



Freedom fighter Ansar Ali in front of his house in Dinajpur's Hakimpur. He has got the house as a gift from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

Freedom fighter gets house from PM

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

"Bir Nibash" -- a name well-suited for the house of a hero of the country. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has arranged this house as a token of her appreciation for Freedom Fighter Ansar Ali's gallantry during the Liberation War of 1971.

The key to the house was handed over on August 18 to Ansar Ali from Hakimpur upazila of Dinajpur. Shibli Sadiq, lawmaker of Dinajpur-6, gave away the key to the Freedom Fighter on the PM's behalf.

Local Government and Engineering Department built the house on 5 decimals of land at Chhatni village in the same upazila at a cost of Tk 8 lakh.

The Liberation War veteran became tearful and remained speechless for a few moments after the key was given to him. He broke the silence by saying, "Now I can die in peace, as I haven't been able to furnish anything better for

my family since my return from the war."

Freedom Fighter Liakat Ali, commander of Hakimpur Muktiyoddha Sangsad, was also present during the occasion.

"I will remember this day till the moment I breathe my last," Ansar Ali said as he moved in to Bir Nibash the next day, along with his family members including his sons, daughters-in-law and grand children. His wife passed away 20 years ago.

This valiant Freedom Fighter joined Bangladesh Army after the Liberation War and since his retirement from the army as a lance corporal in 1986, he had been living in rental thatched huts.

After 30 years of hardship, Ansar Ali has finally been able to provide a proper shelter to his family members -- a real home that has two bedrooms, a dining room, two bathrooms and a kitchen.

"I now forget the hardship I faced

over the last 30 years," said a happy war veteran, thanking Sheikh Hasina for her generous gesture. "We fought for the country during the Liberation War of 1971 without any fear of any consequences, only to see an independent homeland... This government, however, is doing a lot of good deeds for our [Freedom Fighters] honour."

In 1971 Ansar Ali took part in the Liberation War of Bangladesh under Sector 7 after he and many other local youths received warfare training in India. He was assigned with blowing up bridges and culverts with mines and other explosives in his Sector.

On August 11 another Freedom Fighter, Dabir Uddin from Khatra Madhabpur village in the same upazila, also received a house, in the form of a gift, from the Prime Minister, said Hakimpur upazila commander of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Liakat Ali.

Top court

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HC verdict.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha passed the order following two petitions by the government and eight rights organisations seeking a stay on the HC verdict.

Syeda Rezwana Hasan, a lawyer for the rights organisations, told The Daily Star that Ashiyani City authorities were not allowed to continue activities of their projects at Uttarkhan, Dakkhin Khan, Barua and Butnar mouzas in Dhaka following the SC order.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam said the government had filed the stay petition, considering that the living condition -- low land, open space and forest that were necessary in a city -- would be damaged if Ashiyani City's housing projects were allowed.

Provide info

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held there this week, said an official.

State Minister for Finance MA Mannan will join the delegation later, the official added.

The next round of Foreign Office Consultation between Bangladesh and Pakistan is likely to be held in Dhaka on September 1-2.

Hasnat sent

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scrutinised," he said.

The law enforcers will seek remand for him in future if necessary, Masudur added.

Hasnat was shown arrested on August 13 in the case linked with the murders of 20 hostages, including 17 foreigners, in the terror attack.

Earlier on August 4, former North South University teacher Hasnat and Canadian university student Tahmid Hasib among the survivors of the July 1 attack were taken on remand for eight days.

Hasnat was again remanded for eight days. Tahmid was sent to jail on Saturday after completion of his remand for 14 days in two phases.

On July 1, armed militants stormed Holey Artisan Bakery at the diplomatic zone in Dhaka's Gulshan area and killed nine Italians, seven Japanese, two Bangladeshis, one Indian and one Bangladesh-born US citizen. Two police officers were also killed.

Mall authorities

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were burned significantly inside the shops, which made it difficult for firefighters to determine any hidden blaze, he added.

"Firefighters will officially inform the mall authorities before leaving it," said Ali Ahmed. He hoped that they would be able to finish their job by night.

The shopping mall authorities said they were hopeful about opening the market by tomorrow.

"We are waiting for the fire service officials to finish their job. Once we take charge, we will determine the actual loss by our own experts," said Jasim Uddin, head of marketing of the mall.

