

Autism not a barrier

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

A 12-year-old boy was showing his paintings to visitors at an exhibition pleasantly. The visitors were attracted by an overmastering delight in the beauty of his wonderful paintings.

"Abir has recently received an award from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for his paintings," said his mother.

But Abir is not like other boys. He has some problems in communication and socialisation. The physicians term it autism.

"It took long five years to diagnose the problem. My son would improve much if it could be diagnosed earlier," said Abir's mother adding she had to visit many doctors until he was diagnosed with autism.

Autism is a neurological and behavioral problem. The exact cause of autism is still under investigation. However, researches suggest that a combination of factors - genetic and environmental - may account for changes in brain development.

The experts said autism is much more common than most people think. There are over half a million people in the UK with autism - that's around 1 in 100 people.

"Before coming to a school for autistic children, my baby used to go to a normal school. But as she was introvert and did not communicate much with other students, the parents of the school termed my baby mad. The baby somehow heard it and was so upset that she did not want to go to that school anymore. Even when we walked past the school which was nearby our house, she began screaming," said grandmother of Lagna, another autistic child.

"Lagna is now doing very well. She can do her works by herself. She draws beautiful pictures and stands first in her class," said the grandmother.

"Autistic children are not mad. Somehow they have some problems in brain development, that is why they behave not like other



An exhibition of artworks by children with autism held on the Autism Welfare Foundation premises in the city recently on the occasion of the World Autism Awareness Day. PHOTO: STAR

children," said Dr Rowan Hafiz, chairman of Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF).

Early diagnosis and intensive behavioral intervention can have a significant and lasting positive impact on autistic children, she said. "People come to know about autism gradually and taking their children to doctors and specialists, the rate of autism diagnosis has been increased."

While talking to The Daily Star Dr Farzana Islam of Child Development Centre at Dhaka Shishu Hospital said 60 percent of the total children currently coming to this centre are autistic.

Quoting a study conducted jointly by the BPF and the Child Development Centre in the capital, she said there are three autistic patients in every 1000 children.

The centre works on autism diagnosis, management and basis intervention like functional and psychological assessment of children.

"Still I get panicked when I think of those days. I woke up at midnight and found my boy sitting on the Almirah and trying to catch the fan. He was so restless. He broke all the things he got before him and could not talk," said mother of another autistic child, Ador.

The neighbors also were annoyed with

Ador trying to take things from their houses, which he liked. They understand that his behaviour was not normal, but they didn't try to cooperate, said the mother.

But Ador has improved much after getting admitted to the school of Autism Welfare Foundation where special care is taken for autistic children. They are encouraged to do creative works what they like.

But unfortunately such schools are limited to the capital. Parents having autistic children and living outside Dhaka also need some supports for their children's upbringing, and inclusive education system, said the mother.

Set up cooperatives for marketing agriculture produces: PM

UNB, Dhaka

The government has given great importance to introducing 'cooperative ventures' for marketing the agricultural produce of rural areas, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday.

"Marketing of a product is very much important. You've to set up cooperatives across the country and give the responsibility of marketing to them. This will ensure fair price to the farmers for their produce," she said addressing the Bangladesh Krishak League leaders at her official residence Gonobhaban.

The Krishak League leaders led by its President Dr Mirza Abdul Jalil and General Secretary Motahar Hossain Molla met the PM on the occasion of the founding anniversary of the organisation.

Hasina said her government would do everything for the welfare of farm-

ers and agriculture, as Awami League (AL) is a pro-agriculture and pro-farmer political party.

"AL is a party of farmers. When this party is in power it means the farmers will get highest support and benefit from the administration."

She said her government wants to make the country self-reliant in food and is working hard in that direction.

"But the BNP-led alliance government wanted to make the country food deficit for their personal benefit," Hasina said, adding that here is the difference in policy between the two parties.

She asked the opposition leader why the coarse rice price "shoot up to Tk 45 which was only Tk 10 during my government's tenure from 1996 to 2001. "You have to give an answer to this question," she said indicating the opposition leader.

Hasina said the opposition has tried to increase the rice price but failed due

to timely and effective steps of the government.

"If AL were not in the power this time the price of coarse rice could be Tk 80 per kg," she said.

The PM said her government has been providing subsidy for the farmers in fertiliser, diesel, power and other agriculture inputs, and also introduced 'farmer card' for easy disbursement of subsidy among the real farmers.

