronghold.

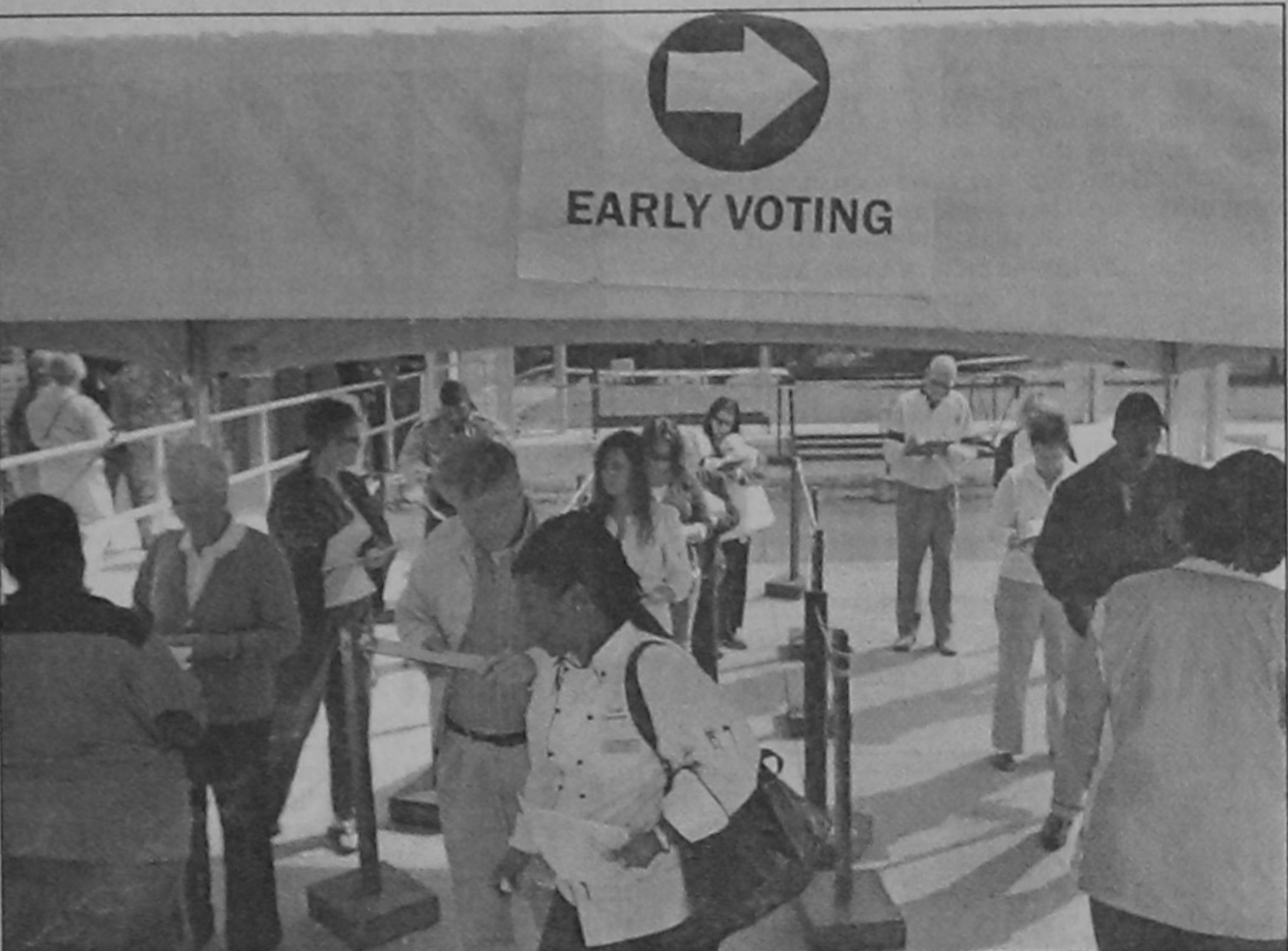


PHOTO: AFP
People wait to cast ballots during early voting on Thursday in Savannah, Georgia. Georgia election officials say early voters have already doubled the number of 2004. As of October 22, some 825,000 had cast their ballots. Georgia has 15 electoral votes.

