

Join, stay in JS

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activities, please. If you don't stop such practices, we know how to handle these strong-handedly," said Hasina, also the president of ruling Awami League (AL).

She said this while talking to the party's grassroots from Chapainawabganj in a view exchange meeting at her official residence Gono Bhaban yesterday.

After an 83-day absence since March last year, the BNP on Friday hinted that it would go back to parliament during the upcoming budget session scheduled to be begin on June 3.

The constitution stipulates that lawmakers will lose membership if they remain absent for 90 consecutive business days.

Regarding the upcoming parliamentary election, the premier said, "Election [in our country] will be held the way it is conducted in other parliamentary democracies across the globe."

The Awami League Central Working Committee, the

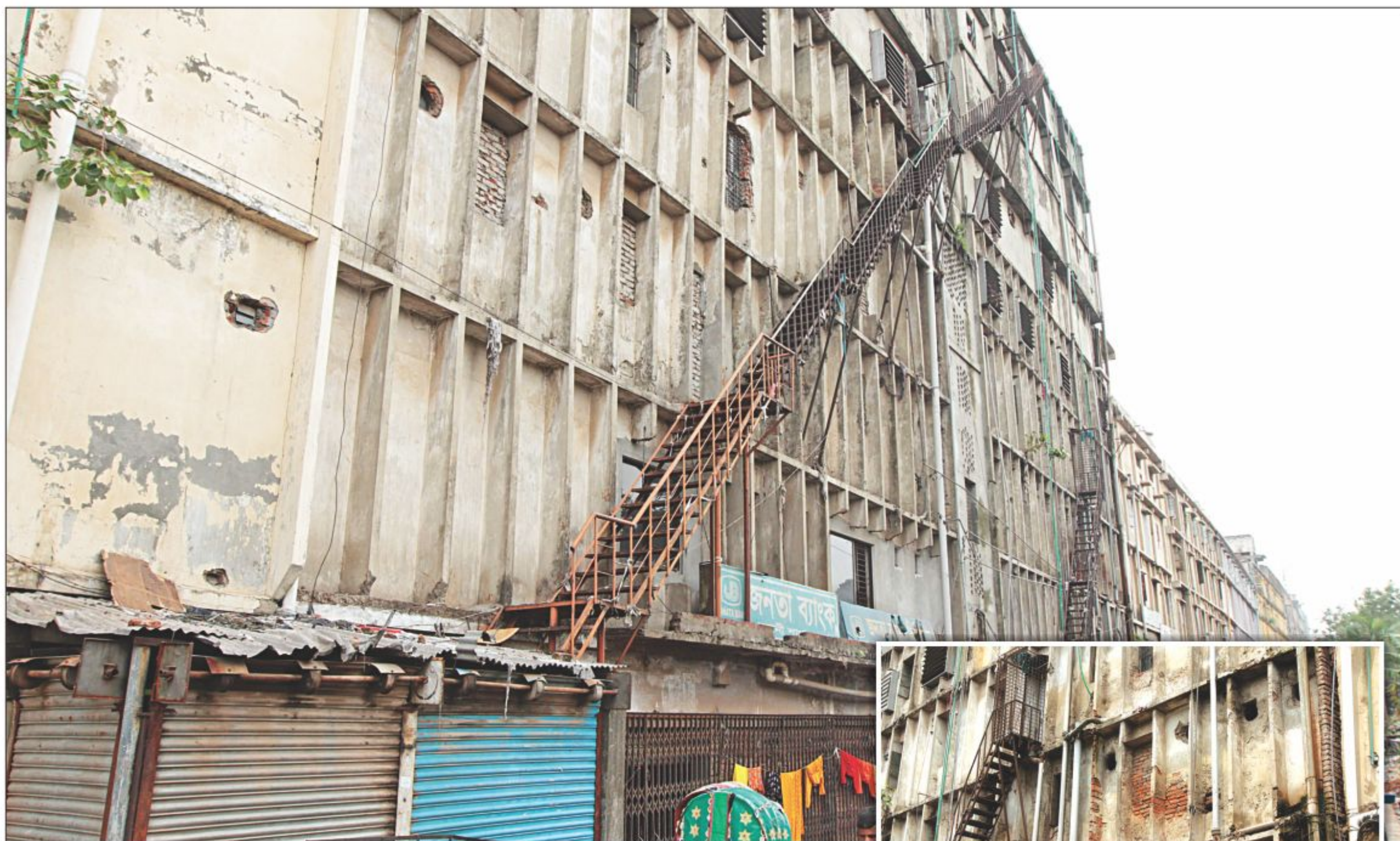
highest decision-making body of the ruling party, on Friday decided that the next general election had to be held under an interim government composed of elected representatives, and it would not allow a caretaker government formed with unelected people.