"We've thrice reduced the price of fertiliser which was Tk 90 per kg and made it Tk 22 at present."

She said: "The previous governments of Zia, Ershad and Khaleda Zia never took such pro-agriculture initiatives before."

She blamed the other governments who were in power for more than 29 years for the present condition of the country.

Hasina said her government is working for the socio-economic devel-

opment of the country. "As the country is heavily dependent on agriculture, we have put utmost importance in this sector," she said.

She emphasised more research works on agriculture as the country could produce diversified agricultural products. In this regard, she mentioned that during her previous tenure as the prime minister she had allocated Tk 12 crore for the purpose.

Hasina said her government has also given importance to constructing godowns to preserve food grains, especially rice and paddy. This government is also engaged in making the rural economy vibrant that will ultimately help the country.

She asked the Krishak League leaders to work for producing more organic foods, which have huge demand in the foreign markets.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque also spoke on the occasion.

28th BCS exam results after court hearing on 27th exams

PSC chairman tells The Daily Star

WASIM BIN HABIB

The Public Service Commission (PSC) can publish final results of the 28th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations after the hearing on the 27th BCS exams in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court scheduled for April 25.

"We will be able to publish the final results after the hearing," PSC Chairman Dr Saadat Husain said in an interview with The Daily Star recently.

"We have almost completed necessary preparations to publish the results. If the government's appeal is granted in the hearing, we will be free from various restrictions and can go ahead with our work," he said.

Some candidates of the 27th BCS exams, who passed it but were dropped from the list of successful candidates on charges of irregularities, filed a writ petition challenging the PSC's decision.

The 28th BCS exams for 1,720 posts of different cadres were held in 2008.

Dr Saadat, who was appointed as the PSC chief during the tenure of the previous caretaker government, said the 27th BCS exam issue is mainly hampering other activities of the PSC. No corruption or irregularities took place in PSC in the last three years.

He took the helm of the PSC in May 2007 in the wake of widespread corruption and irregularities in the commission, especially question paper leakage.

"There might be some mistakes in the process of various examinations, but there

were no corruption or irregularities in the last three years. No incident of question paper leakage took place during this period. Nobody can say that anyone was given job in exchange for money," Dr Saadat said.

When asked whether there was any deadlock in the commission activities, he said they have published results of 32 examinations of several non-cadre posts under different ministries within three months.

"Yes, it's true that we delayed publishing the results of some examinations, but it's also true that we have published some results within five or six months of the examinations," he said, adding that "We don't want to select any incompetent candidates."

Asked if there is any split among the commission members, he said the commission has 11 units and the number of members is 14. So, one might be unhappy if he/she does not get the charge of a unit initially, but the problem is now over.

He also said the system of the commission is that the members concerned and the chairman take the decisions regarding all issues except the very important ones and BCS exams.

"There are also some decisions, no matter how unpleasant they might be, I take on my own," he added.

Regarding some members' letter containing allegations against him, Dr Saadat said those were not allegations, rather they wrote to him what they felt. However, these problems are over.

Regarding 29th BCS examinations, he said the process is going on smoothly.