Firefighters struggled for at least 15 hours to fully douse the fire that broke out at the shopping complex around 11:30am Sunday.

The cause of the blaze still remains unknown. Fire service officials suspect the fire originated from electric short circuit on the ceiling of a shop at Block-C on level-6.

According to fire service officials, as many as 29 fire engines were used in the operation. Eleven people, trapped on the rooftop, were rescued unharmed.

The mega shopping mall, one of the biggest in the country, houses about 2,300 shops in addition to food courts, Cineplex and gymnasiums.

This is the fifth fire incident at the market and the adjacent 20-storey building which is used as Bashundhara's office since 2009,

according to shop owners and employees.

Smoke was seen coming out of the mall yesterday afternoon while the mall staff cleaned up accumulated waters from different floors.

Talking to reporters yesterday afternoon, Jasim Uddin said 11 shops were damaged completely while 20 to 22 more shops on level-6 have been affected from the blaze.

The Bashundhara authorities will also form a body with their own expert technicians and fire service officials to find out whether any negligence of duty on the part of their staff was responsible for the inferno, said Jasim.

Fire service authorities formed a five-member body that started work yesterday, DG Ali Ahmed told The Daily Star by phone.

Meanwhile, MA Hannan Azad, president of Bashundhara Shop Owners' Association, claimed that some 100 stores on level-6 were affected due to the blaze.

Alongside goods stored and displayed, interiors of several shops have also been damaged partly or completely, he said, adding that interior of a shop may cost as many as Tk 10 lakh.

Visiting the spot yesterday afternoon, Tawfique Ehsan, president of Dhaka Metropolitan Shop Owners' Association, said they would form a monitoring committee and discuss with the authorities concerned for compensation for the affected shop owners.

Hajj pilgrims

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morning [Sunday]. But there is no update on that," said Nayem Ali, 55, from Brahmanbaria.

The Daily Star could not reach his agent or Biman for comments last night.

His wife, two sons and their wives have also come to see him off but they were waiting at the camp without any information about his flight. "It's painful that there is none to listen to my sufferings..." he said.

Around 30,000 pilgrims have already obtained their visas from the Saudi Arabian embassy in Dhaka to perform hajj, said Abu Saleh Mostofa Kamal, director of Dhaka's Ashkona Hajj Office.

A total of 55,616 hajjis have already flown to Saudi Arabia by this afternoon [Monday]. Over 15,000 hajjis are waiting for their visas," he said, adding that five to six days were left to get the visas so "these pilgrims will be able to get visas by this time".

Meanwhile, a total of 483 hajj agents

have been asked to submit pilgrims' passports to the embassy for hajj visas by August 28.

"All the mentioned agents have been requested to complete visa procedures for the hajjis as the Royal Saudi embassy will not accept any passport after August 28," said Kamal.

This year, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia selected 483 agents to handle the hajj activities of 96,558 pilgrims who have registered online. Of them, 143 agents were waiting to get confirmation from the Saudi government to send around 15,000 pilgrims, whose fate hangs in the balance, said sources at Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh.

AKM Masudur Rahman, consular at Bangladesh Hajj Mission in Jeddah, told The Daily Star that only 14 hajj agents could not complete the detailed procedure for their 2,500 to 3,000 pilgrims. The hajj mission is monitoring whether agents are ensuring the promised facilities for the pilgrims, he added.

NOOR'S MOTORCADE Key accused of 2013 attack arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Detectives yesterday arrested the prime accused in a case filed for attacking the motorcade of Asaduzzaman Noor, the then Awami League lawmaker and now cultural affairs minister, at Ramganj Haat of Sadar upazila in 2013.

Four Jubo League and Krishak League men were killed and many others injured in the attack.

Babul Akhtar, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said a team of Detective Branch of police nabbed the main accused, Abu Helal, 52, near Badiar intersection on Nilphamari-Jaldhaka road around 10:30am.

Helal, former ameer of Sadar upazila unit of Jamaat-e-Islami, is also the vice-principal of Chander Haat Degree college, said the police official.

On December 12, 2013, several thousand BNP-Jamaat activists protesting the execution of war criminal Jamaat's assistant secretary general Abdul Kader Molla attacked the houses of Hindus in several villages of Polashbari and Laxmichap unions.

