

15 lakh cases await trial in lower courts

392 posts of judges vacant for over 7 years

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

A total of 392 posts of the lower court judges have been lying vacant for more than seven years affecting a number of people seeking justice across the country.

Sources said over 15 lakh cases have been pending with the lower courts across the country, while some three lakh with the High Court Division of the Supreme Court.

Law ministry sources, however, said a total of 1,146 judges are now discharging judicial functions in the lower courts and recruitments of 207 new assistant judges are now under process.

Out of the total vacant posts, 320 are of the assistant and senior assistant judges and the rests are of the higher tiers of judges -- joint, additional and district judges, according to the sources.

An official concerned said all the vacant posts of judges could not be filled up at a time, as appointments of the judicial officials are made at only the entry level in the posts of the assistant judges. Vacancies in other posts are filled up by promotion.

The process of the appointments of 207 new judges was started in November in 2008 when the number of vacant posts of the assistant judges was the same, he added.

The official further said that most of the judges are functioning at those kinds of courts where the number of pending cases is more.

Sources said the vacancies of the judicial

posts have been created due to several reasons, including non-employment of judges during the regime of the BNP-led government, and separation of the magistracy.

The executive magistrates earlier discharging judicial functions were absorbed in the administrative posts after the separation of the magistracy through separation of the judiciary from the executive, sources added.

Besides, some of the judges either left the jobs or have been transferred to other services on deputation creating vacancies in judiciary.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday told The Daily Star that the government has been trying its best to fill up the vacancies in the judicial posts.

We are trying to find out the reasons causing the vacancies in the lower judiciary, he said, adding that the government is serious so that the litigants do not face any trouble in getting justice.

Some new assistant judges will be appointed through the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) for quick disposal of the pending cases.

Meanwhile, JSC sources said the commission has already selected 926 candidates out of total 2,153 through a preliminary test. The selected candidates are now sitting for a written test of total 1,000 marks and the recruitment process will be completed within three months.

In May last year, the government appointed 394 assistant judges in courts across the country following separation of the judiciary.

Bangladesh team to join Bali confce on refugee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Special envoy of Indonesian government TM Hamzah Thayeb called on State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hasan Mahmud at the foreign ministry in the city yesterday.

They discussed different issues, including Rohingya refugee, Bali conference, climate change, economic recession and issues of bilateral interests.

The envoy informed the minister that an international conference on refugee would be held in Bali on April 14 and 15. He also invited the state minister to participate in the conference.

Hasan informed the envoy that a delegation from Bangladesh will participate in the conference.

The minister said, "Our relations with Indonesia, the world's biggest Muslim country, are very close and friendly. The two countries assist and cooperate with each other in different multilateral and international issues. We will take effective steps to strengthen the relations."

