

Reflections

We need to tackle mental health

THE United Kingdom is one of the 25 richest countries in the world based on GDP per capita (PPP).

The country and its people have created a vast range of resources and inventions that have transformed the lives of millions of people across the world: the English language, industrial revolution, constitutional monarchy, welfare society, national health service, economic reforms and even

luxury cars.

These contributions to the world and to humanity bring a great sense of pride and identity and should enable us to live prosperous, peaceful and happy lives. But last week's report of a father of two with mental health problems taking his life in Abbeyford Woods Car Park in Folly Gate is just one example of a huge gap in our strengths.

The soaring statistics on declining mental health are shocking, and challenge our hard-earned peaceful and happy living. According to a 2016 study by the mental health charity MIND, one in four people in England experience mental health issues,

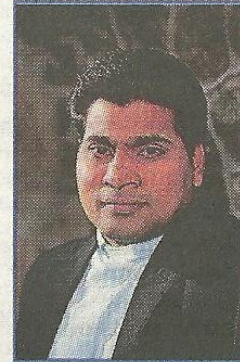
starting with relatively common conditions of mixed anxiety and depression (7.8 in every 100 people), rising to suicidal thoughts (20.6 in every 100 people) and leading to suicidal attempts (6.7 in every 100 people) and self harm (7.3 in every 100 people). If left unaddressed these mental health issues destroy lives. They trap people in misery and melancholy and can lead to relationship breakdown, separation and even suicide.

Mental health problems don't spare any group. They prey on young and old, rich and poor, men and women, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender alike. Alongside biological, genetic and

psychological causes, it is environmental conditions that are now a big concern and focus of interest and research. Yet we have greater possibility of change and improvement in our environment than with the other causes of mental health.

So, let's organise ourselves and use all the resources and riches we have to ensure mental illness is not stigmatised, to strengthen family bonds, to promote healthy parenting, to place less pressure on schoolchildren, to endorse stress-free work and encourage graceful ageing.

A wise deed begins with a nice thought. So let us seriously reflect upon St. Paul's instruction: 'Let your



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minds be filled with everything that is true, everything that is honourable, everything that is upright and pure, everything that we love and admire — with whatever is good and praiseworthy.' (Phil 4:8).