They wounded a number of people, set fire to their houses and looted properties.

On December 14, local lawmaker Noor in a motorcade went to visit the houses of the affected people.

On his way back, several thousand BNP-Jamaat men attacked his motorcade with sharp weapons at Ramganj Haat under Tupamari union.

Later, a case was filed with Sadar Police Station against 14 known and 150 unknown people.

On March 15, 2015, the investigation officer of the case, sub-inspector Mostafizur Rahman of the police station, submitted a charge sheet to the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court, accusing 217 BNP-Jamaat men.

Before the arrest of Helal, police arrested 56 accused. But they all secured bail from the High Court.

Rio bids

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surprise factor was Great Britain, who reaped the rewards of massive investment for London 2012 by displacing China of the second position. Russian Federation, despite having a large number of athletes ineligible to compete due to drug offences, held on to fourth position while Germany finished fifth.

Japan, hosts of the next Olympics, moved up from 11th to 6th position while Brazil made their best ever finish on 13th position.

The Rio Olympics eventually proved to be just what everyone had feared it might not be. If glitz, glamour and lavishness was the parameter of success of the world's biggest sports extravaganza, Rio de Janeiro would probably rank somewhere in the middle tier, but if passion and commitment was the gold standard, then Rio has certainly earned a special place in the Games' history.

Ghulam Azam

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reported the incident, citing Ghulam Azam's lawyers.

However, Mashiure Rahman, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station, and Shiblee Noman, assistant commissioner (Ramna zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they knew nothing about it.

According to Azad, some 25-30 men came to the house at 119/2 Kazi Office Lane in Boro Moghbazar around 9:00pm, and inquired him about Azmi.

"I told them that I didn't know because I was not at the house the whole day. They then started beating me up," Azad told The Daily Star.

The men later entered the eight-storey building and searched all apartments. They found Azmi in one of the apartments, blindfolded him and took him with them around 11:30pm, claimed Azad.

Earlier on August 9, Ahmed Bin Quasem, son of top Jamaat leader and convicted war criminal Mir Quasem Ali, was allegedly picked up by some unidentified men from his Mirpur DOHS home in the capital.

Hummam Quader Chowdhury, son of executed war criminal Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, was also reportedly picked up by unidentified men from a court compound in the city on August 4.

Iraqi forces foil suicide bomb attack

Remove bomb vest from 12-yr-old 'IS boy' before blast

AFP, Kirkuk

Iraqi security forces apprehended a teenager wearing a suicide belt before he was able to detonate it in the city of Kirkuk, security officials said yesterday.

The foiled attack late Sunday was one of a series of security incidents in Kirkuk and came a day after a child suicide bomber killed more than 50 people in Turkey.

"Police forces managed to stop a bomber thought to be as young as 12," Kirkuk police chief Brigadier General Khattab Omar Aref told reporters.

He said the boy was about to carry bomb attack on behalf of IS at a Shia place of worship in Kirkuk, an ethnically and religiously mixed city that lies 240 kilometres north of Baghdad.

Nighttime TV footage showed a boy holding his hands in the air as security forces removed the explosive belt from around his waist.

The video shows him appearing to burst into tears as he is captured by police. The explosive vest was later detonated in a controlled explosion, reports Independent.

New details have emerged suggesting the boy was kidnapped by masked men who placed the explosive vest on him.

The thwarted attack was one of four separate security incidents in Kirkuk over a few hours, including one in which a policeman shot a suicide bomber who tried to enter a Shia prayer hall.

"The police forces have managed to foil a terrorist operation that could have caused victims and led to a catastrophe for the province," Kirkuk Governor Najmeddin Karim told AFP.

The security situation has been tense lately in Kirkuk, which is under Kurdish security control but is also home to Turkmens, as well as Sunni and Shia Arabs.

Aref said the attackers involved in the latest string of incidents entered Kirkuk recently and came from Mosul -- the last remaining major bastion of the Islamic State group.

Iraqi forces are currently conducting shaping operations on several fronts to tighten the noose on Mosul -- Iraq's second city -- and set the stage for an offensive.

The IS group, the most extreme organisation in modern jihad, has routinely used children to perpetrate crimes.

