



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina greets an autistic child at the inaugural function of the Fifth World Autism Awareness Day-2012 at Osmani Memorial auditorium in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

PHOTO: PMO

AUTISTIC CHILDREN

'Social stigma obstacle to leading normal life'

PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY, Ctg

Amidst barriers and negligence from the society's part, it is not only the autistic children who suffer but also their parents who often have to refrain from leading a normal life, speakers observed at a meeting in the port city yesterday.

"It is very hard to realise the distress of the parents of autistic children," said Lucky Sen Gupta, mother of an autistic boy named Nil Akash Nath, residing in the city's Sananda Residential Area.

The society has set up an undeclared barrier on the autistic children and neglects these children so much that their parents often find it hard to attend social programmes or lead a normal life with their children, she said.

Lack of service for the autistic children is one problem while it requires around Tk 10,000 every month for maintaining an autistic child, something not possible for middle class families, she added.

Summing up the scenario for autistic children, she said neighbours, relatives, friends and sometimes even family members neglect these children while there is no special service for them at schools with the general teachers having no training to teach these children.

Autistic Children Development and Welfare Center (ACDWC) organised the meeting at Shiplakala Academy in the port city observing the World Autism Awareness Day 2012.

Begum Arjuman, principal of Nispap School, a specialised institute for autistic stu-

dents, said the actual figure of the autistic children in the country is still not clear, making it tough for the organisations working on these children to set up work plan.

According to different sources, one out of every 150 children is autistic, she added.

She also said autistic children need soft and empathetic dealing, getting which they behave like normal children, otherwise they tend to become hyperactive.

The mother of a ten-year-old autistic boy also said she does not take her son everywhere to avoid him from facing negative reaction from people.

Dr Bashona Muhuri, child specialist and mother of an autistic boy, also said good behaviour and service from others can prove helpful for autistic children.

Shamsuddin Sishir, professor of Government Teachers' Training College of Chittagong and also a life time member of ACDWC, said if the teachers did not take special training on the autistic children, it will not be possible to create an autism friendly atmosphere at the schools.

Railways Minister Suranjit Sengupta, while addressing as the chief guest, said the government is sincere about the welfare of the autistic children and is thinking of enacting a law to protect their rights.

ACDWC Advisor Dr Bashona Muhuri chaired the programme while Deputy Director of Social Welfare Department of Chittagong Parveen Mehtab, journalists M Nasirul Haque and Lion Hasina Khan were present as the special guests.

Chief Justice asks judges to change mindset

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Judges have to change their mentality and be supportive of justice seekers to ensure proper and timely judgment, Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain said here yesterday.

The long judicial process causes woes to justice seekers, he said, advising judges, especially the juniors, to be more active and sincere about giving proper services to people.

"The judges should utilise the court period fully. If magistrates and judges practise sitting in court in the afternoon, the majority of cases will be solved in a short time".

He also stressed that it was a must for good relations to exist between the court benches and the lawyers' bar associa-

tions for a quick disposal of cases.

On his first visit to the port city after his appointment as chief justice, Md Muzammel Hossain addressed a meeting at Chittagong District Bar Association yesterday.

Told that there were 25 vacant posts of judges in different Chittagong courts, he assured the audience of his efforts to end the shortage.

"We will mitigate judges' crisis in Chittagong courts as early as possible. But we have many limitations and should manage the problem with the scarce resources we have.

The speakers told the CJ that despite judges' shortage in Chittagong courts, around 70 per cent cases of 2011 had been settled.

Chittagong District Bar Association President Md Delwar Hossain Chowdhury presided over the meeting.

Girl takes her life in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A girl allegedly committed suicide by taking poison over love affairs at Gabtoli in the city yesterday.

The deceased is Juli Rahman, 16, an employee of Satata Jubo Co-operative Society Ltd at Khaleq Plaza in Gabtoli.

Juli's cousin Rumi Akhter said Juli had an affair with Mintu, a shop employee of the plaza for last three months. But they were not in good terms over the last few days.

They engaged into a quarrel over phone around 3:00pm and she took poison few minutes later at her office, said Rumi. Juli died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

Brac University will organise a seminar; Venue: the university indoor games room, Mohakhali; Time: 11:00am.

Human chain

Bangladesh Ganotantrik Sangskritik Jote will form a human chain; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 11:00am.

Dialogue

Shujan Mohammadpur Committee will hold a citizens' dialogue; Venue: Shuchona Community Centre, Mohammadpur; Time:



Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain addresses a meeting at the Chittagong District Bar Association auditorium in Chittagong city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Ershad blasts govt for power, water crises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday criticised the government for countrywide power and water crises.

At a discussion meeting he said the government had been claiming that it had diverted electricity to villages to facilitate irrigation, resulting in the ongoing power outage, but people from his constituency Rangpur had phoned him to say that their crops were drying out for water shortage.

Jatiya Jubo Sanghati, youth front of Jatiya Party, organised the discussion in the capital's Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh to mark its 29th founding anniversary.

The government is claiming to have added electricity to the national grid but where the additional electricity goes, said Ershad, also a key leader of the ruling grand alliance government.

His party is prepared to contest the next general election independently as it has selected 300 candidates to participate in the polls scheduled for early 2014, he added.

Jatiya Party presidium members Kazi Zafar Ahmed and Kazi Firoz Rashid as well as and Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader also spoke in the meeting.

Soldiers dug burrows next to BDR hospital: PW

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A prosecution witness (PW) of the BDR carnage case yesterday provided a gruesome narration about the burial of slain army officers by the mutineers on February 26, 2009.

"I had never seen so many corpses in my life. I fall on the ground, losing consciousness," Sepoy Shahjahan Ahmed said adding when he regained consciousness, he found soldiers digging burrows with spade and shovel next to the BDR hospital.

"I could understand that the soldiers were burrowing into the ground to dump the army officers' bodies," he said.

Shahjahan told the court that earlier on the day some armed Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) soldiers had forcibly taken him on an ambulance at gunpoint to the hospital. He found two trucks and a pickup van loaded with the bodies of army officers when he reached the hospital.

A Metropolitan Session Judge's Court, set up on the playground of Alia Madrasa at Bakshibazar in the city recorded the depositions of six other defunct BDR (now Border Guard Bangladesh) members and cross-examination by defense counsels.

Shahjahan later left the place on an excuse.

In their depositions, they said they saw armed soldiers opening fire and threatening others to make them participate in the carnage.

So far 92 out of over 1200 prosecution witnesses have given depositions before the court.

The court was adjourned till April 4.

A total of 74 people, including 57 top and mid-ranking army officers, were killed in the two-day mayhem that began on the morning on February 25, 2009.

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