



A view of a few blocks of buildings showing the rapid pace of the city's reconstruction after the earthquake. Inset, a school building in ruins in the aftermath of the quake.

Chinese town reborn

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Qiang, Hui, Han and Tibetan architectural styles. If not for the remaining ruins from the quake, it might be hard to imagine that the town suffered such devastation.

With the assistance from the central and provincial governments, Yingxiu has been transformed into a quake-themed tourist destination with a huge number of people visiting the town every day to see how it recovered from such a disaster.

As this correspondent reached the town on a chilly and overcast day last month, the group of journalists gazed awestruck at the breathtaking sceneries the town was surrounded by. The small town, as it seemed, is nestled in picturesque mountains and hills with thick white clouds hanging around almost like mosquito nets.

"We are standing on the town built upon the ruins and rubble," said tour guide Chen Xiurong, welcoming the group with a traditional style.

Yingxiu, once a town with several factories, has been re-designed as a comfortable living and environmentally friendly town, with the focus on tourism, said the guide dressed in traditional ethnic clothing.

Each of the building in Yingxiu, now home to about 7,000 residents,

is no more than three storeys and designed to withstand an earthquake of 8-magnitude on the Richter scale.

A four-star hotel, a hospital, a park, and a large conference centre have been set up in this town. Everything is modern except some disaster sites they have kept untouched.

Chen said the newly constructed buildings are of world-class anti-earthquake standards built with the state-of-the-art techniques.

The economic structure of this town has also changed after the quake. Almost each family now runs their business on the first floor of the newly built houses.

A small furniture store, for example, is run by the family of a youth, Yang Hao. He sells furniture and sculpture made of rare woods, a bit higher than the normal retail price. He also exhibits those well.

"With the help of the government, we managed to set up this store. The government cares for us," Yang said.

He said his sale was good enough. "We have employed seven local people and our annual revenue is around 1 million yuan. We are very satisfied now," he noted.

The 15-year-old youth also said he was inside his previous house when the earthquake struck.

"I was buried under the rubble but was rescued after some frantic efforts," said Yang, who was only six and a student

of the lone local school at that time.

"We're very lucky that none of our family members except me was hurt [minor injuries]," he added.

Lanka, director of foreign affairs office of the prefectural government of Wenchuan, to which Yingxiu belongs, said they are now striving to develop tourism.

"We hope to make the town a place of tourist attraction," he said.

Across the town, a structure, which used to be a school, sits at a precarious angle, with one side sunk deep into the ground.

The school namely Xuankou Middle School was reduced to rubble by the quake. There were 1,500 students inside that day. Of them, 55 including 43 teachers were killed.

The schoolyard has been converted into an earthquake museum as the authorities have kept the campus untouched. Inside, a concrete-made clock is seen on a stairwell showing 2:28pm, the time when the earthquake hit.

The half-fallen ruins of the school buildings including a laboratory with cracks on the external walls are a reminder to visitors about the destruction. Entry into these buildings, of course, is prohibited.

The message that the Yingxiu people have given to the band of tourists is that there is always hope in life.

Just one question

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When she heard the news of his deportation on the TV, early morning chill, weak health or distance -- nothing could stop her from rushing to the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court of Narayanganj from her home in Algirchar village in Sonargaon.

Wrapping herself with an extra saree for she couldn't afford a shawl, she was waiting on the court premises since 8:00am yesterday for an opportunity to confront the culprit. She hadn't even eaten anything the whole day.

Recalling the moment when she first saw Ibrahim's body after it was recovered from the Shitalakkhya river, Noorjahan said, "His hands and legs were tied with ropes. There was

another rope tied around his neck. I could not forget the sight."

"He was a young man like you," she said pointing to one of these correspondents, as they were waiting for Nur Hossain to be brought to the court.

"I don't understand why Nur killed him and this is what I want to know."

Her husband Abdul Wahab was also with her.

"We know Nur Hossain was not alone. There are others [behind the murders] and we demand justice," said the 70-year-old.

With Ibrahim dead, the family finds it hard to bear the expenses.

"We got only Tk 20,000 after Ibrahim's death and that's all," said the bereaved father.

But for Noorjahan, nothing seemed more important than getting the answer to her question.

She kept looking at the entrance to the court premises and asking people how long it might take for Nur Hossain to be brought there.

However, when he was finally brought in, heavy security protocol didn't allow her to get even close to him.

"I could not even see him [Nur]," she said as tears rolled down from her eyes.