It provides young boys in its self-proclaimed caliphate military training from a very young age.

According to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the bomber who killed at least 54 people at a Kurdish wedding in the city of Gaziantep was aged 12 to 14.

Military officials, including from the US-led coalition fighting IS, have said the group was increasingly resorting to under-age fighters because a string of defeats and setbacks was stretching its ranks thinner than ever.

Japan's first lady visits Pearl Harbor

AFP, Tokyo

The wife of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has visited Pearl Harbor, bombed by Japanese planes nearly 75 years ago in an attack that brought the United States into World War II.

It was not clear exactly when Akie Abe made the visit. But she posted 11 pictures on her official Facebook page, apparently early yesterday.

"I offered flowers and my prayers at the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor," she wrote.

Her visit to the Hawaii memorial came just months after President Barack Obama journeyed to Hiroshima, the Japanese city where a US plane dropped the world's first atom bomb in the closing days of World War II.

Obama's trip to Hiroshima sparked speculation that Shinzo Abe could visit Pearl Harbor in response.

But top government spokesman Yoshihide Suga yesterday denied that, while confirming the first lady was in Hawaii for a "private trip".

"There is no such plan for the prime minister to visit Hawaii," Suga said.

On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes swept low over the US naval base, killing more than 2,400 American troops and civilians, a date which then-president Franklin Roosevelt declared would live in "infamy".

The two-hour bombardment of the US Pacific Fleet at anchor sank or damaged some 20 ships and destroyed 164 planes.

PM sees plot

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our main strength."

The prime minister mentioned that terrorism and militancy are not the problems of Bangladesh alone, as it is now a global menace. One Bangladeshi imam and his assistant were killed in the USA as they were coming out from a mosque after saying prayers, she added.

Talking about the overwhelming response her government received from the mass people for peace in the country, Hasina said all are very much aware now. She also urged the people of all religion to spread the message of peace.

"We all will be able to march forward staying united, enabling everyone to perform their religious rituals peacefully with dignity," she said.

The premier said the people of all religion had sacrificed their blood for the country's independence.

Turning to terrorism and militancy, she said militants have no humanity. "They have no religious perception; they don't believe in any religion, they are just terrorists, killers and militants. Those who are militants and terrorists have no religion and state. They have nothing, militancy and terrorism is their only job."

Reiterating her firm resolve not to allow militancy in the country, Hasina said her government would not tolerate any sort of militancy on this land.

She also assured the members of the Hindu community of taking steps to enact a succession law for them to facilitate their real heirs in getting their property.

To frame the law, Hindu community leaders need to reach a consensus first, she said, adding that the government would welcome if Hindu leaders submit a draft of the law to the government.

Pointing out the law enacted by her government for Hindus similar to the "heba law" of the Muslims, Hasina said her government has done this to facilitate handover of property of

Hindus to their close relatives without any tax.

As the Hindu leaders sought it, she also assured them of giving tax rebate on importing statue of Radha Krishna from abroad.

Awami League Advisory Council Member Suranjit Sengupta, State Minister for Youth and Sports Biren Sikder, State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Narayan Chandr Chanda addressed the programme.

The principal of Ramakrishna Mission in Dhaka, chief of Hrishidham Ashram of Chittagong, leaders of Bangladesh Puja Uddapan Parishad, Janmashtami Uddapan Parishad and Mohanagar Sarbojonin Puja Committee, among others, also spoke on the occasion.

250 fall sick

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The incident occurred around 10:00pm when the factory was set to close.

Jashim Uddin, an assistant director of fire service, said at least 200 visitors to a nearby tourist spot fell sick as wind carried the gas to the area across the Karnaphuli river which flows by the fertiliser factory.

Firefighters were trying to contain spread of the gas till late last night.

Residents of the neighbourhood were advised through loudspeakers to stay indoors and breathe through wet cloths.

Meanwhile, many residents in Agrabad, Bandar, Halishahar, Patenga and Naval Academy complained that they could feel toxicity in the air even though they kept doors and windows at homes shut.

Firefighters working in the area said they felt burning sensation in their eyes and skin due to concentration of the gas in the area.

Amal Barua, managing director of the fertiliser factory, said the reason of the leakage could not be known. All the staffs were evacuated from the factory as soon as the leakage occurred, he added.