Hinting at the opposition leader Khaleda Zia, Hasina said that she [Khaleda] had a unique style of joining parliament and leaving it after delivering a one- or two-hour-long speech.

"But we don't want a repetition of the old practice. Stay and take part in the discussions during the budget session," the PM said.

She also urged her party men to strengthen the party and showcase the development during the tenure of the incumbent government.

Awami League leaders Abdul Latif Siddiqui, Satish Chandra Roy, Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin, and Mahbubul Alam Hanif, among others, were present at the meeting.



The fire escape of the garment factory in Banani does not lead to the ground. It just stops on the first floor. In an emergency, panicked workers would have no place to go to.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Act right away

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labour standards and workers and workers' rights."

She informed Kerry of Bangladesh's latest measures for ensuring workers' rights and workplace safety and the government's commitment to reforming the existing labour law. Amendments to the law will be placed in the coming parliament session.

The foreign minister urged the US government to continue to provide Bangladesh with GSP (the generalised system of preference) privileges and to extend duty-free and quota free market access for Bangladeshi products.

Kerry assured Dipu Moni that he would do his best, according to a press release of the Bangladesh Embassy in the USA.

"We are hopeful that the

and Washington was not going good over several issues, including the removal of Prof Muhammad Yunus from Grameen Bank, Bangladesh's delay in signing Tifca and the death of labour leader Aminul Islam.

According to the State Department's media note, Kerry said war crimes trial at the International Crimes Tribunal should be fair and transparent in line with international standards.

Dipu Moni explained the context of 1971 Liberation War, the role of war criminals and the tribunal's procedure.

She also renewed her invitation to the US secretary of state to visit Bangladesh. Kerry promised that he would make a visit at the earliest possible time.

trywide violence incited by Jamaat-Shibir and briefed him on Hefazat's 13-point demand and the mayhem created by them.

Bangladesh cannot reverse its achievements and these demands clash with its constitution and aspirations and dreams of the people and go against the founding principles of the state established through the Liberation War in 1971, Dipu Moni said.

She added people rejected the outdated demands, including enactment of a blasphemy law and abolishing of women and education policies.

GRAMEEN BANK When Kerry raised the matter of Grameen Bank, Dipu Moni said that as a public statutory body, the bank was now running in accordance with

Hartal unacceptable

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The statement was issued in the wake of political violence and continuous shutdowns called by the opposition parties.

The chambers are Bangladesh German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bangladesh-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dutch-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, France Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Nordic Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The reaction to the recent incidents in Bangladesh's garment industry is enormous in Europe, said

Albrecht Conze, the German ambassador.

The country should take steps to face this image crisis, Conze said. "Stop talking. It's time for action."

Bangladesh's growth is declining in many sectors, said Carel Richter, chargé d'affaires of the Netherlands' embassy.

Europe would like to buy more from Bangladesh if there are successful efforts to reverse the current situation, Richtersaid.

The country has come to this stage by hard work of the entrepreneurs and common people, said Sakawat Abu Khair, president of Bangladesh German

Chamber.

If the western companies now shift their orders from here and venture into some other countries, Bangladesh will eventually receive those assub-orders, he said.

But that will make the labour even cheaper and the factories will become less-compliant, Khair said.

He urged the foreign investors to help Bangladesh get rid of the crisis with suggestions.

Md Saiful Islam, an adviser to Bangladesh German Chamber, blamed the recent disasters in the garment sector on negligence.

The government should hold a fair and meaningful

election, which will get both international and local acceptance, Islam said.

"Bangladesh is a people's republic and we have a rich heritage," said Syed Nurul Islam, president of Bangladesh-Malaysia Chamber.

If French buyers shift their orders from Bangladesh, it would create unemployment, said Humayun Rashid, president of France Bangladesh Chamber.

