# Care is the call

FROM PAGE 1

education and shelter, but to be recognised as persons,' she observed.

Sonia said society should pay greater attention to autistic persons. "If society nurtures them, it will get back much in return."

Speaking of the enormous challenge posed by autism, she said, "There is much of it [autism] that we still do not understand. Science itself in the seven decades of research has not found clear answers or explanations for its causes."

Sonia, also chairperson of India's ruling United Progressive Alliance, noted that prevalence of autism is widespread and today it is believed that nearly one person out of every hundred is afflicted with autism.

In India alone, she added, 8 million individuals are estimated to have autism spectrum conditions.

She stressed the need for civil society's participation in sensitising people to autism and in providing quality care and services to those affected.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who addressed the meet as special guest, emphasised establishing the rights of the challenged people in developing countries.

"It is necessary to create social and legal frameworks to mitigate sufferings of the challenged people, protect their rights, and promote their causes," she said adding that in most of the developing countries, the rights of those challenged are rarely recognised, and seldom met.

Hasina pointed out that dangers such as social stigma, misinformation and lack of experts and treatment centres limit the quality of support available to the autistic per-Necessary social and legal

frameworks should be created and infrastructures built

to lessen their sufferings, protect their rights and promote their causes, she contin-

"Challenges faced by families living in poverty are already immeasurable; it is even more challenging when that child has a complex disability such as autism."

The prime minister mentioned that identification of a disability and appropriate interventions within the first year of a child's life are particularly important when it comes to meeting the challenges of neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism.

She called upon all to work in cooperation with one another so that as a region "we can develop scientifically sound practices, which are socially applicable and economically feasible". Arranged on the theme

"Autism Spectrum Disorders and Developmental Disabilities in Bangladesh and South Asia", the conference adopted seven-point Dhaka Declaration at its opening session.

It also appealed to the donors to pay attention to the unmet needs of millions of people affected by autism and financially support the programmes planned to improve care and services.

Global research and advocacy forum Autism Speaks organised the conference in collaboration with the government of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and World Health Organization (WHO).

Bangladesh does not have specific data on those affected by autism but officials estimate that around 150,000 children may be classified as autistic.

Health Minister Dr AFM Ruhal Haque said the government will carry out a special census to determine the number of the autistic per-

FROM PAGE 1

The Daily Star.

about autism.

experts say.

be discovered.

She added that the confer-

Children with autism lack

ence would create awareness

communication and socialis-

ing abilities due to a complex

disability involving a biologi-

cal or organic defect in brain,

prone than girls to have

autism. The exact reason

behind the problem is yet to

improvement is possible with

the country are perceived to

be autistic, which is one per-

cent of the total number of the

other parents at the confer-

not getting proper education

Worker dies

labourers around 9:45am

joined work on the rooftop

of the four-storey building.

wooden frames from the

newly-built pillars. Miraz

pulled a wood piece from a

pillar which was at the edge

of the rooftop and sud-

denly lost control," he said.

ary wall of the adjacent

building before he fell to

nearby hospital and then

shifted to Dhaka Medical

College Hospital. Doctors

around 2:00pm declared

the ground, Zakir added.

His head hit the bound-

Miraz was rushed to a

"We were removing

FROM PAGE 20

Echoing Salma's view,

proper care and attention.

people with disabilities.

Though it cannot be cured,

Around 1.5 lakh children in

Boys are four times more

autism.

At the conference, it was stated that the autistic populace in the world is increasing at a rate ranging from 10% to 17%. The exact number of autistic people is not available, but the experts claim it would be tens of millions.

The inaugural function was addressed, among others, by Sri Lankan first lady Shiranthi Wickramasingha Rajapaksa, Maldives vicepresident's wife Ilham Hussain, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Health Minister AFM Ruhal Haque, Indonesian Health Minister Endang Rahayu Sedyaningsih, Bhutanese Health Minister Lyonpo Zangley Dukpa, Andy Shis of Global Autism Public Health Initiative, Shekhar Saxena of WHO, Aysha Saif Mohammad Hamadan Ali of UAE and Belal Al Nezami of Jordan.

Hasina's daughter Saima Hossain, an autism activist and an organiser of the conference, was also present.

