



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina meets her Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev, left, and Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe, right, as she visits the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar for the 11th Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## ATTACK IN FRANCE No Bangladeshi among victims

Says BD embassy in Paris

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

No Bangladeshi national was among the victims of the terrorist attack in France in which a lorry ploughed through a crowd celebrating Bastille Day in the French city of Nice on Thursday night, killing at least 84 people and injuring scores more.

"Based on available information, we are in a position to tell you that no Bangladeshi national is among the casualties," M Shahidul Islam, ambassador of Bangladesh to France, told The Daily Star by text message yesterday.

"We are awaiting the French government's official list of casualties, including their nationals," he added.

Foreign ministry officials in Dhaka said the Bangladesh Embassy in Paris was in touch with the local authorities and Bangladesh communities following the attack.

The ambassador said a help desk has been opened with telephone number: +33(0)1-46519033 and e-mail: helpdesk@bangladoot-paris.org.

## Bablu now Ershad's special assistant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a dramatic move, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad appointed Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu as his special assistant yesterday, nearly seven months after removing him from the party's secretary general post.

The decision was announced in a press release signed by Sunil Shuvo Roy, Ershad's press secretary, yesterday.

Talking to The Daily Star, Bablu said, "Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad has his trust in me, and the decision has proved it once again. I hope I can serve my party in a better way now."

According to JP insiders, the move aims at pleasing Ershad's "opponent" group, led by Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad, in the party.

Bablu, a key member of that group, has good relations with the government and it might have prompted Ershad to take the decision, they said.

Talking to The Daily Star, several party leaders said the JP chief always wants to maintain a "balance" within the party. He made Bablu his special assistant to improve his relations with

his "opponent" group so that he could run his party in a smoother way.

Party sources said Ershad had wanted to pressurise the "opponent" group after appointing his younger brother GM Quader as party co-chairman in January.

That was why he had removed Bablu as party secretary general later on for opposing Quader's appointment. Ruhul Amin Hawlader then replaced Bablu.

Following that, the "opponent" group demanded that Raushan, who is also Ershad's wife, be made senior co-chairman of the party and Bablu be reinstated.

Even though Ershad rejected the demands immediately, he on April 27 appointed Raushan as the senior co-chairman, a post that does not even exist in the JP charter.

Meanwhile, after being contacted yesterday, GM Quader, in a text message, said, "I have no knowledge [of Bablu's appointment]. But if the chairman [Ershad] has done it he must have thought it would be helpful to the party."

## Lorry attack in France kills 84

FROM PAGE 1

National day ended on Thursday night. It careered into families and friends listening to an orchestra or strolling above the beach on the Mediterranean Sea toward the grand, century-old Hotel Negresco.

Bystander Franck Sidoli said he had seen people go down. "Then the truck stopped, we were just five meters away. A woman was there, she lost her son. Her son was on the ground, bleeding," he told Reuters at the scene.

Dawn broke on Friday with pavements smeared with dried blood. Smashed children's strollers, an uneaten baguette and other debris strewn about the promenade. Small areas were screened off and what appeared to be bodies covered in blankets were visible through the gaps.

The truck was still where it had come to rest, its windscreen riddled with bullets.

"I saw this enormous white truck go past at top speed," said Suzy Wargniez, a local woman aged 65 who had watched from a cafe on the promenade. "It was shooting, shooting."

After visiting victims at Nice's Pasteur hospital, Hollande said about 50 people were still in a critical condition. The dead included at least 10 children. At least two Americans and one Russian were among those killed.

At the hospital, medical staff were treating large numbers of injuries. Waiting for friends who were being operated on was 20-year-old Fanny.

"The truck pushed me to the side. When I opened my eyes I saw faces I didn't know and started asking for help," she told Reuters. "Some of my friends were not so lucky. They are having operations as we speak."

Early indications were that the attack was the work of a lone assailant. Tunisian security sources told Reuters the suspect had last visited his hometown of Msaken, about 120 km (75 miles) south of Tunis, four years ago. He was married with three children, and was not known by the Tunisian authorities to hold radical or Islamist views.

"France is filled with sadness by this new tragedy," Hollande said in a dawn address. "There's no denying the terrorist nature of this attack."

Only hours before the attack, he had announced plans to lift a state of emergency in place since November, when Islamic State gunmen and suicide bombers struck Paris entertainment spot on a Friday evening, killing 130 people.

### BODIES EVERY FIVE METRES

In his address he said the state of emergency would now be extended by a further three months. He would call up military and police reservists to relieve forces worn out by enforcing it.

Nice-Matin journalist Damien Allemand had been watching the firework display when the truck tore by. After taking cover in a cafe, he wrote on his paper's website of what he saw: "Bodies every five meters, limbs ... Blood. Groans."

"The beach attendants were first on the scene. They brought water for the injured and towels, which they placed on those for whom there was no more hope."

Major events in France have been guarded by troops and armed police since the Nov. 13 attacks. But those guarding the crowd on Thursday appeared unable to halt the Renault truck as it tore along pavements and a pedestrian zone. According to one city official, it had careered for up to 2 km (1.5 miles).