Arild Klokkehaug, founding president of Nordic Chamber; Shahzade Hamid, president of Dutch-Bangladesh Chamber, and Hiroyuki Watabe, vice president of Japan-Bangladesh Chamber, were also present.



US Secretary of State John Kerry meets Foreign Minister Dipu Moni at the US Department of State in Washington DC Friday.

PHOTO: US STATE DEPARTMENT

USA will continue giving GSP facilities to Bangladesh," said Bangladesh Ambassador in USA Akramul Quader.

A hearing on whether the USA should continue providing GSP facilities to Bangladesh has recently ended. Cancellation of the facilities would have negative impact on exports from Bangladesh.

"The office of the United States Trade Representative will make a proposal on GSP next month," Quader told The Daily Star over the phone, adding Bangladesh would get to know about the decision at that time.

Asked whether the much-talked about Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework Agreement (Tifca) came up in the meeting, he said Bangladesh and the USA would soon make the deal.

"There are some procedural matters that are yet to be completed. We will sign the deal on completion of the formalities," he said.

During the talks, Dipu Moni apprised Kerry of some other issues, including election-time government, climate change, Rohingya refugees, violence by Jamaat-Shibir men and Hefazat-e-Islam and its 13-point demand.

Officials considered the meeting crucial as the relationship between Dhaka

ROHINGYA ISSUE

When Kerry expressed his concern about the Rohingya population in Myanmar, the foreign minister said despite having constraints, Bangladesh had been a gracious host to the Rohingya refugees.

But the country cannot accommodate any more refugees, given the economic, environmental, social and geographical constraints, she added.

Appreciating Bangladesh's role, Kerry assured Dipu Moni that the USA would continue talks with Myanmar to resolve the matter.

Dipu Moni praised the US president's recent remark in Yangon that the solution to Rohingya problems lies in Myanmar and that the citizenship issue of Rohingyas must be addressed.

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

Dipu Moni told the US secretary of state that the Awami League-led government was committed to ensuring free, fair and inclusive parliamentary elections.

In this regard, she said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had already invited the opposition to a dialogue to place its suggestions about the model of the interim government.

RECENT VIOLENCE AND HEFAZAT

The foreign minister also informed Kerry of the coun-

the relevant rules and regulations. She also said appointment of a new managing director was facing some obstacles.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Dipu Moni urged the USA to stand by Bangladesh's climate change related adaptation and mitigation projects since the country is very vulnerable to the problem.

Kerry assured her of US assistance.

PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE The two countries will hold its second partnership dialogue in Dhaka on May 26 and 27 to discuss further security, trade and development ties between them.

Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque will lead the Bangladeshi delegation while Wendy Sherman, US under secretary of state for political affairs, will lead the US delegation.

The first dialogue was held in Washington DC in September last year.

AL leader

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In protest of the killings, locals blockaded Dhaka-Bagerhat highway at Attaki intersection in Fakirhat upazila for about an hour, added our Bagerhat correspondent.

Hearing the news, businessmen of Fakirhat upazila headquarters shut their establishments.

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Party insiders say the opposition may enforce a one-day hartal at the end of this week to begin fresh agitation. It is also considering programmes like blockade and siege in phases.

Moudud Ahmed, BNP standing committee member, said, "We have no alternative to taking a hard line now."

Rafiqul Islam Mia, another member of the standing committee, said there was no question of placing a proposal in parliament.

Both the leaders said the opposition MPs, if they join the House session, would speak on various issues including the necessity for a non-partisan polls-time government, and "oppression" on the opposition activists and "corruption" of the government.

In March, the BNP-led

opposition launched a one-point movement to oust the government as its call for restoration of the caretaker government system went unheeded. However, that movement has yet to gain pace.

According to a number of BNP policymakers, the party's over-dependence on Islamist group Hefajat-e Islam to intensify the one-point movement was a severe blow to their agitation.

In addition, the government's tough stance on the opposition like arrest of its leaders and refusal to allow rallies has already put the BNP in a tight corner.

Against this backdrop, the ruling party's recent proposal for a dialogue to resolve the political crisis had generated a ray of hope for BNP.

"It is now clear the so-called dialogue proposed by the ruling party will yield no

result. So, we are considering an all-out agitation against the government," Rafiqul said.

Asked to elaborate, he said the opposition would launch a non-cooperation movement against the government at one stage of street agitation.