A cultural programme styled "The Land That I Love" was presented by the national cultural team of children with Earlier in the day, Sonia

Gandhi placed wreaths at National Mausoleum at Savar, paying tribute to the independence martyrs. She also placed wreaths at the mural of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi. The Congress chief met

Hasina after inaugurating the conference.

She called on President Zillur Rahman a Bangabhaban after the special ceremony in which she received Bangladesh Freedom Honour on behalf of her slain mother-in-law Indira Gandhi.

> him dead, Badda police said. Zakir said Miraz would not have died had there been protective arrange-

> > ments.

Following the incident, workers stopped the con-

was filed with Badda Police Station in this connection, said Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the

Considering the crisis of sugar in the local market, the monitoring team, however, yesterday gave permission to the three traders to sell those in local market at government fixed price.

between local sugar traders and district administration yesterday afternoon with Additional Deputy Commissioner Md Shah Alam in the chair.

by Thakurgaon Sugar Mills

He bought the delivery order (DO) from that Dhakabased trader and lifted 146

justice before the court after

The court, however, fixed September 25 for trial of the case. The court also summoned complainant of the case to appear before it on that date to give his statement.

Earlier on April 13, another Dhaka court granted bail to the sub-inspector in the case.

Anwarul Haq, an assistant director of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), filed the case on December 19, 2010.

The case statement said SI Rakibul demanded Tk 5 lakh bribe from one Ferdous Ara to arrest five criminals she had brought charges against on

the statement added.

Autism initiatives hold ray of hopes mostly for shortage of special The conference focused on schools.

creating awareness about At present, there are only 22 private schools that oper-"It was relatives, not outate in a limited scale for autissiders, whose unfriendly tic children in the capital, attitude was sometimes so social welfare ministry shocking that I could not hold sources said. back my tears," Salma told

Nevertheless, participants are happy that the problem is recognised by the top level of the government. "This international con-

ference on autism shows government's commitment to the autistic children to ensure their rights to education, treatment and empathy," said Rownak Hafiz, chairman of Autism Welfare Foundation. Rownak, who has been

for 15 years, said these children are not disabled. They are rather able in a different way, and they need proper training, care and treatment. The social welfare ministry runs some 15 one-stop ser-

working with autistic children

vice centres across the country to diagnose and manage autism, but the centres face



**Tawsif** 

Farida Yesmen, executive director of Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association, said, "We need autism diagnosis units at least at the divisional hospitals. Otherwise, the children outside Dhaka will remain undiagnosed and will not get education and treatment." A number of parents said

they suffer badly due to the lengthy process of diagnosing autism and admitting their children to schools. Rokhsana Ahmed, a

ence said their children are shortage of trained man- mother of an autistic child, said she had to go from doctor

to doctor with her son. The child specialists could not even identify the problem.

city

She had to migrate from Chittagong to Dhaka just to admit her boy to a school.

"When I heard about the conference where the world leaders are participating, thought the prime minister [Sheikh Hasina] would announce setting up of a shelter home for the autistic children. My child will have no place to go after my death," she told this correspondent.

One in every 110 children has autism globally, which is higher than the number of the children being affected with HIV/AIDS or Leukemia, according to Autism Speaks. An estimated 1.5 million

people are affected by autism in the US where the prevalence rate is increasing by 10-17 percent every year. BSMMU and Autism

Speaks will hold a three-day workshop starting from Wednesday at BSMMU for the parents, teachers and therapists on how to manage the children with autism.

# Commuters

**FROM PAGE 20** 

Like Saba and Elias, thousands of people had to pass through untold sufferings yesterday, as almost all the city streets were chock-ablock with traffic. A large number of impor-

tant streets and link roads were off-limits to regular traffic for over two hours to ease the movement of motorcades carrying Indian National Congress President Sonia Gandhi, Sri Lanka's First Lady Shiranthi Rajapaksa and Maldives vice president's wife Ilham Hussain along with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and ministers.

The VVIPs were in the city to attend a two-day conference on autism yesterday.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police earlier in a press release said it would regulate traffic on roads from Sonargaon Hotel intersection to Bijay Sarani to Savar yesterday from 9:30am to 10:00am for smooth transport of VVIPs to the National Memorial.