"Perhaps I will have to live with the burden of this question," said Noorjahan just before policemen drove them along with others away from in front of the court building.

Noorjahan trudged her way out, wiping her eyes, behind her husband.

Regional bus services soon

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The minister said India's northeast comes as an important link of connectivity as Bangladesh plans to establish it as a bridge between South Asia, South-East Asia and beyond.

"Our opportunities are endless -- once we are able to realise these, it would enormously contribute to taking the overall Bangladesh-India bilateral ties to a greater height," he said.

Bangladesh is looking forward to a greater economic integration with India's northeast for mutual benefit, he said. "This would particularly facilitate northeast's socio-economic development and better connectivity with rest of India. Complementing India's endeavour to develop its northeast is also in our own interest."

"This has an important security dimension which we should not lose sight of either. Security is poised to play an important role in ensuring economic development, peace and

stability in this region."

Turning to power sector cooperation, Ali said Bangladesh has contributed to the northeast's power sector development by allowing transportation of "Over Dimensional Cargo" for Tripura's Palatana Power Plant through its territory.

Work on grid connection between Tripura and Comilla to bring 100MW electricity is progressing well. "We have also allowed transportation of food grain to Tripura in the same manner."

Mentioning that the northeast has "enormous" hydroelectric potential, he said, "We are also exploring joint venture investment in hydroelectric projects and the possibility of power import/exchange with the northeast."

Under the aegis of sub-regional cooperation, he said, discussions are taking place in joint working groups for cooperation in the sectors of water, power and connectivity involving Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan.

The foreign minister also said Bangladesh is looking at direct air connectivity between Dhaka and Guwahati.

Asiatic Society of Bangladesh Chairman Akmal Hossain, among others, spoke at the inaugural session.

EXPANSION OF DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE
Bangladesh is expanding its diplomatic and consular presence in the Indian northeast with a view to enhancing Bangladesh's multi-sectoral engagements, Mahmood Ali said.

"A Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh in Guwahati is coming up. Our Agartala Visa Office has already been upgraded to an Assistant High Commission. Our first-ever assistant high commissioner would be joining there soon."

These are small links in the bigger picture of an inter-connected region that they are striving for, the foreign minister noted.

'Guerrilla grafting'

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While authorities see urban fruit-bearing trees as a nuisance, these agricultural rebels see them as an opportunity to provide fresh, healthy produce for free to anyone who walks by.

According to their Facebook page, "Guerrilla Grafters is a grassroots group that sees a missed opportunity for cities to provide a peach or a pear to anyone strolling by. Their objective is to restore sterile city trees into fruit-bearers by grafting branches from fertile trees. The project may not

resolve food scarcity, but it helps foster a habitat that sustains us."

Their mission, they say is to make delicious, nutritious fruit available to urban residents through these grafts.

Every grafted tree has a steward, someone who promises to check up on it regularly, making sure it doesn't cause any problems, said Tara Hui, member of the group since its inception five years ago.

"The hope is that through this one small act [of grafting] we can reconnect with a shared space and reconnect with

each other," Hui said. "Ultimately, I think codes and regulations should respond to the reality of people's lives. Just taking an evening stroll, and then you see a fruit and you reach over and now you're nourished."

Guerrilla grafters have created a web app to provide grafting tips and help members find trees that might be good candidates to accept fruit-bearing branches. Through their Facebook page they track the progress of their cherry, plum, and pear grafts, and report upcoming events.

Political tensions surge in Cambodia

Court orders opposition leader arrest for defaming ruling party member

AFP, Phnom Penh

A Cambodian court yesterday issued an arrest warrant for opposition leader Sam Rainsy over an old, unreserved defamation sentence amid a surge of political tension between him and strongman premier Hun Sen.

The order comes a day after Hun Sen threatened Rainsy with legal action for calling on the international community to pressure him to move towards a peaceful exit from office, which he has held for more than three decades.

The opposition leader, currently touring South Korea, made the comments during his visit to Japan earlier this week, drawing on the historic vote of nearby Myanmar which was ruled for nearly half a century by a military junta.

Taking encouragement from Sunday's historic vote in Myanmar he said it was time to ensure his country achieved full democratisation.

On Friday Phnom Penh Municipal Court ordered police "to arrest and bring the convict Sam Rainsy to serve the (two-year defamation) sentence in jail", according to a copy of the warrant seen by AFP.

Rainsy was sentenced for defamation in the 2011 case while in self-exile outside Cambodia for accusing the country's foreign minister of being a former Khmer Rouge member.

