

German donors visit drug rehab center Officials say they will continue support for clinic for at least three more years

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A German donor delegation this week visited a Caritas drug rehabilitation project in Savar sub-district near Dhaka and promised to continue funding the project for next three years.

Thomas Helfen, German government head of South Asian affairs, and Johannes Schneider, first secretary to the head of development at the German embassy visited the Bangladesh Rehabilitation and Assistance Center for Addicts (BARACA) on January 24.

They met some of around 55 resident patients as well as staff.

"It's a special day for us because the presence of benefactors, who have been supporting us to continue the service over the decade, inspires us. The nation is thankful for this support in paving [a way back into life] for hundreds of addicts and erasing the suffering of many families in the country," Holy Cross Brother Robi Purification told the gathering.

Helfen said he was really glad to visit the center with his colleagues.

"I convey you greetings from the German government. I'm impressed to see your courage and conviction to stay drug-free. It's very difficult to change the habit of addiction but you are blessed with dedicated people to help you get back to [being] happy and peaceful," he said.

During the visit the German official planted a tree at the center.

Caritas executive director Benedict Alo D'Rozario said that Caritas Germany and the German government have been funding BARACA since 1999 and the donors, happy after visiting the facility, confirmed they would continue their support for next three years.

The center is the brainchild of American Holy Cross Brother Ronald Drahozal who along with group of confreres started it in 1988 for two addicts.

Initially financed by Holy Cross Congregation, the center was accepted by Caritas as one of its projects in 1999 and eventually developed for 70-80 residential patients' treatment.