Besides, from 5:00pm to 7:00pm, routes from Ruposhi Bangla Hotel through Kakrail, High Court, Zero Point and Rajuk to Bangabhaban would be restricted. The VVIPs were sched-

uled to leave Bangabhaban for the airport at 7:00pm. "We tried to ease conges-

tions and we did not control

traffic before the VVIPs' arrival. The restriction was imposed only during the VVIP movements," Deputy Commissioner (Traffic) Khandaker Nazmul Akhter of DMP (south) said. If a busy area of the capital is jammed for an hour or

two, the rest of the city feels the impact, said another DMP high official, preferring anonymity. Yesterday, the officer added, the city dwellers on

almost every road experienced long tailbacks, starting with the VVIP movements in the morning. An Uttara resident said he

left house for his Farmgate office at 10:30am.

Stadium at 11:45am. There, he had to spend about 40

From the level crossing to Farmgate his car moved by inches.

Indira visited an inde-He reached his office at pendent Bangladesh on Bangabandhu's invitation on March 17, 1972 and to one hour and 15 minutes. Indian troops from here. The withdrawal of the troops

An East Shewrapara resident said he waited at Shewrapara bus stand for at

tial area in Badda. He got a bus but had to get down on Gulshan Link Road

as it was moving very slowly in heavy traffic. Finally, a walk of around

three kilometres to his destination was the last resort.

# Azharul

Bangladesh lost its best

Rahman and Prime Minister Court.

> brought contempt of court charges against Azharul.

sources at BNP central office AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Gobinda Chandra claimed she did not receive Tagore ordered government officials concerned to take He, however, noted he action against the Jamaat heard about an invitation leader within two weeks and submit a report on the comcard had been couriered to the opposition leader's pliance of the order in 10

> inspector general of police, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and Supreme Court registrar have been made respondents to the rule, petitioner's counsel Manzill Murshid

> He said the bench also issued a rule upon Azharul to explain within two weeks why he should not be punished for contempt of court.

Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain repre-

# Best friend honoured



FROM PAGE 1 mother-in-law took a firm

stance to side with the Bangalee people fighting to establish their own country. "If Indira Gandhi could

have been with us, I know she would have been overwhelmed by the high honour you have bestowed on her," Sonia said.

"There can be no honour higher than the one conferred for the freedom of an oppressed people and the birth of a great nation," she She said she felt humble

and privileged but also proud to accept the award on her mother-in-law's behalf. "I do so with a very full heart and consciousness that the honour is not her alone but also India's, and in a sense yours as

She said she came to Bangladesh not just to visit another country.

"Memories and emotions flood my mind. My husband and I were present at the airport along with Indira Ji amid massive crowds on the historic morning on January 10, 1972, when Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was welcomed in Delhi on his way to his newly free country,' recalled Sonia.

"The amount of excitement and sense of optimism, indeed the knowledge that history was being made, I can never forget," she said. Sonia concluded her

speech by saying, "Joy Bangla, Joy Bangladesh-India friend-

President Zillur Rahman said, "This is a very special and historic occasion for us, an occasion that will certainly be written in golden letters in the history of both of our nations.'

inspired millions of

fight against all oppression and injustice.

"She launched an intense and bold diplomatic move for Bangladesh, despite challenges by some major powers. She also vigorously pursued the Pakistani authority for safe release of Bangabandhu," he

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina described Indira Gandhi as a true and great friend of Bangladesh, its people, and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"On Bangabandhu's request, she withdrew the Indian soldiers within three months of Bangladesh's independence. That was a unique gesture of Mrs Indira

Gandhi," Hasina said. "We are delighted to honour her with our highest award," she said, recalling the eventful days of Bangladesh's

liberation war in 1971. She said Indira Gandhi travelled the world to rally support of the world community for the independence of Bangladesh, and for saving the life of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was then facing capital punishment in a Pakistani jail.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said, "We are here to honour a friend who played the most critical role among all our foreign friends in our nation's journey to statehood. Indira Gandhi changed the course of events in the fateful months of 1971. And with the support she gave to our embattled people, the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh was born. Today

honour Indira Gandhi." The award's teak frame He said Indira Gandhi contains two gold plates on both sides of a folded box. Bangladeshis and Indians to Fifty-year-old teak, preserved

we are here to recognise and

express our gratitude, and to

The plague in honour of late Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi. by the Department of Forest has been used for the frame.

