

Healthcare frontliners suffered mental health issues during pandemic

Their anxiety, depression spiked, study says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Healthcare professionals working in Covid-19 hospitals suffered from intense mental health problems, as a study found that 21.1 percent physicians and 6 percent allied health professionals suffered from anxiety.

The study, conducted by a team of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), also revealed that 18 percent physicians and 6.8 percent allied health professionals suffered from depression.

This rate of anxiety and depression was much higher than the national mental health survey done in Bangladesh conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health in 2018-2019.

In the national mental health survey, the rate of depression was 6.7 percent and anxiety was 4.5 percent, demonstrating that frontline health professionals had much more anxiety and depression than the general population estimated in pre-Covid era.

Md Shamsul Ahsan Maksud, an associate professor of the department of psychiatry at BSMMU was the principal investigator of the study, titled "Mental health impact of Covid-19 pandemic among front line health care professionals in Bangladesh: A cross sectional study".

"We tried to look due to Covid-19 who developed more depression, anxiety, severe stress reaction (post-traumatic stress disorder) or insomnia (sleep disorder)," said Maksud.

The researchers conducted a survey among 479 doctors, nurses and

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Supporters and activists of BNP gathered in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday, where party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir delivered a speech after forming a human chain demanding the removal of Election Commission officials.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Your child, your responsibility: IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parents have to take the responsibility of monitoring their children to ensure their wellbeing, Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed said at a programme yesterday.

"Families have to be aware where their children go, what they do and who they mingle with. Parents have to take this responsibility," he said at an event at Rab Headquarters in the capital.

The programme was organised marking the celebration of Bangabandhu's birth centenary.

"Why did you give birth to your children if you cannot take the responsibilities? It is your social, moral and religious duty," the police chief said.

Benazir expressed concerns over children's involvement in teen gang culture, drug and other crimes and asked all to come forward to save them.

"What happened in Kalabagan is an out-an-out crime. Rape happened there, causing death," the IGP added.

Mentioning shortage of probation officers, correction centres and children courts, he said, "Children cannot be kept in jail, taken in police custody without probation officer... they cannot be sentenced to jail by a mobile court."

He asked for initiating a social movement to prevent juvenile gang culture until the facilities are in place.

REPORT OF PLAGIARISM

HC questions PhD conferring process of Dhaka University

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday wanted to know whether Dhaka University uses any software or any other information technology to preserve the thesis of PhD holders.

The court asked the authorities concerned of Dhaka University to submit a report to this effect in two months.

The HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam passed the order during hearing a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Md Moniruzzaman Lincon seeking necessary orders.

He submitted the writ petition on January 26 last year based on a report published in Prothom Alo's online version on January 21 saying that 98 percent of the thesis of DU Associate Professor Abul Kalam Lutful Kabir was not original.

Following the writ petition, another HC bench on February 4 last year wanted to know whether the public and private universities are conferring PhD and equivalent degrees to the students following rules and regulations of the University Grants Commission.

The court ordered the UGC to inquire into this issue and submit a report to it.

At the same time, the court had directed Dhaka University vice chancellor to inquire the allegation against one of its teachers who reportedly earned his doctorate degree by submitting a 98 percent plagiarised dissertation.

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AL 'depoliticising' the nation: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that Awami League has been following a depoliticisation formula introduced by the 1/11 regime in 2007 as part of its efforts to "establish a monarchy" in Bangladesh.

Speaking at a human-chain programme, he urged the political parties and people of all walks of life to forge a 'greater mass unity' to remove both the current government and the Election Commission (EC).

"In 2007, an army-backed illegal caretaker government was formed through local and international conspiracies. It had started the depoliticisation process in Bangladesh by arresting many political leaders and activists, including our leader Khaleida Zia, in false cases at that time," Fakhrul said.

The BNP leader said, "It's most surprising that Awami League is still carrying out the depoliticisation process following the formula of the illegal caretaker government... This party is going to establish a monarchy in the country under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina."

BNP's Dhaka south and north city units arranged the programme in front of the Jatiya Press Club, demanding the resignation of the Election Commission officials for its 'failure' to ensure credible and impartial voting in the recent polls.

Fakhrul said the current EC that 'killed'

democracy has now turned into the most 'hated' institution in the country.

"We've long been seeking the resignation of the Election Commission officials. Not only the political parties, but also the noted intellectuals, NGO activists and international organisations are now clearly saying a truly fair and credible election is not possible in Bangladesh unless the current Election Commission is removed," he said.