Fred Foundation CEO due today

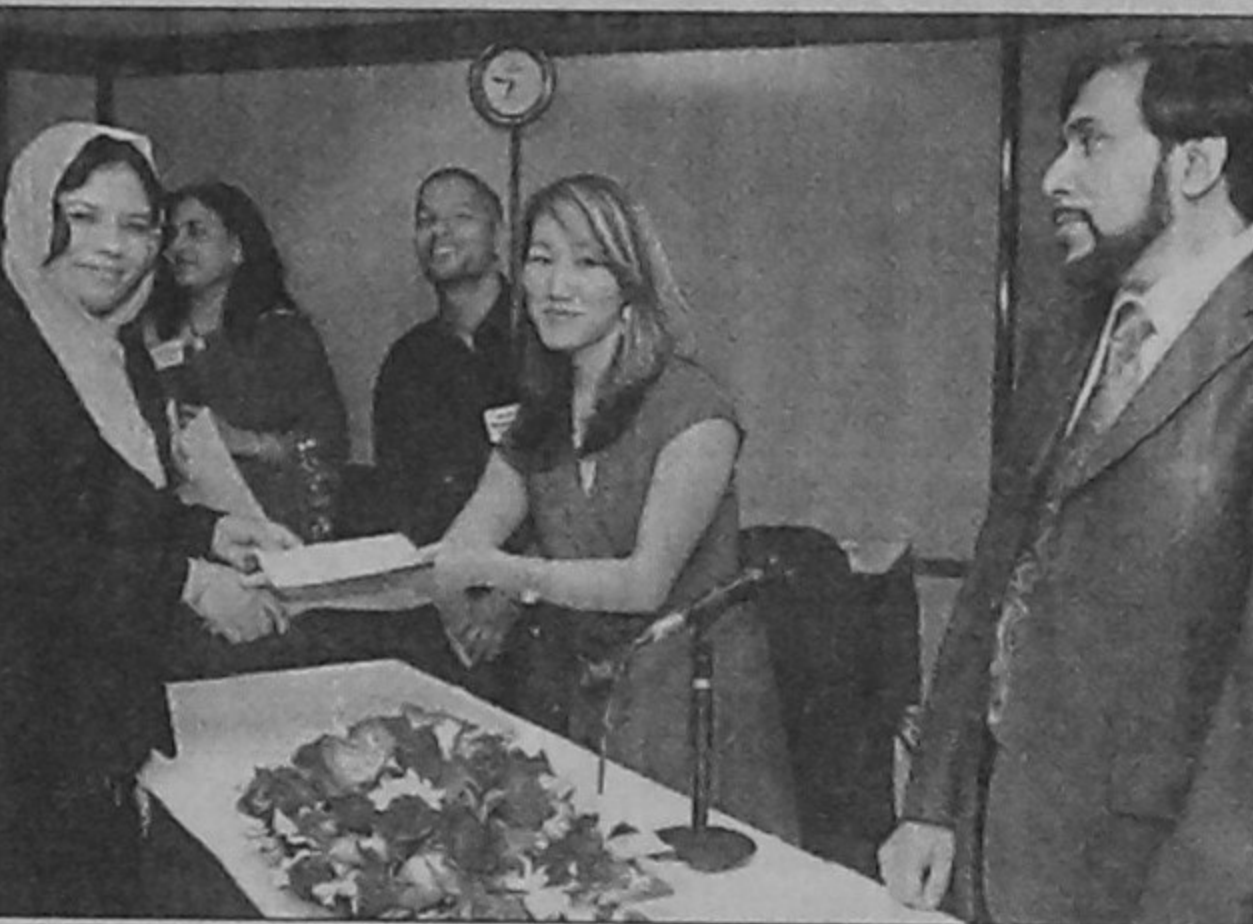
METRO DESK



Brian Doolan, the chief executive officer of the Fred Hollows Foundation, will arrive in Bangladesh today, says a press release.

During his four-day visit, he will meet Prof Syed Modasser Ali, advisor to the Prime Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Prof Deen Mohammad, Line Director National Eye Care and Director of National Institute of Ophthalmology.

The Fred Hollows Foundation is an Australia-based international NGO that aims to assist the government in providing effective and affordable eye care services.



Tanim Laila of Grameenphone receives certificate from Assistant Country Director of UNDP Young Hong at the certificate giving ceremony of a training course on 'Non-profit leadership: Maximising impact' in the city on Tuesday. United Nations-mandated University for Peace and the Institute of Hazrat Mohammad (SAW) jointly organised the two-day course.

'Shortage of workers hampers healthcare'

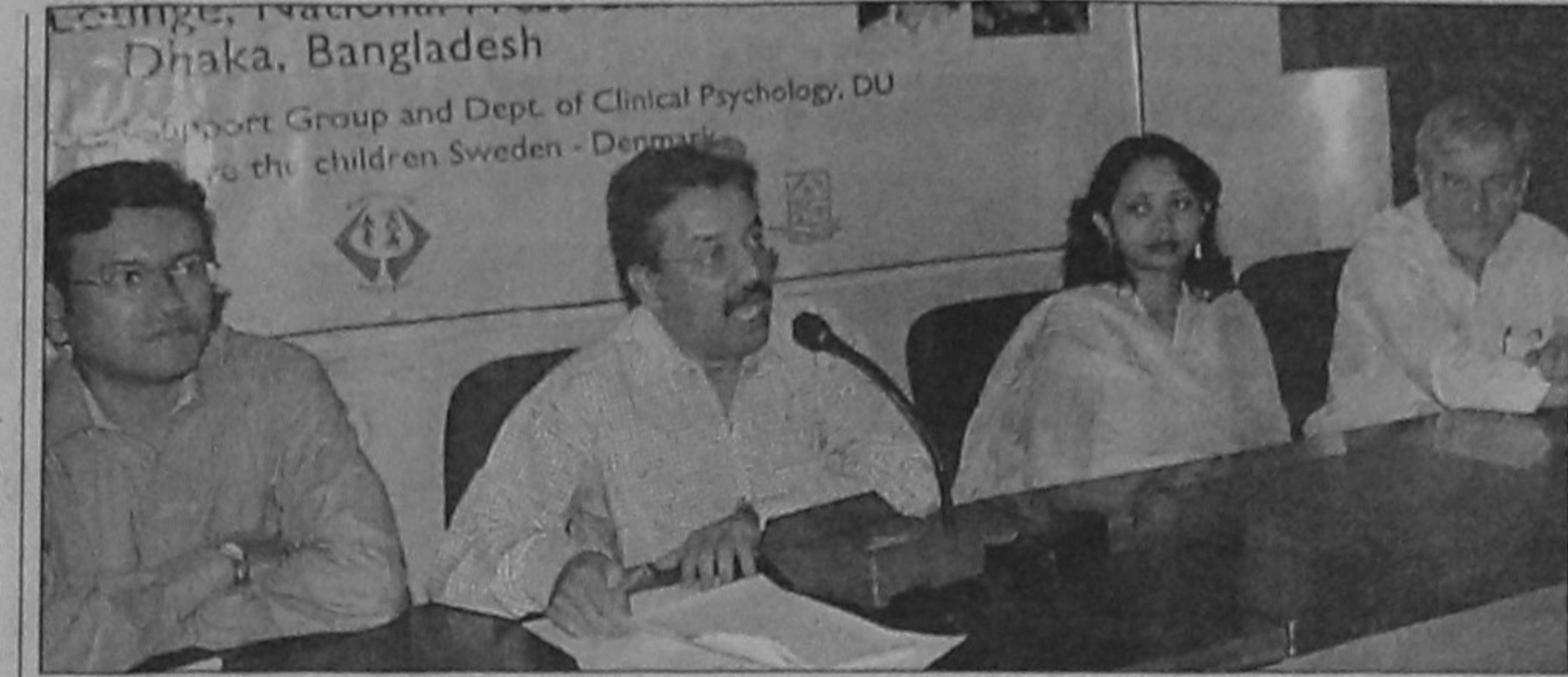
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lack of health and family planning workforce hinders proper health and family planning support to the people, speakers at a programme said yesterday.