Regional AIDS

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participants wrote to them informing of their security concerns in Dhaka.

The update detailed about the killings of two foreigners, security alerts raised by several countries and increased presence of law enforcement agencies.

"The secretariat is closely watching the situation in a broad spectrum and is in close contact with the relevant government security agencies, security organisations, security experts and the UN Department of Safety and Security," said ICAAP-12 Secretary General Joe Thomas had said in the update.

Diplomatic sources said security concerns in Bangladesh led to the postponement of the event.

A Bangladeshi, who works in Malaysia, told The Daily Star that he knew some participants who had cancelled their plan to attend the congress for security concerns.

Some 3,500 delegates, including 26 ministers, over 200 high level government officials, several United Nations mission heads, HIV and AIDS researchers, activists, and NGO representatives, were expected to attend the ICAAP event.

All fugitives

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pledge. We do not resort to empty rhetoric."

The minister said most of the accused in the sensational cases have already been arrested. "Police also have submitted the charge sheets and the trial is underway."

BNP activist

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two motorcycles intercepted the microbus and took Robi with them at gunpoint, said Rana, who was in the microbus.

After the incident, Rana informed the Detective Branch (DB) of police and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) of the matter. But neither the DB nor the Rab was able to give his family any information about his father's whereabouts.

On information yesterday, police recovered the body of Robi from near a bridge and sent it to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said Saiful Islam, officer-in-charge of Chuadanga Sadar Police Station.

Criminals left the body there after killing Robi elsewhere, he said.

The motive behind the murder could not be known immediately. However, Robi's wife alleged that Robi's rivals might have murdered him by hiring killers over the land-related case.

Three burnt

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accumulated inside the house and exploded the moment it came in contact with the matchstick flame.

The impact of the explosion caused a wall of a nearby flat to fall on another adjacent tin-shed building, causing minor injuries to four others, he said.

In a similar incident in the capital's East Ashkona area last month, four of a family and their domestic help suffered critical burns. The domestic help died later at a hospital.

On May 30, seven members of a family were burnt in a same manner at Kalabagan. Three of them succumbed to their injuries afterwards.

DHAKA INT'L FOLK FESTIVAL

Audience swept off their feet

FAHMIM FERDOUS

Paban Das Baul, the legendary folk singer, yesterday filled the Army Stadium with his sonorous voice and wonderful melodies on the second night of the Dhaka International Folk Festival 2015.

The three-day festival, which continued well into the early hours of today, was presented by Meril and organised by Sun Events and Maasranga TV at the capital's Army Stadium.

On a Friday evening, people of all ages flocked to the venue in their thousands and they were left enchanted by baul and folk singers and troupes from different countries.

It was Baul Bhajan Khyapa who opened the day's concert, followed by young artistes Ruba and Sajib who are from a Maasranga TV show called Magic Bauliana. They were followed by Ajar Alim, Jahir Alim and Nurjahan Alim -- the three children of folk legend Abdul Alim.

A brief discussion followed with Professor Emeritus Anisuzzaman, Anjan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Group and Maasranga TV and Indian High Commissioner Pankaj Saran on the stage. They expressed their gratitude to the audience as the turnout yesterday peaked at nearly 60,000 in the evening.

During her performance, Nazrul singer Nashid Kamal went beyond herself, swaying the audience with popular songs like "Je Jon Premer Bhab Janey Na" and "Sundori Komola" with a big baul ensemble as accompanists.

Bari Siddiqui came on stage next, presenting his signature style of melancholic folk, closing with his hit "Shuachan Pakhi". Alongside singing, he also played the flute in a song, much to the audience's delight.

Arnob & Friends then presented their urbanised style of folk music, starting with "Mon Torey". The group

then performed a Lalon song, a Tagore song and a Chittagonian folk song, with the audience singing along.

As the clock struck midnight, enthusiasm of the audience kept rising at the stadium, with Paban Das continuing to elevate the ambiance to new highs, being accompanied by Arnob and his band.

With Momtaz and Yunnan Art troupe yet to perform, the enthused music lovers were in for another good night.

More news and features on the festival are in Arts & Entertainment on Page 9.

Egypt to send Russian plane recording abroad for analysis

AFP, Cairo

A recording from Russian Airbus A321 which caught a sound before the plane disintegrated in midair will be sent abroad for analysis, Egypt's civil aviation minister was quoted as saying Friday.

It was not immediately clear which country would receive the copy of the black box recording to analyse one of the key clues of the investigation into the October 31 disaster, which killed all 224 on board.