Black turnout is strong in early voting in South

AP, Charlotte

Blacks are already surging to the polls in parts of the South, according to initial figures from states that encourage early voting a striking though still preliminary sign of how strongly they will turn out nationwide for Barack Obama in his campaign to become the first African-American president.

There have been predictions all year of a record black turnout for Obama. The first actual figures suggest that wasn't just talk.

In North Carolina, blacks make up 31 percent of early voters so far, even though they're just 21 percent of the population and made up only 19 percent of state's overall 2004 vote.

Roughly 36 percent of the early voters are black in Georgia, outpacing their 30 percent proportion of the state's population and their 25 percent share of the 2004 vote.

"No one but the voters can be sure how they voted," said John McCain's campaign officials note that the Obama camp has put much more effort than they have

into early voting. But the numbers are still notable.

Democrats are outvoting the GOP by a margin of 2.5-to-1 in North Carolina, where early voting has been under way for a week. That's roughly double the margin from 2004.

More than 210,000 blacks who are registered as Democrats have cast early ballots in the Tar Heel State compared with roughly 174,000 registered Republicans overall. Four years ago, the number of GOP early and absentee voters was more than double that of black Democrats.

"It's a sign about how energised African-Americans are about this election," says David Bositis, who tracks black voting trends at the Washington-based Joint Centre for Political and Economic Studies.

In Louisiana, more than 31 percent of the early voters are black, and Democrats are topping Republicans nearly 2-to-1. In the crucial battleground state of Florida, nearly 55 percent of early voters are registered Democrats well above their 41 percent share of the electorate in the Sunshine State.

Grandmother may not see Election Day Says Obama

AP, Honolulu

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama says he's not sure his gravely ill grandmother will live to see Election Day.

Obama flew to Hawaii to visit Madelyn Dunham, 85, who helped raise Obama. The Illinois senator said he left the campaign trail with less than two weeks remaining before the election because his grandmother is ill but alert. Her brother has said she recently fell and broke a hip.

"Without going through the details too much, she's gravely ill. We weren't sure and I'm still not sure whether she makes it to Election Day," Obama told ABC's "Good Morning America" in an interview broadcast Friday.

"We're all praying and we hope she does, but one of the things I want to make sure of is I had a chance to sit down with her and talk to her. She's still alert and she's still got all her faculties. And I want to make sure that I don't miss that opportunity," he said.

French lead European love-in for Obama

AFP, Paris

Europeans, particularly the French and Germans, overwhelmingly want Barack Obama to win the US presidential vote next month, an opinion poll said yesterday.

Only a tiny minority would vote for the Republican contender John McCain, said the survey carried out by the Harris Interactive polling institute in Europe's five biggest countries.

Seventy-eight percent of French people interviewed, 72 percent of Germans, 68 percent of the Spanish, 66 percent of Italians and 48 percent of Britons said they would plump for the Democrat Obama on November 4.

McCain would take only one percent of the French vote, five percent in Germany and eleven percent in Britain, said a poll commissioned by France 24 television news channel and the International Herald Tribune newspaper.

"The principal reasons given for

this marked preference for the Democratic candidate are his personality, the values that he represents and his capacity for change from current American policy," said France 24 in a statement.

"In Europe, finding a positive outcome in Iraq and Afghanistan remains the most important priority," it said.

The other election issues that stood out in all the countries surveyed by Harris, which questioned 6,000 people via e-mail, were the economic situation in the United States and global warming.

Across all the populations surveyed, Obama was considered to be the most competent to deal with these issues as well as the most apt for promoting better relations with Europe.

But McCain was perceived as more credible on security questions and on terrorism. In all six countries, a majority of respondents said they thought that having a black US president would have a positive effect on the country.

Mass kidnapping as wave of attacks hits S Russia

AFP, Nazran

More than 10 people have been kidnapped in the volatile province of Ingushetia in southern Russia, a local official said yesterday, as guerrilla attacks by rebels in the region intensify.