It is important to recruit about 10,000 more Family Welfare Assistants to motivate couples and provide them with support for family planning and reproductive health, said the speakers, adding that some 600 posts of doctors are vacant now which should also be filled immediately.

They were speaking at the launching ceremony of the National Communication Strategy for Family Planning (FP) and Reproductive Health (RH) at a city hotel.

The Directorate of Family Planning in association with the UNFPA developed and



Shamsul Alam speaks at a discussion at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is Kamal UA Chowdhury and on his left are Sabrina Karim and Niels Bentsen.

Number of people with mental problems on rise

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 16 percent people of the total population of the country are suffering from different forms of psychological problems and the number is on the rise, speakers said at a roundtable yesterday.

They underscored the need for raising mass awareness and adopting a holistic approach to address the psychosocial disorders people are suffering from.

The speakers also emphasised the importance of providing the members of the law enforcing agencies with training on psychosocial problems to ensure child rights.

With the support of Save the Children Sweden-Denmark, Psychosocial Support Group (PSG) and Department of Clinical Psychology of Dhaka University jointly organised the roundtable on 'Psychosocial support and its importance in the context of Bangladesh' at the National Press Club in the city.

Niels Bentsen, country representative of Save the Children Sweden-Denmark, delivered the welcome address while Shamsul Alam, programme manager, moderated the roundtable.

The speakers said there

are many barriers to providing psychosocial support and perhaps the biggest are lack of knowledge about the process and people's mindset or stigma towards mental health.

Kamal UA Chowdhury, chairman of clinical psychology department of DU, presented the keynote paper where he made some recommendations, including establishing the 'minimum standard of psychosocial support' in the context of Bangladesh.

Noted psychologist Prof Mehtab Khanam stressed the need for decentralising power to ensure medical services at the doorsteps of the common people.

"We should raise awareness among people about

the importance of seeking help from psychotherapists to heal their mental sufferings. Different government and non-government organisations will have to work together to this end," she said.

Prof ASM Atiqur Rahman said the donor agencies are giving a huge amount in this regard. But, a section of people are looting the fund instead of using it effectively. "All the efforts will go in vain unless we include politicians in the process as they formulate the country's policy," he said.

Much of the cases of mental illness can be solved by using the religious institutions, because people in the country strongly believe in religion, he added.

Jubo League men attack construction firm in Gazipur

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

An office room, a workers' shed and a dredger of a construction firm were damaged when some Jubo League activists of Kaliganj upazila attacked the firm at Baligaon in Kaliganj Sadar yesterday.

The incident also triggered chases and counter-chases between the two rival factions of the youth wing of Awami League.

Police and witnesses said as around 30 to 40 activists led by Jubo League General Secretary Mainul attacked the firm, rival faction led by its Organising Secretary Shah Alam chased the attackers.

On information, Kaliganj police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

The firm owner said they were filling a piece of land with sand in Baligaon area. But the yes-men of Mainul Islam demanded Tk 10 lakh as toll from him.

However, Mainul denied the allegation, saying that the firm was grabbing the land of helpless people in the area.

Locals said the land was being prepared to set up a paper mill of Diganta Group and the firm was assigned to do the work of filling the land.

However, Officer-in-Charge Abdul Awal of Kaliganj Police Station said they did not receive any allegation of land grabbing.