Sreemati Indira Gandhi's name is inscribed on the plate on the left side in Bangla and English while the plate on the right has the signatures of Bangladesh President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The plate on the left mentions that the award was conferred as the highest token of respect and gratitude of the Bangalee nation to Indira Gandhi for her immense contribution to Bangladesh's

War of Independence. A brief audio-visual documentary was played at the 50minute ceremony which showed images of Bangladesh's Liberation War, Indira Gandhi's activities during that period, and some of her moments with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The documentary made the audience

quite emotional. The entrance o Bangabhaban was decorated with pictures depicting historic moments of Indira Gandhi during Bangladesh's struggle for liberation. Both Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Sonia Gandhi saw the pictures with curiosity.

State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Capt (retd) AB Tajul Islam gave the welcome speech. A large number of dignitaries including some foreign guests were present at the ceremony.

Cabinet Secretary M Abdul Aziz read out the citation conferred on Indira Gandhi. The event concluded with

the playing of the national anthem of Bangladesh.

Indira Gandhi was the third prime minister of India for three consecutive terms from 1966 to 1977, and for a fourth term from 1980 until her assassination in 1984.

struction work.

An unnatural death case police station.

## 339 sacks

FROM PAGE 20

A meeting was also held

Shajahan Khan, one of the three traders, informed the meeting that those sacks, which were found in his godown on Sunday, were allotted to a trader in Dhaka

authority.

sacks of sugar to his godown. During discussion, he admitted that such stocking was illegal. "We have been doing this for about 20 years," he added.

# SI indicted

**FROM PAGE 20** 

it read out the charge.

December 3, 2010.

A team of ACC caught the sub-inspector red-handed while taking the bribe at National Heart Foundation Hospital in the city's Mirpur,

### One person made public on December 16, biggest challenge for Indira 1971, termed Indira's his-

FROM PAGE 1

Gandhi, the prime minister of India at the time, to extend her all-out help to Bangladesh's struggle for freedom.

In the very beginning of the Liberation War, Indira on March 27, 1971 expressed her government's full support to Bangladesh soon after the Pakistani invading army embarked on a massacre of the Bangalees. The freedom fighters desperately needed a place to regroup, get armed and launch counter offensive. It was Indira who allowed military training camps to be set up on India's soil for the freedom fighters.

At Indira's directive, the Bangladesh-India border was opened to allow the refugees safe shelter in India as millions escaped from the spectre of genocide being committed by the Pakistani leadership and its army.

Indira herself moved in Indian parliament on March 31, 1971 to adopt a resolution in support of Bangladesh's liberation that said, "This House records its profound conviction that the historic upsurge of the 75 million people of East Bengal [Bangladesh] will triumph. The House wishes to assure them that their struggle and sacrifices will receive the wholehearted sympathy and support of the people of India.'

After the birth of Bangladesh and after the release of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Indira was addressing a public meeting in Delhi on January 10, 1971. "We made three promises to the people of India. First, all those who came to India seeking refuge will return home to Bangladesh. Second, we shall provide all-out support to the Mukti Bahini [freedom fighters] and help the people of Bangladesh. And third, we shall free Sheikh Sahab [Bangabandhu] from jail. We have fulfilled our

three promises," she said. Though it has taken 40 years to pay the highest state honour of Bangladesh to Indira since independence, Mujib himself in the same public meeting expressed his and the nation's gratitude to her, hours before arriving at his newly liberated country.