A local government official said weapons and grenades were later found inside the vehicle. Nice-Matin newspaper said on Twitter that police were searching the attacker's home in the Nice neighborhood of Abattoirs.

After midday reporters were told by police to move away from a white Volvo delivery van near the home because they feared it might be holding explosives. Officers carried out a controlled explosion on the vehicle, blowing the doors open and leaving shattered glass all around, but it was not clear whether they found anything incriminating.

Nice airport was briefly evacuated as a precautionary measure after an unattended bag was found, an airport official said.

### ISLAMIC STATE TARGETS FRANCE

After the Paris attacks, Islamic State said France and all nations following its path would remain at the top of its list of targets as long as they continued "their crusader campaign", referring to action against the group in Iraq and Syria.

France is a major part of a US-led mission conducting air strikes and special forces operations against Islamic State, as well as training Iraqi government and Kurdish forces.

"We will further strengthen our actions in Syria and Iraq," Hollande said, calling the tragedy - on the day France marks the 1789 revolutionary storming of the Bastille prison in Paris - an attack on liberty by fanatics who despised human rights.

"We are facing a battle that will be long because facing us is an enemy that wants to continue to strike all people and all countries that have values like ours," he said.

France has also sent troops to west Africa to keep Islamist insurgents at bay.

The country is home to the European Union's biggest Muslim population, mostly descended from immigrants from North African former colonies. It maintains a secular culture that allows no place for religion in schools and civic life, which supporters say encourages a common French identity but critics say contributes to alienation in some communities.

There had been no claim of responsibility on Friday morning.

The Paris attack in November was the bloodiest among a number in France and Belgium in the past two years. On Sunday, a weary nation had breathed a sigh of relief that the month-long Euro 2016 soccer tournament had ended without serious incident.

Four months ago, Belgian Islamists linked to the Paris attackers killed 32 people in Brussels. Recent weeks have also seen major attacks in Bangladesh, Turkey and Iraq.

Pop star Rihanna canceled a concert scheduled to be held in Nice on Friday. Riders on the Tour de France, the top event on the international cycling calendar, observed a minute's silence before Thursday's stage, held three hours' drive northwest of Nice. Security has been tightened for the three-week race, which is watched by huge crowds lining the route around the country.

US President Barack Obama condemned what he said "appears to be a horrific terrorist attack". Others joining him included German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Pope Francis, Russian President Vladimir Putin, the European Union, Nato, the UN Security Council and Saudi Arabia's top religious body.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said: "We understand what France and the French people are going through today."

Nice, a city of 350,000, has a history as a flamboyant aristocratic resort but is also a gritty metropolis. It has seen dozens of its Muslim residents travel to Syria to fight.

On social media, Islamic State supporters celebrated the high death toll and posted a series of images, one showing a beach purporting to be that of Nice with white stones arranged to read "IS is here to stay" in Arabic.

## Govt to find out roots

FROM PAGE 1

"Connectivity is indeed no longer a 'choice' for any community; it is about seizing a strategic opportunity," Hasina told the second plenary session of 11th Asem Summit.

On the theme of the session, 20 Years of Asem: Partnership for Future through Connectivity, she said whatever be the modality of connectivity frameworks, these should aim at accelerating sustained and inclusive growth and sustainable development.

"At the turn of 20 years, Asem reflects on deepening connectivity here in Mongolia in the wake of multiple transformations that we are witnessing now," the PM added.

Hasina, who arrived in Ulaanbaatar yesterday to attend two-day Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem), joined the inaugural session of the Summit at Shangri-La Hotel.

President of Mongolia Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj received the premier at the summit venue.

"Today, new growth hubs and nodes are emerging across Asem landscape," the PM said, adding that long-known business patterns and industries have been giving way for new ones.

Development initiatives need to be based on core values and principles like solidarity, friendship, mutual trust and equitable sharing of benefits, she observed.

Pointing out the advancement in multi-modal connectivity among the countries in Asia-Pacific region, Hasina said in South Asia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) and Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar - Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) are worth noting.

The premier, however, mentioned that for connectivity to yield greater advantage and improvements in peoples' living and livelihoods, countries need to seriously explore greater resources, further capabilities and newer partnerships.

Highlighting Bangladesh's progress in e-services, she said 4.5 million

under-served citizens receive over 70 e-services from 5,300 Digital Centres across the country and around 43,000 government offices are connected under a single national e-portal.

She hoped that Asem would be able to bring greater result orientation on connectivity, especially under Asem Working Group on Connectivity.

The PM appreciated excellent arrangement and gracious hospitality offered to her and the Bangladesh delegation to Mongolia.

**MEETINGS WITH ASEM LEADERS**  
Hasina on the first day of her visit to Mongolia passed a busy day yesterday. Besides joining the Asem Summit, she held bilateral meetings with some Asian and European leaders at the Summit venue.

She met Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni Silveri.

Foreign Minister M Shahidul Haq briefed reporters in the afternoon about the Summit and bilateral meetings. PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim was present.

The premier reassured the Italian foreign minister that the Bangladesh government and its people would jointly resist evil forces. In this regard, she pointed out the initiatives taken at the community level to combat terrorism, said the foreign secretary.