Law Minister Shafique Ahmed addresses a workshop organised by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) at its conference centre at Gulshan in the city yesterday. On his left are BEI President Farooq Sobhan and former adviser to the caretaker government ASM Shahjahan. (Story on Page 1)

Call to ensure rights of persons with disabilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11th National Day for the Persons with Disabilities and the 2nd International Autism Awareness Day was observed in the country yesterday with a call to raise awareness and ensure their rights.

Launching a yearlong programme at a discussion, Minister for Social Welfare Enamul Haq Mustafa Shaheed said, "The government will soon conduct a survey to determine the exact number of the persons with disabilities. Without knowing the exact number, it is not possible to include them in development programmes and empower them."

He also said, "The government will ensure education for the children with disabilities in schools. If any schools do not allow them, the government will take tough action."

Ministry of Social Welfare, National Disability Development Foundation (NDDF), National Forum of Organisation Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) and Department of Social Service

jointly organised the discussion at the Department of Social Service auditorium in the city.

Earlier, they took out a colourful procession from in front of the Bangladesh Betar Bhaban at Agargaon. Persons with disabilities and members of different organisations participated in the rally.

NFOWD Chairman Khandaker Jahurul Alam said currently only four percent of the children with disabilities are going to school. And the remaining cannot attend schools due to lack of the disabled-friendly schools.

Disabled-friendly transport system is also needed to ensure free movement of the persons with disability, he said.

Dr Raunak Hafiz, chairperson and executive director of Autism Welfare Foundation, said early diagnosis of autism is necessary, but most people in our society try to hide their autistic children.

She also called for steps to properly develop the skills of autistic children.

Qamrunnisa Khanam,

secretary to the ministry of social welfare, Shitangshu Sen, director general of the department of social service, Nasima Begum, joint secretary to the ministry, Jawaherul Islam Mamun, president of NFOWD, and Mansur Ahmed Chowdhury, managing director of NDDF, also spoke.

Meanwhile, Action on Disability and Development (ADD), Jatiya Trinamul Pratibodhi Sangstha (NGDO) and National Council for Disabled Women (NCDW) jointly organised the Jatiya Protibondhi Natya Utsab '09 (National Disabled Theatre Festival) at Rabinra Sarobar in Dhanmondi on the occasion.

Inaugurating the festival, Social Welfare Minister Enamul Haq Mustafa Shaheed said the government would take up various programmes to establish the rights of the people with disabilities.

Cultural personality Aly Zaker also spoke at the programme.

A total of 50 persons with disabilities from across the country performed in the theatre festival.

No alternative to two top women leaders

Speakers tell publication ceremony

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a book launching ceremony yesterday said there is no alternative to the two top leaders of the two major parties for strengthening democracy in the country.

They said this at the launching ceremony of the book titled 'Sheikh Hasina: From Leader to Statesperson' written by Syed Borhan Kabir at the National Press Club in the city.

Head of News of ATN Bangla Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul said "minus two formula" was hatched to minus the two top leaders of the country by some unscrupulous people to gain their personal interests.

Naimul Islam Khan, editor of the Amader Shomoy, said the existence of the country would be at stake if the two women leaders are not at its helm.

Hasina is gradually becoming a statesperson from a leader of a party which she showed while taking wise decisions during the BDR mutiny, he added.

Speaking as the chief guest, Adviser to Prime Minister Syed Modasser Ali said Hasina believes in Allah and the power of the people, adding: "She is the leader of the people and they are her power."

The speakers further said that the country needs a statesperson for its development and Hasina is gradually becoming a statesperson.

With Adviser to Prime Minister Prof Alauddin Ahmed in the chair, the programme was also addressed by Shyamol Dutta, editor of the Bhoter Kagoj, Syed Borhan Kabir and BTV Director General Kazi Abu Zafar Siddique.

Exhibition of Indian artists' works begins

Staff Correspondent

An exhibition of art works of 26 Indian artists titled "Distant Window" began at Jhinal Gallery of Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday.

Faculty of Fine Arts and Government Arts and Craft College, Kolkata jointly organised the weeklong exhibition, says a press release.

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique inaugurated the exhibition as the chief guest.

Dean of the Fine Arts faculty Prof Rafiqun Nabi presided over the inaugural ceremony. Artists Quaiyum Chowdhury, poet Belal Chowdhury, principal of Kolkata Government Art and Craft College Kamolakhko Ganguly, artist Dipali Bhattacharjee spoke at the programme.



Chief Whip Abdus Shahid speaks at a meeting at the Residential Model School auditorium in the city on March 31 marking the Independence Day. Daffodil Institute of IT organised the meeting.

Study in Canada advertisement for University of Windsor, listing courses and contact information.

Advertisement for 'কিস্তিতে ফ্যাট' (Fat in installments) with a list of items and prices.

Advertisement for 'ENGINEERS Wanted' by Asset Developments & Holdings Ltd, detailing job requirements and contact info.