"Your government, army and people have displayed a level of compassion and assistance which the people of Bangladesh will never forget. Srimati Gandhi has done everything possible all over the world to make sure that I am safe. Personally, I am grateful to her. My seventyfive million people are grateful to her and her government, Bangabandhu told Indira at that meeting. Former chief of the Indian army's eastern com-

mand Lt Gen JFR Jacob who is credited with making Gen Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, Bangladesh's struggle. the then commander of Pakistan army's eastern command, surrender in

Gen Jacob, who drafted the historic "instrument of

### INDIA RECOGNISES

in the recognition of Bangladesh on December 6, 1971 when she told Indian parliament, "I am glad to inform the House that in the light of the existing situation and in response to the repeated requests of the Government of Bangladesh, the Government of India have after the most careful consideration, decided to grant recognition to the people's republic of

Bangladesh. "I'm confident that in future the government and the people of India and Bangladesh, who share common ideals and sacrifices, will forge a relationship based on the principles of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, noninterference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit. Thus working together for freedom and democracy we shall set an example of good neighbourliness which alone can ensure peace, stability and progress in this region. Our

However, between March and December in 1971, she had to manoeuvre through the labyrinth of world politics that was sharply divided in the shadows of the Cold War. Pakistan was an old ally of the USA and China. And India was on the other axis snuggling against the Soviet Union. Naturally, when Bangladesh went to war with Pakistan, it did not get support from the USA and China.

ities invited the BNP chairmatic offensive despite person. having many adversities, which was obviously one of her charismatic roles for Bangladesh's liberation. She played a crucial role not only to get Soviet Union's support for Bangladesh but also to make other important western countries under-

and Chinese support for Pakistan, she had DP Dhar to negotiate a treaty of friendship with the Soviets, thus giving us freedom of action. She led the nation to its greatest military victory, restoring our prestige and raising India's status to that

the programme, among others. The main opposition party welcomed Sonia's visit and hoped this would strengthen the Indo-Bangla stand the cause of relations and help resolve the long-standing disputes between the two neigh-

In the early autumn of 1971, she toured Europe and bours.

was successful in getting

surrender", narrated Indira's role in Bangladesh's liberation in his book, "Surrender at Dacca -- Birth of a Nation": "Indira Gandhi was pragmatic, determined and courageous. She stood up to Nixon [US President Richard Nixon] and the pressures from the United Nations. "To counter American

of a regional superpower. The liberation of Bangladesh was Indira Gandhi's finest hour." DP Dhar was Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's adviser for Bangladesh.

Indira's support culminated

good wishes to Bangladesh.'

Indira launched a diplo-

Leaders of different political parties excluding BNP and its allies were present in

toric role in Bangladesh's liberation her "finest hour".

BANGLADESH

both the United Kingdom and France to break with the United States and block any pro-Pakistan directives in the United Nations Security Council.

BANGLADESH LIBERATED "Dhaka is now a free capital of a free country," Indira informed parliament on December 16 immediately after the surrender of Pakistani occupation forces in Dhaka. "This House and the entire nation rejoice in this historic event. We hail the people of Bangladesh in their hour of triumph. We hail the brave young men and boys of Mukti Bahini for their valour and dedication.'

less had they not been con-

announced withdrawal or

immediately after the war

was unprecedented in the

November 19, 1917 in

Allahabad, India to

Jawaharlal and Kamala

Nehru. She became the

leader of the Congress Party

and prime minister of India

in 1966. After ruling the

country as the prime minis-

slain mother-in-law Indira

from President Zillur

Khaleda was invited to

But her Press Secretary

Maruf Kamal Khan Sohel

any formal invitation.

parliamentary office.

the programme as an MP,

Indira was born on

world history.

friend ever.

FROM PAGE 20

Sheikh Hasina.

17 about Bangladesh.

"It's a victory, but a victory not only of arms but of ideals. The Mukti Bahini could not have fought so daringly but for its passion-He was more than an ate urge for freedom and the hour late for work as he was establishment of a special caught in a jam at a level identity of Bangladesh. Our crossing near the Army own forces could not have been so fearless and relent-

minutes. vinced of their cause," Indira told the House on December

> 12:25pm spending an hour and 55 minutes on road. Usually, it takes 40 minutes

> least half an hour for a bus to go to Bashundhara residen-

### ter for three times, she was

assassinated by two of her own Sikh security guards on FROM PAGE 20 October 31, 1984 and

against Azharul. According to the petition, the Jamaat leader on July 19 at a press conference at his party office said the government scrapped the caretaker government system by exploiting the Supreme

The petitioner also The HC bench of Justice

The Daily Star could not The home secretary, confirm whether the author-

told The Daily Star.

sented the government.