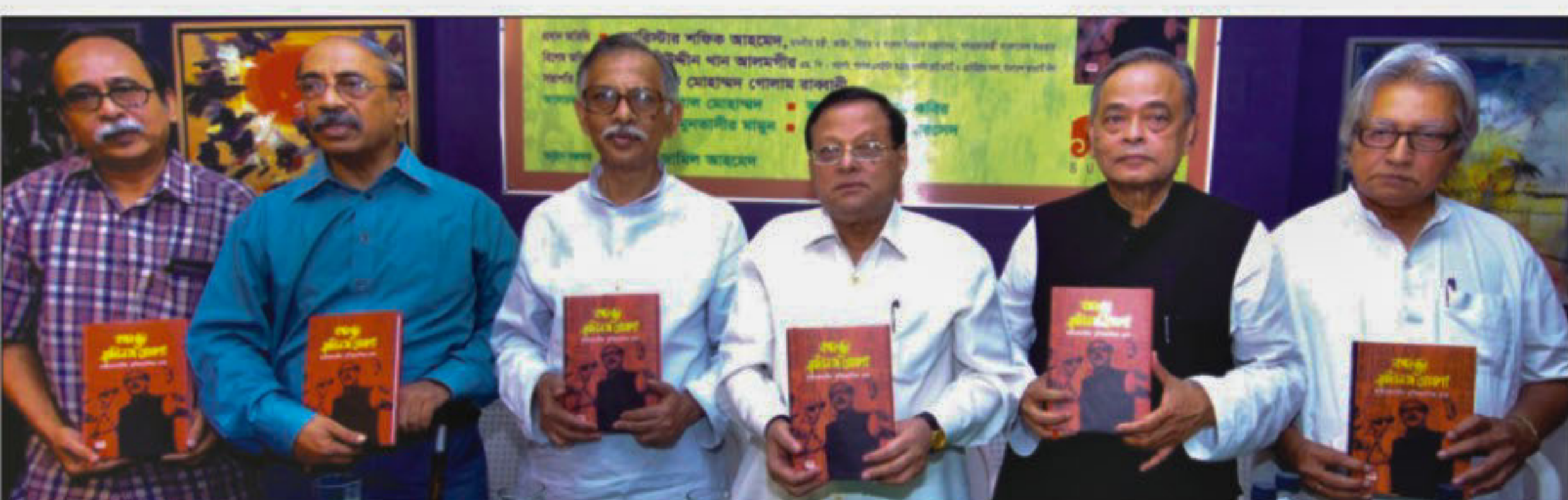


PHOTO: STAR

Guests hold copies of a book titled 'Bangabandhu Swadhinatar Ghoshona: High Courter Oitihashik Rai' at its launching ceremony at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. From left are Prof Muntasir Mamun, journalist Shahriar Kabir, Justice Gholam Rabbani, Law Minister Shafigue Ahmed, Dr Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir and artist Belal Mohammad. (Story on Page 1)

MODEL TINNI MURDER

Hearing on charge framing on May 18

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed May 18 for hearing on charge framing against former Jatiya Party (JP) lawmaker Ghulam Faruq Ovi in connection with a case filed against him for killing model Syeda Tania Mahbub Tinni in November, 2002.

Judge Mizanur Rahman Khan of the Seventh Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after Additional Public Prosecutor Ruhul Amin appealed to the court for setting the date for charge hearing.

On November 25 in 2008, another Dhaka court asked Ovi to appear before it to face trial, but he did not comply. Later, the court issued arrest warrant against Ovi as he went into hiding.

Tinni's body was found floating in the Buriganga on November 11 in 2002, and a case was filed with Keraniganj Police Station. Five people, including Tinni's husband Shafakat Hossain Pial, were arrested in this connection.

'Recognise women's contribution to agriculture sector'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although women constitute 68.1 percent of the labour force in the agriculture sector, they are still out of legal protection.

They should be brought under a comprehensive law and their contribution to the agriculture sector should be duly recognised.

Speakers said this at a press briefing at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. Karmojibi Nari (KN) organised the briefing to advocate for due recognition of women labour and demanding a comprehensive agriculture labour law.

While presenting the keynote, KN Coordinator Abdullah Al Mamun said around 80 per cent of the total labour force does not get protection of law and 48.1 per cent of the total labour force is involved only in agriculture.

Labour Law 2006 mainly deal with the factory workers and employers that constitute only 20 per cent of the total labour force and the law remains almost useless

regarding the labour force involved in informal sector, he said.

The economy of the country is highly depended on the agriculture sector but hardly any law can be found that could regulate agricultural productivity.

The Minimum Wage Ordinance 1984, the only one achievement regarding agriculture-labour could not be implemented yet due to lack of required gazette notification, he said.

Speakers at the programme urged the government to fix a minimum wage for the workers in different sectors and also recommended reviewing the Labour Law 2006.

KN at the briefing announced that they would conduct a mass signature and post card campaign in association with other 20 partner organisations across the 64 districts ahead of the May Day.

KN Director Mahmuda Imam, Coordinator Arifa Akter Anu and Executive Committee Member Umme Hasan Jhalal also spoke.

Rape of domestic help condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) in a statement yesterday condemned the attempt to kill an adolescent domestic help after gang rape in Khulna on Saturday.

The Khulna unit of BMP has kept the girl, aged around 14, under its custody and is providing her with legal aid.

LIGHTING SOLUTIONS

BIJOY SARANI TEJGAON LINK ROAD

Energypac Power Generation Ltd.

79, Shahid Tajuddin Ahmed Sharani, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka-1208
Phone: 9892035, 01713229913 Fax: 880-2-8813262
E-mail: saimur.mnd@energypac.com, sales.mnd@energypac.com

www.ENERGYPAC.com