

NCP leader found dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jannat Ara Rumi, a leader of the National Citizens Party (NCP), was found

dead yesterday morning at a women's hostel in the capital's Jigatala area, according to police. She was a joint coordinator of NCP's Dhamondi thana unit.

Hafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Hazaribagh Police Station, said upon receiving information around 4:10am, a team from the police station rushed to the spot and recovered her hanging body from a room on the fifth floor of Jannati Female Student Hostel at Jigatala's Old Kachabazar Road. Her body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

Preliminary investigation suggests that she may have died by suicide, but the exact cause of death will be determined after the autopsy, the OC added.

The NCP, in a statement, SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

'DEVIL HUNT' 4,232 held in five days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 4,232 people have been arrested by law enforcers over the last five days until yesterday evening under the "Operation Devil Hunt Phase-2", a special nationwide drive aimed at restoring law and order and recovering illegal arms ahead of the upcoming national election.

During the same period, another 3,120 people were detained in connection with previous cases and outstanding warrants.

The government launched the operation on Saturday following a spate of killings across the country, particularly after the shooting of Dhaka-8 aspirant and Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi.

In the 24 hours until yesterday evening, a total of 2,042 people were arrested -- 1,074 in previous cases and over outstanding warrants, and 968 under "Operation Devil Hunt Phase-2", according to Police Headquarters.

During the operation, law enforcers seized one pistol, one shotgun, one pipe gun, two magazines, 20 rounds of cartridges, four exploded gas shells, two unexploded gas shells, four bullets, nine crude bombs and several locally made sharp weapons.

Police also searched 22,990 motorcycles and 1,904 cars. The searches led to the recovery of one shotgun, three crude bombs, four locally-made weapons and three rounds of ammunition, and resulted in the arrest of five people.



On the occasion of International Migrants Day yesterday, the families of 26 Bangladeshi migrant workers who have been detained for a long time in various prisons in Libya formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club. They demanded for the swift release and safe repatriation of their family members who fell victim to human traffickers.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Shortage of manpower, budget hamper child mental health care

Says mapping study by BMU, BACAMH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lack of trained manpower, adequate budget, public awareness, and persistent social stigma are major obstacles to child and adolescent mental health (CAMH) services in the country.

Although there are just over 500 psychiatrists nationwide, only 21 are child and adolescent psychiatrists to serve the large number of children and adolescents with mental health conditions.

In addition, the number of government and private facilities providing CAMH services is very limited. Most facilities are Dhaka centric and tertiary-level, leaving thousands of potential service seekers without access to care.

As a result, effective implementation of existing policies, laws, and action plans, along with adequate budget allocation and utilisation, strong multi-sectoral collaboration, and increased public awareness are essential to improve CAMH services.

These findings and recommendations were outlined in "Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Mapping in Bangladesh," jointly developed by the Psychiatry Department of Bangladesh Medical University (BMU) and the Bangladesh Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, with funding from Unicef.

The service mapping was conducted between April and June 2024 and was disseminated yesterday at a programme held at BMU.

According to the National Mental Health Survey 2019, the overall prevalence of mental disorders among children aged 7-17 years was 12.6 percent. The prevalence was 12.9 percent among rural children and 11.5 percent among

urban children.

At that time, the country's total population was 15.89 crore, with 40 percent under 18.

Presenting the findings, Sifat E Syed, assistant professor at BMU's Psychiatry Department, said the seven-member team conducted the study through in-depth interviews, desk reviews, and focus group discussions.

She said there is no dedicated national policy on CAMH.

Specialised CAMH services are available at BMU, the National Institute of Mental Health and Hospital (NIMH), government medical colleges in Dhaka, Pabna, Mymensingh, and Sylhet, Combined Military Hospitals (CMH), and some private hospitals.

However, there are only 55 inpatient seats available at BMU, NIMH, and Dhaka CMH combined.

Services are very limited at district and primary healthcare levels, and there is no system for providing community-based outpatient care, she added.

Although medicines for CAMH are available, government supplies are provided only to NIMH. Healthcare and district levels, she said.

In 2023, the total mental health budget stood at US \$173.5 million, which accounted for only 0.5 percent of the total health budget. The budget allocation for CAMH was not specified separately.

