

Fire orphans 2-yr-old

FROM PAGE 1
Around 3:30am, a house in the area was on fire. The fire had originated from an earthen stove and had engulfed two other houses, said Otish Chakma, senior station officer of Kalurghat fire station.

"Hearing screams, we all got out and saw the fire," said Manjur Alam, brother of Syed. Nahida gave her son to one of the neighbours and tried to douse the blaze as it spread to theirs, he added.

Later, firemen extinguished the flames around 4:30am, he said. But Nadia went inside the house, said neighbours Mohammad Babul and Md Rahsed. As she was not coming out, Syed went in too.

They were found lying unconscious inside, said Rina Akter, Syed's sister-in-law. Both were rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where doctors declared them dead around 6:00am, said Nayek Hamidur Rahman of CMCH police camp.

They went inside the house to recover their certificates and other



Adiat with his parents in a family photo.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

documents, said the family members.

Nur Banu, Syed's mother, could not speak. She was holding Adiat tight.

"Will we be able to take care of him

like his parents?" lamented Rina Akter.

Some seven houses were gutted, and the damage was estimated around Tk 3 lakh, said a fire service official.

Evacuation suspended

FROM PAGE 1
A number of buses containing fighters from east Aleppo and their families left the last rebel-held sector of the Syrian city yesterday after a deal between rebels and pro-government forces allowed evacuations to resume, reported Reuters earlier.

Pro-government forces agreed to the deal in exchange for people being allowed to leave two Shia villages besieged by insurgents. The Aleppo evacuation ground to a halt on Friday after a disagreement over the villages of al-Foua and Kefraya.

Syrian state television, citing its correspondent in the city, yesterday said buses had started to leave east Aleppo where over 15,000 people gathered in a square to wait for the buses. Many had

spent the night sleeping in the streets in freezing temperatures.

Some buses and Red Crescent vehicles also arrived at the entrance to the two villages, most of whose residents are Shia Muslims, shortly after the deal was announced, according to al-Manar television. The broadcaster is affiliated to the Lebanese group Hezbollah, an ally of Damascus.

However, five buses were attacked and burned on their way there, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and Syrian state media said.

State television showed pictures of flames coming from the green buses which have come to be synonymous with evacuations in Syria.

Videos broadcast on social media showed men with guns cheering and

shouting "God is great" as the buses burned.

State media said "armed terrorists", a term it uses for groups fighting against President Bashar al-Assad's rule, carried out the attack. Pro-Damascus Mayadeen television said the rebel group formerly known as the Nusra Front was behind the attack.

Rebel officials said an angry crowd of people, possibly alongside pro-government "operatives", was responsible.

Aleppo had been divided between government and rebel areas in the nearly six-year-long war, but a lightning advance by the Syrian army and its allies began in mid-November following months of intense air strikes, forcing the insurgents out of most of the rebel-held territory within a matter of weeks.

Making people smile

FROM PAGE 1
those in the audience to form groups and collect information of patients in their districts," Arman said.

He and his volunteers set up the link between patients and the NGOs offering the treatment free of cost.

"Such a tiny effort can change the life of someone with cleft lips."

A common birth defect in Bangladesh, it is possible to surgically remove the cleft in most of the cases.

Though many people have come forward to lend their support to the cause, initially drawing people's attention to the matter was not an easy task.

His fame from Mirakkal has helped Arman get quick response from people. He now leads a network of volunteers to ensure better treatment of those born with the defect.

Arman is grateful to Lion Mukhlesur Rahman Foundation's (LMRF) chief Nader Khan who first

engaged him in this work six years ago. "I was inspired by his guidance," Arman said.

A number of organisations in the country have been providing almost free treatment that cost around Tk 20,000.

Arman has continued working with the LMRF. He also communicates with other organisations working in different parts of Bangladesh to ensure that people from those areas also get free medical services.

For spreading his messages about cleft lips, Arman runs a Facebook page "CureCleft" which now acts as an information centre for patients.

Volunteers collect information about patients and post on the page.

"We tell them what to do next," Arman said.

Referring to a recent experience, he said a follower of the page Abdus Samad Raju met a girl with cleft lips

while travelling in a three-wheeler at Chawkbazar in Chittagong city.

Raju immediately posted her picture in the inbox of the group alongside the phone number of her family.

The girl received treatment and got rid of the birth defect in just six days, to the surprise of her family, Arman said.

The girl's mother told Arman the family had avoided taking her out because neighbours used to describe her distorted lips as a curse.

Dr Shamim Khan, executive director of the LMRF, said he was very happy working with the young star. Arman began working as a volunteer with them in 2010 and looked after organisational work in Cox's Bazar district.

"We feel very happy. We are proud of Arman who did not leave the work even after becoming a celebrity," said Shamim, expressing the hope that other celebrities would come forward to work for social causes.

Currently, on an average they are getting Tk 7,000, according to the workers and Industrial Police.

Workers of around seven factories started their movement on December 12, who were later joined by workers of other plants joined to press home the demand.

Yesterday, with the authorities keeping the factories closed to avoid any untoward incident, some workers tried to block the Dhaka-Tangail highway at Jamgona around 11:00am, but the police foiled the move, said witnesses.

A protester, Siddikur Rahman, said they are raising the demand for wage hike to cope with the rising prices of essential commodities.

Mizan Shafiqur Rahman, superintendent of police in Dhaka, said additional police were deployed in the areas to check violence.

Mustafizur Rahman, director of Industrial Police-1, said they are continuing talks with the factories' owners as regards their demand.

Ties not reliant

FROM PAGE 5

"Pakistan has always harboured and supported terrorists. We feel those who support terrorism should be discouraged and isolated. We should do everything to discourage and condemn such attacks. Such kind of terror attacks should not be carried out against any country," Kamal says.

On terror attacks both in India and Bangladesh having roots in Pakistan, he says, "Both India and Bangladesh have the same stand on the issue of terrorism. We have noticed in recent past, how Pakistan's involvement in various terror attacks has come out into open. This has to stop."

It seems little has changed today for these peace-loving people, one of the earliest to settle in Bengal, who cleared the forests and built the railroads. In 1855 their grievances were not given importance as today their rights are ignored. The exploitation that Sidhu and Kanoo fought against is still their lot.

One needs only to see the recent developments in Gaibandha, where their village was razed to the ground, their claims to their land ignored, to wonder: how much longer till they are accorded rights as human beings by those in power?

The writer is a member of the editorial team, *The Daily Star*

brothers, Sidhu and Kanoo, they rose up, only to be crushed by the British.

"It was not war; they did not understand yielding. As long as their national drum beat, the whole party would stand, and allow themselves to be shot down. ... There was not a sepoy in the war who did not feel ashamed of himself," W.W. Hunter would write later.

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