Contacted over the phone, a number of grassroots level BNP leaders in Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Bogra and Panchagarh said they were waiting for the party high command's instruction to enforce tougher agitation. "The party should now announce tougher programmes to pile up pressure on the government," said Kamrul Monir, general secretary of Rajshahi city BNP.

The main opposition party, however, is facing organisational weakness mainly in the capital from where anti-government move-

ment spreads elsewhere in the country. Leaders of the city unit allegedly do not take to the streets in fear of police action.

When his attention was drawn to the reported organisational weakness of his party, Moudud said the anti-government movement might have a turning point anytime and the party was not that weak as it might appear.

LATEST

The BNP lawmakers would join the Jatiya Sangsad session on June 9, the party's standing committee decided at a meeting last night, said meeting sources.

Chairperson Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting at her Gulshan office.

The party also decided to enforce hartal and blockade and hold mass rallies across the country, but it did not finalise the dates.

FAKE PASSPORT

6 held at airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Rohingya and five Bangladeshis were arrested at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday while trying to fly abroad with fake papers.

Members of the airport security force, the Armed Police Battalion, made the arrests at the departure lounge.

Rohingya national Md Zafar Alam, 20, of Mongdu in Myanmar, was nabbed when he was about to catch a flight of Qatar Airways to Saudi Arabia around midday.

"He had come to Dhaka via Cox's Bazar and managed a fake passport and a visa with the help of a broker, who is a Bangladeshi, in exchange for Tk 2 lakh," said Alamgir Hossain Shimul, senior assistant superintendent of the battalion.

Around 45 minutes later, the security force arrested five Bangladeshi nationals when they were trying to take a Malaysian Airlines flight to Kuala Lumpur.

The five are Md Shihab, 28, Mohammad Aziz, 34, Shahadat Hossain, 34, Tahajjal Hossain, 38, and Zahirul Islam, 28.

Officials of the battalion said the six were nabbed on charges of forging machine-readable passports. Two cases were filed with Airport Police Station.

53 BNP men

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from Kashimpur Jail-1 and the remaining 18 from Kashimpur Jail-2 around 1:30pm.

Asked, Jahangir could not confirm the charges on which the opposition men were arrested again.

On March 11, they were arrested from BNP's Nayapaltan central office in the capital.

A total of 156 leaders and activists were arrested during the drive.

Earlier on Thursday, the DB police rearrested BNP Joint Secretary General Salahuddin Ahmed at the Dhaka Central Jail gate after his release on bail in various cases.

Saudi woman

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women's rights are very restricted - she had to break a lot of barriers to achieve her goal, her climb team said.

A biography on the expedition website said convincing Moharrak's family to agree to her climb "was as great a challenge as the mountain itself", though they fully support her now.

"I really don't care about being the first," she is quoted as saying. "So long as it inspires someone else to be second."

Looking down

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She was put on a catheter as her urethra was ruptured. She was not able to eat properly and said, "My mother would have checked every now and then if I had eaten."

Her husband, Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman, 28, opened a bank account in her name with remuneration received from the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association, so that it may be used in the future for her recovery.

Twenty male and 53 female patients, out of the 116 admitted to Nitor from the tragedy, asked for rehabilitation and were in need of financial support for their recovery.

Lucky Begum, 32, suffered muscle injuries to her leg. "I swore to Allah that I would return to the village with my family if I were rescued," she said.

She had come to the capital to earn a living three years ago. She decided to take whatever money she would receive from charity and BGMEA back to Kaliya in Narail to start up a small poultry business.

"I will not stay here anymore, even if the government

promises me a job! If anyone wants to help me in any way, then they should help us start some sort of business back in our village," Lucky added.

Mahmudul Hasan Hridoy, 27, also wanted a job at his village at Shingail in Manikganj. He was a private tutor before he joined New Wave Style as an accounts officer last March.

"Doctors told me that I need one year's rest before I can walk normally again. I would never be able to lift heavy objects," said Mahmudul, who suffered from spinal cord injury. He said he would go back to teaching, but cannot as he would not be able to bear the stress.

Unlike the other survivors, he did not receive any remuneration from the BGMEA since he never got an appointment letter from the factory.

"They told me to contact the owner, but he is in jail. I tried to contact the factory manager, but he too is injured," he said.

Mahmudur does not know what to do, just like the hundreds others affected by the collapse.



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