BMU Psychiatry Department Chairman Prof MMA Shalahuddin Qasar said half of all lifetime mental illnesses begin by age 14, and three-fourths by age 24, making preventive

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SEXUAL ABUSE
Existing system failing to protect children at schools
Says child-led study; experts urge adopting evidence-based approach

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Children in Bangladesh face widespread sexual harassment and abuse in schools, public spaces, and online platforms, while existing reporting mechanisms largely fail to protect them, according to a child-led national study.

The findings were shared at a national dialogue organised by the Association for Community Development (ACD), with support from ECPAT International, at a city hotel in the capital yesterday.

Speakers at the event urged authorities to adopt coordinated, child centred, and evidence-based approaches to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

The study was conducted under the project "Children Know Better: Making Child Participation the Key to Improving Effectiveness of Action Against Sexual Exploitation of Children". It was led entirely by children and drew on their own experiences and those of their peers in Rajshahi district.

Presenting the findings, child researchers Sumaiya Afrin Shyama and Sabiha Jannati Nisha said once the concepts of sexual harassment and abuse were explained, every child interviewed could recall direct or indirect experiences involving themselves or their peers.

The study found that children see schools and madrasas as both learning spaces and sites of risk. Many reported harassment by senior students and, in some cases, teachers, who allegedly used threats of poor grades or promises of better marks to coerce students.

Technology-facilitated abuse emerged as a major concern, with children describing it as more widespread than offline abuse.

They reported blackmail using images, fake online relationships, unsolicited explicit content, and the circulation of

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Govt approves ordinance on enforced disappearances

BSS, Dhaka

The government yesterday approved the drafts of "Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Redress (Amendment) Ordinance 2025" and "Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Conservation Ordinance 2025".

The Advisory Council gave the approval at its weekly meeting at the Chief Adviser's Office with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus in the chair, said the chief adviser's press wing.

The council approved the ordinance on enforced disappearance prevention with a provision that if a disappeared person remains missing for at least five years and does not return alive, the tribunal will be able to officially declare the person as "disappeared".

Under the ordinance, the government will be able to appoint the required number of public prosecutors for the "Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Redress Tribunal" based on recommendations from the National Human Rights Commission.

Victims or complainants will also be allowed to appoint lawyers to the tribunal at their own initiative. In addition, the spouse of a disappeared person or any dependent family member will be able to use the property of the disappeared person without prior approval from the commission.

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ICT-2 accepts charges against Quader, 6 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal 2 yesterday took cognisance of charges against Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader and six other leaders of the party and its affiliated organisations over alleged crimes against humanity committed during the July uprising last year.

The other accused are: AFM Bahauddin Nasim, AL joint general secretary; Mohammad Ali Arifat, former state minister for information; Jubo League chairman Sheikh Fazle Shams Parash, and general secretary Moinul Hossain Khan Nikhil; Chhatra League president Saddam Hossain and general secretary Sheikh Wali Asif Inan.

The three member tribunal, headed by Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury, issued arrest warrants against all seven, and instructed law enforcers to produce them before the tribunal by December 20, after the prosecution informed the court that they are absconding.

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ACC initiates move to bring back Hasina Files charge sheet against Kamal, family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has initiated moves to bring back ousted premier Sheikh Hasina and several other fugitive convicted individuals in corruption and money-laundering cases.

It also filed a charge sheet against former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and his family in separate cases filed over similar allegations.

ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain told reporters yesterday that the commission has contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant authorities to facilitate the return of fugitive convicts, including Hasina.

Hasina was recently sentenced by a trial court to a total of 26 years in prison in four cases filed over forgery and illegal acquisition of Purbachal

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Scores of illegal make-shift shops have been set up on both sides of the railway tracks, making the spot particularly dangerous for pedestrians who are often forced to walk on the tracks to pass the area. Even though these shops are demolished during eviction drives, they just pop up once again a few days later. The photo was taken yesterday.

We Mourn

Our hearts are heavy with sadness for the loss of Mrs. Naz Mustafa (Founder and Principal of Dhanmondi Tutorial), wife of Late K G Mustafa (Former Add'l Secretary of GOB), daughter of K Z H Ali Abed, Grand Daughter of Khan Bahadur Khandaker Ali Tayab and Mohammad Abu Saleh. She left behind her only child, Dr Sultana Mustafa and host of relatives and friends.

We request your kind presence at the Dua Mehfil on Friday, 19 December 2025, 4:00 PM at Shanta Spring, House-8, Road-5, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka.

Mrs. Naz Mustafa
1949-2025