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Living dangerously

Over 100 families continue to live in 8 buildings of AGB colony declared unfit 5 years back; they risk their lives in hope for fresh allotment in govt staff quarter

HELEMUL ALAM

More than 100 families still live in eight buildings at Motijheel AGB Colony (Govt staff quarters) in the capital which were officially declared completely unfit for living five years ago.

Of the families, around 90 are living in two buildings and the rest in the other six, risking their lives despite repeated warnings by the authorities.

Residents of the buildings say they continue to stay there fearing that if they leave those, they would lose chances of getting fresh allotment of staff quarters.

The Public Works Department (PWD) back in 2004 declared the eight buildings-- B-1, B-32, B-33, B-34, B-35, B-36, B-85 and B-97-- completely unfit for living.

But the authorities concerned are yet to shift any of the families staying in two buildings-- B-34 and B-36. They however shifted almost all of the nearly 250 families from the other six.

The families in the two buildings did not get accommodation in the newly constructed staff quarters at Motijheel and Khilgaon, sources pointed out.

In April 2005, the PWD put up signboards at the eight buildings declaring those risky and abandoned, and asking the 344 families living there to vacate those immediately. But they did not leave fearing they would not get fresh allotments.

"Although we have already shifted almost all the residents of six buildings but those of two buildings could not be shifted as yet due to lack of accommodation facilities," said Md Shawkat Nabi, director of the Directorate of Government Accommodation.

He however said they would be shifted when the six other buildings



A child climbs down the stairs of a dilapidated AGB colony building that was declared unsafe for living five years ago.

are reconstructed, which would take about two years.

Another official of the directorate said only those families in six of the buildings, who failed to submit proper documents or pay arrear electricity bill, are yet to get fresh accommodation.

Abdul Quiyum Khan, a class four employee under the defence ministry, is among the residents of the buildings B-34 and B-36. His son Rubel said, "We do not shift from here as we may not get new allotment."

Monowara Begum, wife of Abdul Hamid, a class four employee under

the education ministry living the building B-36, said, "We are now facing danger to our lives as rubble from the ceiling often falls in the room."

Two families still living in the building H-1 said they are yet to leave as they did not get fresh allotment, like some families in five other buildings.

Hasina Begum, wife of Mohiuddin Ahmed, a security guard of AG Office, said they have been living here as they did not get fresh allotment because of arrear electricity bill of around Tk 1.50 lakh.

"We could not pay the bill timely as my husband's earnings (Tk 3,500 a month) were too small to run our six-member family," said Hasina.

Her two daughters had to leave school and twin sons aged seven are yet to be sent to school due to poverty, she said.

Hasina urged the authorities to allow payment of the bill in instalments from her husband's pension money and to waive the interest on the bill.

Replying to a question, Shawkat Nabi said they would consider such cases if the affected people apply for it.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BARISAL LAUNCH CAPSIZE 4 bodies found, toll stands at 31

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Four more dead bodies from the launch accident were recovered yesterday, over 42 hours after the rescue operation had been declared completed.

The dead were identified as Kamal, 28, Kawsar, 22, Taslima, 35 and Shagor, 7.

Some urchins at the Barisal marine workshop jetty where the retrieved launch and the seized cargo vessel lie, sneaked into the launch following a stench and discovered Kamal's body in the engine room around 11:00am yesterday.

Later in the afternoon, some relatives of Abul Hossain hoping to find his body discovered the bodies of Kawsar, Taslima and Shagor near the spot of the accident around 5:30pm.

Hayatul Islam Khan, assistant commissioner of Barisal Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that the official number of recovered bodies had totalled 31--14 males, 10 females and seven children--after the recovery.

The rescue activities, though stopped, were hardly satisfactory since the BIWTA failed to cooperate fully, Hayatul added.

The salvage operation ended around 5:00 pm Thursday, the

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Indian Lok Sabha speaker arrives, talks with PM

UNB, Dhaka

Speaker of Indian Parliament Lok Sabha Somnath Chatterjee said India is willing to provide all necessary cooperation, including training up the parliamentarians, for making the newly elected Bangladesh parliament effective.

The visiting Indian speaker held out the offer as he and

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Mobile school launched in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mobile primary school was launched in the port city yesterday for the underprivileged children.

Housed in a bus, the unique school started functioning with 50 students from poor families of West Bakalia area.

The school named 'Nurul Islam BSc MP Mobile Primary School' was inaugurated at a function on Chittagong Press Club premises. Awami League lawmaker Nurul Islam founded it.

Adviser to the prime minister Syed Modasser Ali, who was the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony, said the

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Charge Hannan with treason

War heroes, civil society ask govt for ex-secretary's comment on liberation war

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

War veterans and eminent citizens yesterday said the government should bring treason charge against former bureaucrat Shah Abdul Hannan, who has said the 1971 Liberation War was fought between India and Pakistan, and not between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Sector Commanders' Forum leader Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafiqullah said Hannan has violated the constitution by making such a comment. The preamble of the constitution states that Bangladesh was created after the Liberation War in 1971.