Several governments including Britain and Israel believe the plane was most likely downed by a bomb on board after it took off from the airport of the Egyptian Red Sea resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh.

The Islamic State group which commands an affiliate in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula claimed it destroyed the plane, without providing details.

The Airbus was manufactured in Germany, with a French design, and its engine was built in the United States.

Rab arrests 3 suspects

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Rapid Action Battalion said it recovered a pistol, a revolver, two bullets, a magazine and a machete from them.

Sixty-six-year-old Hoshi was gunned down on the way to his farmland at Alutari in Rangpur on October 3.

On the same day, law enforcers detained two persons -- Humayun Kabir Hira and Rashed-un-Nabi Khan Biplob -- in connection with the killing. They were later shown arrested in the murder case.

At the briefing at a Rab camp yesterday, Mahabub claimed the trio went into hiding after the Hoshi killing, and changed locations to avert arrest.

He, however, did not say when the three suspects travelled to Chapainawabganj.

The Rab official said Sumon was accused in eight murder cases, Kajal in five and Rubel in two in Rangpur.

Rab handed them over to Sadar Model Police Station in the afternoon and filed a case against them under the Arms Act.

The three were later produced before Chapainawabganj Judicial Magistrate's Court that sent them to jail.

Mahabub said a team of Rab-5 went to Satnail area in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila around 1:20am on information that some criminals carrying illegal weapons had gathered there.

The Rab men detained Sumon for his suspicious movement there and seized a pistol and a magazine from him.

Acting on his statement, the elite force conducted a drive in Bidirpur area two hours later and detained Nawshad and Kajal with a revolver and a machete.

THEY ARE INNOCENT: FAMILIES

Sumon's father Md Hanif told The Daily Star that his son had been involved with Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, the youth front of the BNP, a few years ago.

Quoting his daughter-in-law

Samiya Akter Labanya, he said several plainclothes men identifying themselves as Rab members intercepted Sumon and his wife at Hajirhat of Rangpur while the couple was returning from Dinajpur on a motorbike around 11:00am on October 6.

When they tried to force Sumon into a microbus, locals protested it. They then showed their identity cards and took Sumon with them and left the place hurriedly.

In an interview with TV channel ATN Bangla, Sumon's mother said, "I know that he [Sumon] is innocent. He was at home on that day [October 3]."

Another detainee, Rubel, was picked up from his father-in-law's house in College para area of Rajshahi city on October 11, claimed his cousin Md Imran.

Rubel, an activist of Jatiya Party's youth wing Jubo Shanghati, had been staying in the city for the last three months, said Imran adding that his cousin ran cable network business.

Talking to our Rangpur correspondent, Babul Chandra Barman, father of the other arrestee Kajal, said his son was not involved with any political party.

He said Kajal was accused in eight cases for snatching and theft.

Kajal's sister Golapi Roy Lata told BBC Bangla that plainclothes men picked up her brother from Rangpur court premises on October 5 after he had appeared before it in connection with a case.

She claimed the allegation of Kajal's involvement in the Hoshi murder was absolutely false.

"We filed a general diary with Sadar Police Station on October 8. Police told us that they would look into the matter but did not say anything since then."

Lata said she learnt about her brother's arrest from a news report on TV.

Jihadi John

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murders of US journalists Steven Sotloff and James Foley, US aid worker Abdul-Rahman Kassig, British aid workers David Haines and Alan Henning, Japanese journalist Kenji Goto, and other hostages.

Shown in the videos dressed entirely in black, a balaclava covering all but his eyes and the bridge of his nose, Jihadi John became a menacing symbol of Islamic State brutality and one of the world's most wanted men. He was born in Kuwait but brought up in Britain.

The British government said it had "been working hand in glove with the Americans" to defeat Islamic State "and to hunt down those murdering Western hostages."

Speaking outside his Downing Street residence, Cameron described Emwazi as "a barbaric murderer" who

"posed an ongoing and serious threat to innocent civilians, not only in Syria but around the world and in the United Kingdom too".

He said the US air strike resulted from a combined effort between Britain and the United States and was an act of self-defence. "It was the right thing to do".

US President Barack Obama has promised justice after the deaths of American hostages and the United States is seeking to increase pressure on Islamic State fighters, who have seized parts of Syria and Iraq, and who Obama has vowed to defeat.

The pressure includes US plans to deploy dozens of special operations forces to Syria, deliver more weaponry to US-backed Syrian fighters and to thicken US air strikes against the militant group.