The BNP leader alleged that the EC has miserably failed to perform its constitutional responsibilities due to its incompetence.

"The ruling party has been rigging votes in local government polls the way they did in the national election. Those joined the election from our party in Gazipur's Sreepur were tortured yesterday (Sunday), but the Election Commission couldn't do anything," he claimed.

The BNP leader said Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda used to say the voting was fair after every election even though more 100 percent votes were cast at some polling stations.

"I would like to call upon everyone to build a greater mass unity to get rid of not only the Election Commission but also of those who have killed people and snatched their rights. We urge all political parties to unite for forging the greater unity to protect our own rights, our right to vote and right

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RAPE, MURDER

Bring victim blaming under law, says MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing concern and resentment over the growing tendency of blaming victims of rape, torture and murder in real life and on social media, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday demanded that such acts be brought under the law.

The press release was signed by its senior coordinator Shahana Huda Ranjana.

"The incidents of rape are on the rise due to delayed trials and lack of exemplary punishment, and that is why we want assurance of speedy trials of all rape cases," said Shaheen Anam, executive director of the foundation, in a statement.

"We are pained to see various allegations brought against the victim of the recent incident in Kalabagan, her family and school. We have noticed blaming the victim women and children only encourages such perpetrators," the press release further quoted Shaheen Anam as saying.

MJF expressed grievance, and conveyed condolences to the Kalabagan victim's family and demanded speedy action against those responsible.

Legal notice seeks reopening of all edu institutions from January 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A legal notice was served on the government yesterday, requesting it to reopen all the educational institutions from January 16.

Lawyer Faruque Alamgir Chowdhury sent the notice on behalf of Abdul Kaiyum Sarkar, principle of Bhawal Mirzapur Public School and College, to the education secretary and director general of the Directorate of Education for taking necessary steps in this regard.

Citing the notice, Chowdhury told The Daily Star that the educational institutions have remained closed since March last year due to the pandemic. The shutdown of the institutions was extended 11 times so far and therefore students have been facing its adverse impact, he added.

He said the government has announced that educational institutions will reopen on January 16. This notice has been served so that the shutdown is not extended as the situation is now improving, he added.

The lawyer also said his client will move a petition before the HC for necessary orders if the educational institutions are not reopened on January 16.

CHATTOGRAM CITY CORPORATION POLLS

Campaigners violating health rules

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Supporters of Awami League and BNP mayoral candidates are not maintaining health guidelines, as they started campaigning on Friday, ahead of January 27 Chattogram City Corporation election, creating a possibility of worsening the Covid-19 situation.

AL mayoral candidate Rezaul Karim Chowdhury campaigned at South Pahartoli, Jalalabad and Panchlaish on Friday and Jamal Khan, Anderkilla and Laldighi on Saturday.

Numerous leaders and activists participated in the campaigns. Many were seen not wearing facemasks and violating distancing norms.

The same situation prevailed during BNP candidate Dr Shahadat Hossain's campaigns at Laldighi, Kotwali and Anderkilla on Friday and Patenga on Saturday.

Contacted, Rezaul said he urged his followers to put on facemasks and follow health rules not only during campaigning but also every time they



Supporters of CCC mayoral candidates seen paying no heed to health guidelines while campaigning, as many huddled together with no mask on their faces. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

go outside.

Shahadat could not be contacted over phone despite repeated attempts.

On the issue, BNP Chattogram city unit vice president Abu Sufian said most of their activists were wearing masks during the campaigns.

"We have instructed them to follow health rules strictly," he said. However, absolute compliance is not possible during campaign, he added.

Mohammad Hasanuzzaman,

regional election officer, Chattogram and returning officer of CCC polls, told The Daily Star, "We asked them [the candidates] to gather limited number of people during campaigning and they have assured us in this regard."

He said 14 executive magistrates have been deployed since Saturday to look into violation of health directives and electoral code of conduct.

No action has been taken till writing of this report yesterday.

ZAKAT FUND GRAFT Sayedee among six indicted

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee and five others in a case filed for embezzling Tk 1.27 crore from Islamic Foundation's Zakat Fund.

Sayedee, now in jail, and four others, who are on bail at present, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Judge Sayeda Hosneara of the Special Judge's Court of Dhaka read out the charges to them at the makeshift court at Alia Madrasa in Bakshibazar, Old Dhaka.

The other accused are: Mohammad Lutful Haque, former director of Islamic Foundation; Mia Mohammad Yunus, chief secretary of Bandhujan

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ARMS CASE AGAINST ERFAN SALIM

Court to decide on probe report Feb 8

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court will decide on February 8 whether it will accept the probe report submitted by police clearing Mohammad Erfan Salim, son of Awami League lawmaker Haji Mohammad Salim, from an arms case.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Special Tribunal-1 of Dhaka set the date. Meanwhile, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate is yet to transfer the narcotics case, filed against Erfan, to the Sessions court for the next course of action.

On January 5, Chawkbazar police submitted the probe reports of arms and drug cases to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

Erfan was arrested after a case was filed against him on charge of "attacking" Lt Wasif Ahmed Khan of Bangladesh Navy in the capital's Dhanmondi area on October 25 last year.

Rab conducted a drive at Haji Salim's house on Debidash Lane in Old Dhaka the next day.

After the raid on October 26, Rab officials said they recovered two unlicensed firearms raiding the fourth and fifth floors of Erfan's nine-storey building in Chawkbazar. They also recovered 38 walkie-talkies, five virtual private servers (VPS), and a briefcase which contained handcuffs.

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Conjoined twins born at RMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Conjoined twins were born at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital early yesterday.

Anguri Begum, 35, wife of a bread seller Rubel Hossain, 40, of Bidirpur village in Sadar upazila of Chapainawabganj district gave birth to the conjoined babies through a caesarean operation at the hospital at around 5am, said Prof Nawshad Ali, Principal of Rajshahi Medical College.

"The babies have separate heads, hands and legs, but they were fused to each other on their lower chest and abdomen," said Ali who is also a pediatric surgeon.

"We could not accurately detect their genitals, but we

FIRE AT UNITED HOSPITAL

Pay Tk 30 lakh to victim families: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed United Hospital authorities to pay Tk 30 lakh as initial payment to each of the families of four victims, who were killed in a fire at its isolation unit on May 27 last year, in 15 days.

The court also issued a rule asking the authorities to explain in four weeks why they should not be directed to give Tk 15 crore to each victim's family as compensation. The four victims were Vernon Anthony Paul (75), Riyajul Alam (45), Khodeja Begum (70) and Md Mahub (50).

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam came up with the order and rule following four separate writ petitions filed by the families of the victims seeking necessary directives for adequate compensation.

Following the same writ petitions, a virtual HC bench led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim on July 15 last year directed the United Hospital authorities to pay Tk 30 lakh to each of the four victims' families.

The hospital authorities had been directed to pay the money as an initial payment in 15 days of receiving the HC order copy.

The United Hospital authorities filed a petition with the

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Winter care for SENIOR CITIZENS

For all its comfort, winter also brings with it a number of challenges. Most of these health-related risks can have undesirable effects, especially for the elderly. Here is a list of tips and best practices to help senior citizens avoid common cold and other weather-related problems this winter.

STAY ACTIVE: Indulge in low-impact exercises that pump up blood and provide warmth to the heart. Though it may get difficult to move out of bed during these months, engaging in routine exercises like walking should still become a habit. You can even do it at noon when the winter sun is up.

TRACK YOUR MEALS AND MEDICINES: Stock up on all essential medicines and consume small meals throughout the day to keep yourself healthy and energised. Eat food rich in vitamins such as green vegetables and citrus fruits which make the skin more resilient and less prone to dryness. Keep yourself hydrated with 8-10 glasses of water even if you do not feel thirsty.

STAY WARM: Seniors who have cardiovascular conditions may experience increased side effects in

the cold. Ensure your house, if not centrally heated, has heaters and hot-water bottles at the ready. Wear your woollens especially mittens and caps. The skin tends to become thinner during winters, hence, it is imperative to wear lightweight layers. Humidifiers in the house is a great way to keep the air moisturised and clean.

STAY HYDRATED: It is natural to not feel as thirsty during winter as you usually do around the year. However, since there is a lack of moisture in the air, the dryness can extract water from your body. Make sure you maintain an abundant intake of water. If you do not feel like having chilled water, drink water at room temperature or make yourself a lukewarm lemonade that you can sip on throughout the day.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR SKIN: The cold and dry air can make your skin's natural oils vanish, and nobody likes dry, itchy or flaky skin! While the human body is designed to keep the outer skin healthy and hydrated, winters make it difficult for the oil or sweat glands to do their job effectively. Using certain skincare products and following a strict routine can go a long way in ensuring that your skin stays fresh, soft and healthy.