"If he (Hannan) is a citizen of Bangladesh, he has committed a crime making such a comment. So the government should bring charge of treason against him and bring him to justice," Shafiqullah who had led the Liberation War as a sector com

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Shaheed Minar all abuzz

STAR REPORT

Defying Islamist militants' fresh threat, people yesterday flocked to the Shaheed Minars across the country to observe Language Martyrs' Day to pay homage to the heroes who sacrificed their lives in 1952 to uphold the dignity of mother tongue Bangla.

Though the law enforcers yesterday arrested seven militants of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh who term such cultural events "anti-Islamic", people after placing wreaths at the Shaheed Minars reiterated their vows to protect the mother tongue and Bangalee culture.

Millions with flowers in their hands while toddlers holding their mothers' hands or riding their fathers' shoulders joined the Shaheed Minars that turned the monuments into the human sea.

Barefeet, wearing black ribbons and clutching bouquets of flowers, thousands of people from all walks of life approached the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital to pay homage to the martyrs of the language movement, observing International Mother Language Day.

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LTTE tries Kamikaze attack on Colombo

Major disaster averted as planes fail to hit targets

AFP, AP, Colombo

Tamil Tigers carried out a kamikaze-style attack in Sri Lanka's capital on Friday night, smashing a light aircraft into the main tax building, killing at least two people and wounding 50, officials said.

Tiger rebels said yesterday the two planes they sent on a daring air attack over Sri Lanka's capital were on a kamikaze mission and were not shot down.

Authorities pulled the wreckage of one plane out of a government high-rise office building near air force headquarters in the middle of the city. The second plane crashed near an air force base just outside the international airport north of Colombo.

The rebels said the planes intentionally

crashed as part of a suicide attack targeting the two air force installations and characterised the raid as a success, according to the rebel-affiliated TamilNetWebsite.

The Website showed a photo of the two pilots posing with rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, a tradition for those about to carry out suicide attacks. It described them as members of the "Black Air Tigers." The Black Tigers is the name for the rebels suicide squad.

Earlier Sri Lanka's military said Saturday it averted a major disaster in the capital Colombo by knocking out two Tamil Tiger light aircraft packed with explosives before they could hit their intended targets.

Lankan air force said anti aircraft guns shot down one of the light aircraft that had flown

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'BCL' men occupy newspaper office

Loot valuables from 3 business houses in Netrokona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

A group of BCL cadres allegedly occupied the office of a local newspaper and three business establishments at Chutabazar in Netrokona town on Friday night.

They also vandalised the office of Dainik Deshkanthaswar and also looted valuables of the three business establishments, sources said.

Although the police were informed about the incident, they were yet to take any step in this regard.

Later, the youths put up a signboard inscribed with 'Agradut Club' on the building.

About 30 to 40 youths took position in front of the building in the morning claiming themselves as members of the club.

Ziaul Haque Tapan, former general secretary of district BCL unit, said he is the convener of the club that owns the building.

In 2001 the followers of Abdul Aziz backed by the BNP

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1971 war role should not be the reason

Jamaat argues over anti-liberation element

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami leaders said yesterday that it is not right to term anyone an 'anti-liberation war element' based only on their role during the war in 1971.

They said that in order to identify anyone as an 'anti-liberation element' one has to take into account their roles starting from the 1952 language movement and through successive movements.

The comments came at a discussion meeting organised

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India free to try top Mumbai attacker

CNN-IBN, PTI, New Delhi

India can hold trial of Ajmal Amir Kasab, the sole terrorist caught alive after the 26/11 carnage in Mumbai while US is sending a seven-member FBI team to visit Pakistan next week to probe the carnage.

Pakistan's Defence Minister Ahmed Mukhtar has said that has said there's no way Kasab could be tried in Pakistan for a crime committed in India. Since Kasab's crime was committed in India, New Delhi can conduct his trial according to its law.

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Language day observed on no man's land

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Bangla speaking people in Bangladesh and India got together on both sides of the Benapole-Petrapole border on the International Mother Language Day yesterday ignoring the line of demarcation drawn between them about 62 years back.

Hundreds of people of all ages started gathering in the border areas early in the morning despite obstacles created by members of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

A temporary Shaheed Minar was set up in the no man's land in memory of the Language Movement martyrs.

Lawmaker from Jessore-1 constituency Sheikh Afil Uddin and Indian Lok Sabha member Amitav Nandi placed wreaths, sang the national

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Bangladeshi lawmaker Sheikh Afil Uddin and Indian Lok Sabha member Amitav Nandi hold their national flags on Benapole-Petrapole border after placing wreaths at a makeshift Shaheed Minar in no-man's land yesterday.

Boi Mela soaked in Ekushey spirit

DURDANA GHIAS

The International Mother Language Day, inspiration of Amar Ekushey Boi Mela, lifted the spirit and festive mood to its peak among the crowd at the fair yesterday.

It was the day dedicated to the language martyrs. Mostly clad in black and white or grey, thousands of people were

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Fajr	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation