



Families being taken to safety from a two-storey building, Chayaneer, yesterday morning in Premtala area of Chittagong's Sitakunda, where around 20 residents were trapped inside their flats for more than 16 hours as the law enforcers carried out a raid on a militant hideout in the building.



PHOTOS: ANURUP KANTI DAS

BCL men force fresher to do squats at DU

Some Bangladesh Chhatra League activists of Dhaka University forced a fresher to do squats, holding his ears, after he failed to identify a leader at his dormitory's guestroom Wednesday night.

The victim was Khokon Sarker of the mass communication and journalism (MCJ) department.

The BCL activists of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque hall unit named Nazmul and Sujon of banking, Alamin of sociology, Ahad of political science, Toufiq of Islamic history, Ahmed Monir of theatre and performance studies, and Azizur Rahman of geography forced Khokon to do squats in front of them for failing to identify one of them. They also drove him out of the hall with all his belongings.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

A 16 hour ordeal

MINHAJ UDDIN and PRANABESH CHAKRABORTY, from Sitakunda

In the afternoon of March 15, Shahadat Hossain was enjoying the 100th test cricket match of Bangladesh on television at his elder sister's apartment in a two-storey building, Chayaneer, in Premtala area of Sitakunda.

His elder sister was busy doing her daily chores, while the younger one was tutoring a neighbouring girl. His nephew and niece were playing.

Around 2:50pm, they heard heavy knocks on the front door. The 26-year-old opened the door and to his utmost surprise saw a good number of police standing. But surprise soon turned into fear for the family.

"Police told us that they were going to raid the flat next to us on the ground floor where some militants were hiding," said Shahadat while talking to The Daily Star yesterday noon at the upazila health complex where his sisters were under treatment.

"They asked us not to get out and keep the doors locked," he said.

Since then, the family along with 15 others of six families got trapped inside their flats for over 16 hours till yesterday morning.

A combined team of law enforcers evacuated Shahadat and his family members at 7:45am yesterday after the raid -- code named "Assault-16" -- that started at 6:00am ended. "We were terrified hearing militants' presence..." said Shahadat, a mobile phone top-up vendor.

He said a few moments later they heard a loud bang and panic gripped the family, especially the children.

His elder sister Sabina Yasmin kept on calling her husband Md Salim Uddin, a UP member of Banchsharia union, to inform him about the incident.

Salim, who was at the upazila sadar when they called him, said, "I rushed to my house but could not get inside as the area was barricaded. Tensed, I waited outside all night."

He said throughout the night they heard sounds of several loud explosions from the building. "My wife kept on calling me. They were terrified and crying incessantly," he said.

"None of us could eat anything out of fear," said Morjina, younger sister of Shahadat. "After hearing gunshots, we laid down on the floor."

Sabina, lying in the hospital bed, still

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Finding home after a life in the abyss

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

She was the twelfth among her 16 siblings. Her life was miserable in the poor family. At age 17, she could not stand it anymore, and left home in Naogaon to take up a job in Bagerhat. But her employer turned out to be a pimp.

"I wanted to escape from Goshpotty brothel many times but I could not. Where would I take shelter? Who would give me food? I was in anguish and cried all day long," said Shifa (not her real name).

A daughter of an imam (who leads Muslim prayers), she was reluctant to leave home. But poverty forced her out of home in 1995. She worked as a sex worker till 2007.

"...I happened to contact an NGO which worked for HIV/Aids. They gave me training in health and livelihood activities," the 39-year-old said.

Christian Service Society (CSS) also gave her a piece of land with a house so that she could lead an independent life.

"At last I got a new life, the life of a decent woman."

She was among 31 sex workers who were rehabilitated by CSS. During its HIV/AIDS campaign in 2007, the sex workers requested CSS to help them get back to normal life.

The organisation then picked them from Banishanta and Phultala brothels in Khulna and Goshpotty in Bagerhat.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 7

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Children still reading error-riddled textbooks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two and a half months after a number of primary school textbooks were found to be riddled with errors, the education ministry yesterday said they were still "working on" to rectify the errors.

Twenty days ago, a high-powered committee -- formed by the education ministry in the wake of a volley of criticism -- made recommendations on the issue in its report to the ministry, but the latter still awaits the nod with correction notes from primary and mass education ministry.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid and Education Secretary Sohrab Hossain yesterday made the remarks while answering to reporters' queries during a ministry press briefing regarding the annual nationwide "Creative Talent Hunt Competition".

Answering to a query, the minister said the committee had done its work "very

seriously" and it had already submitted its report. "We are now working on it [report] and we will inform you about our decision later."

Secretary Sohrab Hossain said the process of correction was pending with the primary and mass education ministry. The correction notes will be published after the ministry's approval.

Asked about the withdrawal of a number of contents created by reputed authors from primary and secondary level textbooks, he said such changes in textbooks are made every year.

He, however, declined to elaborate further on the matter as a writ petition in this regard is pending with the High Court.

The government has been facing widespread criticism from various quarters over serious errors in textbooks and discarding of some contents by reputed authors.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Sir Abed's support brought satellite success

Brac University event told STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac Onnesha, first nano-satellite owned by a Bangladeshi university, became a success due to Brac founder Sir Fazle Hasan Abed's apt support, said Abdulla Hil Kafi, one of three students who developed the satellite, yesterday.

He said Sir Abed gave the team 10 minutes to describe the project when they met him in September 2015.

Arifur Rahman, a key person behind the project, explained him the whole thing, and he praised the idea and agreed to move on, he said.

"We just came to know that we are becoming first Bangladeshis to develop a satellite," Kafi told an event

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Keep children away from militancy: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Reiterating that there will be no room for terrorism and militancy in Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all again to remain alert so that students and children do not take the wrong path of terrorism, militancy and drug addiction.

She also said if awareness could be raised, the country will surely be freed from terrorism and militancy.

The prime minister was distributing cheques of special donation among the scientists and researchers of various universities, organisations and agencies under the Bangabandhu Fellowship and National Science and Technology (NST) Fellowship in the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

Mentioning that her government is pledged-bound to extend all-out cooperation to science-based research, the prime minister also suggested that the researchers attentively devote themselves to their work so that they can deliver good results to the nation.

She also called upon the students to spontaneously come forward in the science-

based education to meet the growing demand of scientists and technologists.

About Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Pabna, Hasina said the country is about to step into the nuclear era and a huge number of scientists and technology experts will be required in this field. "Students to be studying in the nuclear field will have to take the responsibility of operating such a plant."

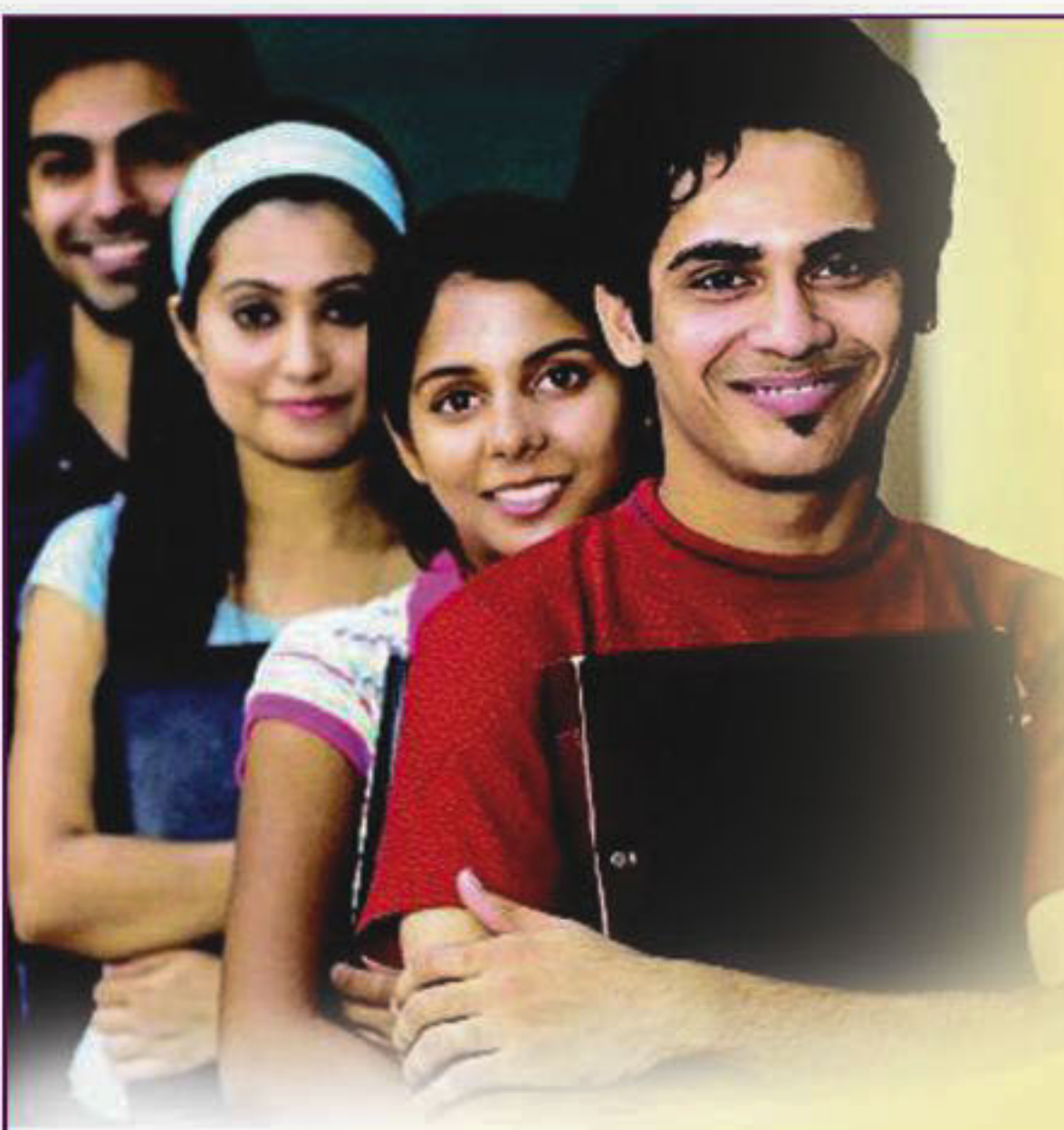
Stressing marine research following the gain of vast maritime areas from India and Myanmar, she said her government has already established Marine Research Institute while a sea aquarium will be built to know about the sea resources.

She mentioned that under the project, 50 researchers were selected for the fellowship to obtain MS and 60 for PhD abroad and 100 more for PhD and 11 for post doctoral programmes at home. Earlier, Hasina distributed Bangabandhu Fellowship to two recipients, NST fellowship to four and cheques of Research Grant among four recipients.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina distributes cheques of special donation among the scientists and researchers of various universities, organisations and agencies under the Bangabandhu Fellowship and National Science and Technology (NST) Fellowship in the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium yesterday.

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