"Ten to 15 people were kidnapped last night in a gambling arcade by armed men in masks. They were driven away in their own cars," a local government spokesman told reporters, without giving further details about the incident.

Earlier RIA Novosti news agency quoted a local Interior Ministry official as saying that the kidnapping happened in the town of Ordzhonikidzevskaya and that four police officers were among those taken.

In other apparently unrelated attacks across Russia's restive

North Caucasus region, a soldier and the wife of a local official were killed, while at least 14 Russian officers were injured, Russian news agencies reported Friday.

Valentina Miroshnichenko, wife of the deputy mayor of Ordzhonikidzevskaya, was gunned down in the street by unidentified attackers in a Lada car and "died on her way to hospital," an Interior Ministry official said, Interfax reported.

The soldier died when the military vehicle he was riding in was hit Thursday by a roadside bomb in Chechnya, which has been ravaged by wars between Russian forces and separatist rebels since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"A soldier died from his injuries. Two have been hospitalised,"

an Interior Ministry official was quoted as saying by Interfax news agency.

Eight police officers were injured in other attacks in Chechnya, including one in which a police vehicle came under grenade fire, Interfax reported.

Human rights groups say violence by Islamist fighters and separatist rebels in this mostly Muslim part of southern Russia has reached unprecedented levels since the end of major combat operations in Chechnya several years ago.

In Dagestan, another high-risk Russian province next to Chechnya, four police officers were injured by a bomb blast on Thursday in the city of Khasavyurt, RIA Novosti news agency reported, quoting local police.

Thousands protest killing of Afghan civilians 3 insurgents killed

AFP, AP, Miharlam

Thousands of people took to the streets of eastern Afghanistan yesterday to protest against the killing of 27 civilians by Taliban insurgents.

Witnesses said the victims, some as young as 15, were ordered off a bus by armed gunmen in the troubled Kandahar province on October 14 as they travelled to Iran in search of work.

Survivors told how they were lined up in small groups and shot at the roadside.

A spokesman for the Taliban later claimed responsibility for the killings, saying the men were Afghan security force recruits.

Protesters on Friday chanted "Death to the barbarian Taliban and Americans" as they took to streets in Miharlam, the capital of Laghman province in the east of the country.

"They were innocent civilians

who wanted jobs and were on their way to Iran. They were killed. This is barbaric," protester Muejeb-ul-Rehman told AFP.

Organisers said more than 10,000 people attended the rally to protest against what they called an "un-Islamic" act.

Local officials put the number at around 2,000.

Authorities investigating the deadly attack say they found only 12 bodies, which were flown to the capital, Kabul, on Wednesday by the Afghan army.

These bodies were later driven to Miharlam to be handed over to families.

Meanwhile, the US-led coalition says its troops have killed three insurgents and detained four others during a raid in eastern Afghanistan.

The coalition says in a statement they killed the insurgents after a firefight in Paktika province on Thursday.



PHOTO: AFP
(From L to R) Chinese President Hu Jintao, India's Prime minister Manmohan Singh, French and current EU President Nicolas Sarkozy, Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and Pakistan Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilliani lead the group of head of states before a group photo of the 7th Asia-Europe Meeting on Friday in Beijing.

Nato warships ready to tackle piracy off Somalia

AFP, Brussels

Nato warships are in place off the Somali coast to tackle rampant piracy in the waters, and are ready to escort UN aid, vessels under threat, a spokesman for the alliance's naval command said Friday.

"The boats are in the area. They have started their deterrent role," a spokesman at Nato's naval command in Naples, Italy said by telephone, adding that the three vessels "would escort UN ships on request".

The ships -- an Italian destroyer and British and Greek frigates which form Nato's operation Allied Provider -- "may use force" under their rules of engagement and in line with international law, a statement said.

They will help escort UN World Food Programme (WFP) food shipments, whose cargo is a tempting target for pirates, until the European Union can launch its own operation, probably in December.

The WFP ships 30,000-35,000 tonnes of aid into Somalia each month.



PHOTO: AFP
Ground crew members help US space tourist Richard Garriott shortly after the landing of the Russian Soyuz space capsule not far from the Kazakh town of Arkalyk, in northern Kazakhstan, some 300km from the capital Astana on Friday.

Astronauts land safely

AP, Moscow

A Soyuz capsule carrying an American and two Russians touched down on target in Kazakhstan on Friday after a descent from the international space station, safely delivering the first two men to follow their fathers into space.

The Soyuz TMA-12 capsule landed at 9:37 am local time,

about 55 miles north of Arkalyk in north-central Kazakhstan, Russian Mission Control spokesman Valery Lyndin told The Associated Press.

Search and recovery crews buzzed in on Mi-8 helicopters and extracted Richard Garriott, Sergei Volkov and Oleg Kononenko from the capsule, which landed on its side on the brushy surface under a clear sky.

Shas rejects joining new Israeli govt

AP, Jerusalem

An ultra-Orthodox party announced yesterday it will not join a new coalition government being formed by prime minister-designate Tzipi Livni, making it more likely Israel will soon hold national elections.

Eli Yishai, leader of the Shas Party, said Livni did not agree to his party's demands for the allocation of more funds to poor Israelis and for a commitment that parts of Jerusalem will not be ceded to the Palestinians.

"Our decision is not to join because our demands were not met," he said.

A Shas statement said the rabbis who control the party, known as the Council of Torah Sages, decided that Shas "will not be able to join the government under these conditions."

Elections would throw Israel's political system into disarray and likely freeze the peace talks Israel is holding with the Palestinians and with Syria.

Current polls show that the likely winner would be the hardline

Likud Party, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu.

Livni replaced the outgoing prime minister, Ehud Olmert, as head of Israel's ruling party last month and is trying to cobble together a new government. Shas, with 12 seats in Israel's 120-seat legislature, would be a key acquisition and give her a majority in parliament alongside her other coalition partners.

If Shas sticks to its refusal, Livni will be left with two options: trying to form a slim coalition with the help of smaller ultra-Orthodox and dovish parties or calling early elections this spring.

Livni said Thursday that if she did not have a new coalition government by Sunday she would call elections. In response to the Shas announcement, Livni spokesman Gil Messing said Friday only that her ultimatum "remained true today."

Shas has opposed any talks on the future of Jerusalem as part of Israel's negotiations with the Palestinians, who want the eastern part of the city as the capital of their future state.

Autism in Bangladesh - Annual Workshop 2008

Date and Time : 18 and 19 Nov 2008 (09:30 - 14:30Hrs)

Venue: RAOVA Club, Old Dohs, Mohakhali, Dhaka

Organised by :
AUTISTIC CHILDREN'S WELFARE FOUNDATION, BANGLADESH

H#74, L#3, Block#E, Mirpur-12, Kalshi, Dhaka-1216

Autistic Children's Welfare Foundation, Bangladesh (ACWFB) is organizing a workshop for creating social awareness and training for parents and professionals/trainers/carers on Autism and strategies to overcome the every day challenges faced on 18 and 19 Nov 2008. The workshop will also focus on bringing up, schooling and teaching and finally highlight how adults are to be rehabilitated in the main stream society.

The workshop shall address following issues and will benefit parents, professionals, trainers and carers:

- Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder • Prognosis and Intervention Procedure- Prognosis and Various teaching /intervention procedures in Autism • Independent Daily Leaving
- Developing Communication and Sensory Issues.
- Socialization and Challenging Behaviours • Family Support : Professional Vs. Personal
- How to Support Adults with ASD /AS/ HFA
- Related Issues in Autism
- Food and other supplement including Biomedical Intervention • Autism and Epilepsy
- Teaching Academics - Challenges for parents and available facilities in Bangladesh.
- Prospects and Procedure to rehabilitate Autism affected Adults in Bangladesh

Attendance : Max 250 Parents, trainers, carers and Professionals as first come first serve basis.
Registration : Tk 1000.00 (One Thousand) only for 2 days.

For more information call: 01914403331/4 E-mail: acwfbddhaka@gmail.com

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