

Torture and screams 82 lakh use illicit drugs in country

FROM PAGE 3

He told the tribunal that interrogators questioned him about his social media posts, threatened to kill him, and said he had been detained on government orders.

Hasinur said he was first picked up on July 9, 2011, while serving as a lieutenant colonel at his office inside Mymensingh Cantonment.

He said senior officers summoned him late at night, forcibly detained him and took him to Dhaka, where he was held for 43 days inside an interrogation cell, blindfolded and handcuffed.

He was later court-martialed on what he described as a "false and fabricated" charge of involvement with the banned militant outfit Harkat-ul Jihad and sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

His appeal against the verdict was never disposed of. He said he was released in 2014 on the order of then army chief Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan.

Old video, fake media

FROM PAGE 3

The national election is ahead. You must exercise your voting rights yourselves and form a government of your choice."

At the time the fact-check report was published, the most viral version of the clip on TikTok garnered 26,000 views, 900 reactions and 100 shares.

However, Rumor Scanner's fact-check found that the video is neither recent nor linked to the upcoming 13th national parliamentary election. The footage dates back to 2023 and shows remarks made by the president in the context of the 12th national parliamentary election.

During verification, fact-checkers found a video titled "Let the upcoming election be fair: Mohammed Shahabuddin" published on February 13, 2023, on the YouTube channel of ATN News. The circulated clip matches this original video.

In the original footage, the president was speaking ahead of the 12th national

FROM PAGE 3

BMU and Research and Management Consultants Limited jointly conducted the study between February and June last year. The findings were disseminated at a programme at BMU yesterday.

According to a BMU press release, data were collected using the Network Scale-Up Method (NSUM) from 13 districts and 26 upazilas across all eight divisions.

The research was supervised by the Department of Narcotics Control. The findings were presented by Chief Investigator Prof Saif Ullah Munshi, also dean of the Faculty of Basic Science and Para-Clinical Sciences.

The total estimated number of people using any type of substance nationwide stands at 81,94,605, the survey said.

Cannabis was identified as the most widely used drug, with around 61 lakh users. It was followed by yaba or methamphetamine (approximately 22.92 lakh users) and alcohol (20.20

lakh).

The survey estimated that around 39,000 people inject drugs, placing them at high risk of HIV, hepatitis and other infectious diseases.

Other substances used include cocaine phosphate (3.39 lakh users), heroin (3.22 lakh), and sleeping pills (3.05 lakh). Smaller numbers were reported for crystal meth or ice (11,888 users), LSD (5,095), and other substances (1,35,864).

The prevalence rate of substance use varied significantly across divisions. Mymensingh recorded the highest rate at 6.02 percent, followed by Rangpur at 6.00 percent and Chattogram at 5.50 percent.

Lower prevalence rates were observed in Rajshahi (2.72 percent) and Khulna (4.08 percent).

Division wise estimated numbers of substance users are: Barishal 4,04,118; Chattogram 18,79,503; Dhaka 22,87,970; Khulna 7,26,210; Mymensingh 7,60,812; Rajshahi 5,66,509; Rangpur 10,80,588; and Sylhet 4,88,141.

Land rights

FROM PAGE 3

Communication Officer Hrasraching Chowdhury Rony moderated the session.

The study found that only 13 percent of drug users have ever accessed treatment or rehabilitation services. Although more than half have attempted to quit, most were unsuccessful due to the lack of proper treatment for drug dependence, counselling, and social and financial support.

Drug users identified treatment and rehabilitation services (69 percent), counselling (62 percent), and employment support (41.2 percent) as their most urgent needs.

About 68 percent also reported facing stigma and discrimination within their families and communities.

BMU Vice Chancellor Prof Shahinul Alam stressed the need for political commitment and continued research to combat drug abuse. DNC Director General Hasan Maruf called for sustained social movements and collective campaigns to counter the threat.

traditionally occupied forest land without formal documents," he said.

Kubraj member Monika Khongla said Khasi communities had lived in Sylhet even before British rule, but land disputes persisted due to exclusion during the 1956 land record process.

"Forest ownership has been handed over to the district administration and forest department, while indigenous people face false cases and harassment," she said, also warning against land grabbing in the name of tourism and development.

Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration Brengzon Chembong said the land ownership crisis stemmed from a colonial mindset inherited from British rule.

"Without changing this mentality and ensuring indigenous inclusion in lawmaking, these problems will persist," he said, supporting demands for a land commission and a separate directorate for plainland indigenous peoples.

Association for Land Reform and Development Executive Director Shamsul Huda said unresolved indigenous issues remained in several ordinances yet to be enacted into law.

"A forest commission with indigenous representation is essential for protecting both forests and indigenous rights," he said.

National Human Rights Commission Secretary Sebastian Rema said, "Without coordination within the state structure and unity among indigenous communities, these problems cannot be resolved."

Ensure water

FROM PAGE 4

biodiversity would occur in the Sundarbans, with Goran trees thriving instead of Sundari and an increase in the population of salt-tolerant insects.

Traditional crop production would decline by half, he said, stressing the need to increase the use of surface water. "To save the people of this region, embankments must be repaired, and water sources must be protected from destruction," Dr Nishat said.

Referring to a recent storm surge in Florida that reached a height of 17 feet, he warned, "If a similar storm surge hits Bangladesh, the water could reach as far as Faridpur."

He said that while Wasa addresses water issues in metropolitan areas and DPHE in municipalities, there is no dedicated authority to resolve drinking water crises faced by marginalised communities.

Dr Nishat also stressed the need to maintain good relations with neighbouring countries to address transboundary water-related challenges.

Prof Kazi Maruf Islam of Dhaka University, Prof Anwarul Kadir of Sundarbans Academy, Mohammad Zobair Hasan of DOPR, and Abul Kalam Azad of ActionAid Bangladesh supplemented the keynote discussion.

The event was attended by representatives of various national and international development organisations and experts.

PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 26

Faz	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-35	12-45	4-15	5-46	7-15
JAMAAT 6-10	1-15	4-30	5-50	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

3,000 leprosy cases detected

FROM PAGE 3

She said 2,640 new cases were detected in the first nine months of last year, while the figures were 3,519 in 2024 and 3,639 in the previous year.

The National Leprosy Programme, in collaboration with NGOs, has been identifying new patients and providing treatment, she said.

There is a national strategic plan for 2023 to 2030 and an updated national guideline for treatment, she added, but said several barriers were holding back their efforts.

She said the national programme currently has no funds to continue essential activities such as training, capacity building, assessment and surveillance, while many posts remain vacant.

Talking to this correspondent after the programme, she said that following the expiry of the

Prof Abu Jafor, director

sectoral programme last year, operations have been continuing with funding provided by the World Health Organization.

She said a massive drive is needed in high-burden districts to detect new cases and ensure patients receive treatment.

Shishir Moral, a special correspondent at Prothom Alo, said leprosy has long been neglected and receives very little media coverage.

Rajesh Narwal, deputy representative of WHO Bangladesh, said media and communities need to come forward to create awareness about leprosy.

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