The Italian minister expressed satisfaction over the quick steps taken for tackling the situation in the aftermath of the Gulshan attack and sending the bodies of Italian citizens home.

Haq said the Italian foreign minister expressed his government's firm resolve to strengthen the relations with Bangladesh. The minister added that in no way the Gulshan incident would harm the bilateral ties.

In the meeting with her Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev, Hasina discussed various bilateral issues.

The foreign secretary said both the leaders expressed satisfaction over

successful progress in the construction work of a nuclear power plant in Bangladesh with Russian support and decided to take steps for rapid implementation of the project.

The Russian PM offered his government's support to stand beside Bangladesh in its fight against terrorism and provide necessary technical and other assistance in this regard.

Terming Russia a friendly nation, Hasina said Dhaka would not hesitate to receive any assistance from Moscow which would be deemed necessary to fight terrorism.

The Bangladesh PM also talked to Swiss President Johann Schneider-Ammann and other leaders.

In the afternoon, the PM along with other heads of state and government joined Mongol Naadam Festival at Chinggis Khaan Khuree tourist complex on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar.

Naadam Festival is a major Mongolian festival to experience the culture and people of Mongolia. The festival has its roots in the nomad wedding assemblies and hunting extravaganzas of the Mongol Army.

Later, Hasina joined a dinner hosted by Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj in honour of the Asem leaders.

The foreign secretary said Asem leaders in a stock-taking session discussed the progress achieved over two decades in three pillars -- political, economic and people-to-people contact.

"The leaders discussed relevance of the forum and focused on four areas of cooperation in next decade, such as reinforcing the partnership between Asian and African continents, strengthening cooperation in anti-terrorism activities and radicalisation, human development and taking substantive initiatives to achieve sustainable development goals," he added.

Today, Hasina will take part in the retreat session of the Asem Summit and also hold bilateral meetings with a number of world leaders.

## Asem leaders denounce terrorism

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Leaders and representatives of governments from Ireland to Indonesia held a minute's silence for the victims at the opening of the summit in Ulan Bator.

In a statement they condemned "heinous and cowardly terrorist attacks" and pledged to fight "the plague of terrorism".

European Council President Donald Tusk said: "It's a tragic paradox that the subject of this attack were people celebrating liberty, equality and fraternity."

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that "despicable terrorism engulfing innocent people can never be forgiven", and German Chancellor Angela Merkel told reporters that "we are all united in shock".

France's foreign minister Jean-Marc Ayrault cut short his visit and prepared to return to Paris, thanking the dignitaries for their "spontaneous and sincere solidarity towards the French people".

"The whole world shares France's ordeal," he told AFP.

The gathering was the first major international conference since the UN-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague ruled,

in a case brought by the Philippines, that Beijing's claims to much of the strategically vital South China Sea have no legal foundation.

The Asian giant, which boycotted the hearings, says the tribunal has no jurisdiction, and has poured scorn on the verdict.

But participants defied its demands that the subject should not be brought up at Asem, criticising Beijing by emphasising the importance of respecting the global legal frameworks that undergird cooperation on terrorism, among other issues.

Manila has pledged not to "taunt or flout" the verdict, but its foreign minister Perfecto Yasay told the summit it "strongly affirms its respect for this milestone decision", calling for "all parties to exercise restraint and sobriety".

Tokyo is embroiled in a territorial dispute of its own with Beijing, and in remarks to reporters Abe brought up the South China Sea in the same breath as terrorism and North Korea as issues of international concern.

He met Chinese Premier Li Keqiang for 30 minutes, with Japanese news agencies reporting that Abe told him

the rule of international law must be respected.

Li retorted that Japan should "stop hyping up and interfering" in the South China Sea, China's official Xinhua news agency said.

The criticism comes as Beijing, a veto-wielding permanent member of the UN Security Council, seeks a greater presence on the global diplomatic stage.

It hoped to use the Asem summit -- official theme "Partnership for the Future through Connectivity" -- as an opportunity to showcase its global initiatives, such as the One Belt, One Road programme, an ambitious plan to build infrastructure projects across the Eurasian region.

China has sought to assert its claims in the South China Sea by building a network of artificial islands capable of supporting military operations, and this week reiterated its right to declare an Air Defence Identification Zone in the area, which would demand civilian flights submit to the authority of its military.

Other issues on the agenda at Asem included Britain's vote to leave the European Union.

## Never inspired terrorists

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if Naik's speeches, streamed online and aired on a television channel, justify acts of terror.

The Indian government is also probing the source of funds for Naik's NGO Islamic Research Foundation based in Mumbai.

Referring to the footage of some of

his speeches shown by media following the Dhaka carnage, Naik said, "Indian media is running a trial against me because of unverified reports. Half sentences being shown, clips being doctored and statements being shown out of context to malign me."

Asked about one of his speeches in

which he said that suicide bombing was permitted by Islam, he said, "It is haram if innocent people are being killed. But some scholars say that if suicide bombing is used as a tactic of war, then it may be permitted to save a country. For example, in World War II, Japan used suicide bombing as a tactic of war."