Rebuilding lives

Savar collapsed on April 24, claiming over a thousand lives and injuring scores. While it was the worst factory tragedy in Bangladesh, it brought out the compassionate side of people. Many came forward to help rescue and rehabilitate the survivors.

Like many Bangladeshis and others from around the world, Sami Al Islam was deeply moved by the disaster. Wanting to do something about it, he worked with a Facebook group called Mukto Tarunyo to set up an establishment that could offer the survivors an opportunity to earn a living.

"When we first collected donations from family and friends to help the survivors, we visited Enam Medical [at Savar] and other medical camps where many victims wanted to know if we could do something to help them earn again," said Sami.

"That was when we thought of opening a small, one-storied establishment for them. With the help of Kazi Munir Hossain Rintu, a mechanical engineer long involved in rehabilitation work, Major Khalid Raihan, general manager of Beximco, and Fayeza Sultana of the ICDDRB, we bought some equipment and found a local landlord willing to rent space at a low rate.

"And we call it Aparajeyo," he explained. The factory is owned by the workers and

the profits are divided equally among them. "We currently make cotton bags and have already delivered an order to Family Needs in Uttara. We have orders from several NGOs to supply bags for their training programmes," said Rintu.

"We are also considering manufacturing jute bags, and we are currently collecting funds to start a two-line garment factory in the upcoming months."

Aparajeyo received machines donated by doctors from the capital's Birdem Hospital as well as generators, irons and cutting machines from others. "On the day of our opening, about 400 to 500 people came to work," Rintu mentioned. He added, "We decided to select those

who were less skilled and therefore less likely to find work elsewhere. We discovered that donations, both government and private, went mainly to those who had lost limbs. Those who had suffered lesser injuries did not receive adequate compensation We decided to help those people."

Nilufa Yasmin and many others like her are now leading better lives thanks to these efforts. She was at her workstation in Rana Plaza when it collapsed. "My head and lower back were injured and I cannot lift heavy things," she observed.

"I have two small children to support and my husband left me. I also support my parents. I received no compensation from the government and had to pay for my treatment myself. Through the Rana Plaza trade union I heard about Aparajeyo," she said.

"They helped us a lot by paying for our treatment and making sure we earn a living. I don't have to worry about my family as much any more."

'US Spying on Australian Missions in China' Beijing demands explanation

REUTERS, Beijing

China is demanding an explanation from the United States after a report in an Australian newspaper said Australian embassies, including the one in Beijing, were being used as part of a US-led spying operation. The Sydney Morning Herald yesterday said

NEWS

that the intelligence collection takes place in Australian embassies across Asia, as well as other diplomatic missions, without most Australian diplomats knowing about it. "China is extremely concerned about this

report and demands that the United States

offers a clarification and explanation," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a daily news briefing. "We also demand that foreign embassies in China and their staff respect the Vienna

Convention ... and other international treaties and not get involved in any activities which do not accord with their status or post and harm China's security and interests," she added. China and Australia had a consensus to

other as a development opportunity, Hua said. "We hope and expect that Australia can work hard with China in this regard."

increase cooperation, and both viewed the

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade declined to comment, saying: "It is the long-standing practice of Australian governments not to comment on intelligence matters" China's own security services are widely

believed to run a sophisticated communications tapping and surveillance operation, at least domestically, though the government denies accusations it tries to hack into overseas computer networks. China, a major trading partner in the midst

of negotiations on a free-trade agreement with Australia, expressed concern this week after Australia's newly elected government said it was upholding a ban on China's Huawei Technologies Co Ltd from bidding for work on the country's \$38 billion (23.7 billion pounds) National Broadband Network. The political uproar over alleged U.S. eavesdropping on close European allies produced

an unusual defence from the National Security Agency this week - NSA Director General Keith Alexander said it was the Europeans themselves who did the spying, and then handed the data to the Americans. Alexander's disclosure at a public congressional hearing marked yet another milestone

in the NSA's emergence from the shadows to defend its electronic surveillance mission in the wake of damaging revelations by former agency contractor Edward Snowden.

Kenya president's trial postponed

CNN ONLINE

postponed the beginning of Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta's trial on charges of crimes against humanity by three months to February 5, accepting a defense request for more preparation time. The trial at the Netherlands-based ICC had been

The International Criminal Court yesterday

scheduled to begin on November 12. The prosecution agreed that certain issues raised by the defense merited further investigation, the court said.

NY bans sale

since adopted in cities across the West.

But the move will be unpopular among those who feel that outgoing Mayor Michael Bloomberg has already over-stepped the line between protect-

ing public health and interfering with personal choice.

adults who smoke has fallen from 21.5 percent in 2002 to 14.8 percent in 2011.

unchanged since 2007, at 8.5 percent according to official statistics.

EC backtracks

FROM PAGE 1

"Aslo, as we have very limited time ahead of the election, it would be tough for us to hold such a dialogue," he added.

As per the constitution, the EC will have to conduct the election before January 25 next year.

The commission is now mainly focusing on the electoral code of conduct. The draft of the amended code of conduct will be uploaded on the EC website on Sunday. People will have seven days to give their opinion on the draft before the law ministry gives its final approval to the draft.

Before holding the last national election in 2008, the then election commission had held a series of dialogue with political parties on the code of conduct and polls schedule, former election com-

missioner M Sakhawat Hussain told The Daily Star.

EC BRIEFING

The prime minister and the opposition leader will be able to run electoral campaigns with their existing security facilities, Election Commissioner Zabed Ali said yesterday.

"There will be no bar to running cam paigns by the prime minister and the opposition leader with their existing security arrangements. Besides, if any candidate seeks security, it will be provided accordingly," he told reporters about the electoral code of conduct at his EC secretariat office.

Candidates will have to follow the code of conduct during electioneering Otherwise, legal action will be taken against them, he added.

Nizami's trial at final stage Defence witness Mohammad Nazibur

FROM PAGE 20

Prosecutor Mohammad Ali put the blame on absence of his team mates. Only two prosecutors were present during the cross-examination yesterday.

At one stage, Ali had to take the assistance of the defence to cite his own exhibited documents. Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim at one point

said, "The problem is you [the prosecution] are divided into many groups." The judge also appreciated the unity of the

defence. Ali on Wednesday prayed for an adjournment

half an hour before the day's session on the ground of not having good preparation. No sign of good preparations was seen yesterday as well. Ali asked Nizami's son if he had known who honoured Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

with 'Bangabandhu' title and if he had knowledge about the Agartala conspiracy case. Disgruntled by the questions, the tribunal at one stage asked the prosecutor to move to

relevant points. Justice Kabir said, "We don't understand why you are asking these. We don't find it relevant to

the case." Quoting lines from some books exhibited by the prosecution in which Nizami is mentioned as the chief of Al-Badr, Ali suggested that the

defence witness was aware of the matter.

Rahman said he was not aware of the matter and did not read the books. Ali at one stage told the tribunal, "I want to get

relieved of the case. I will take breath [of fresh air] after the case is closed." Two prosecutors had earlier been removed

before Ali was appointed in this case. Earlier on Wednesday, Nizami's son during cross-examination claimed Jamaat was not

banned for its involvement in the crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971. According to many historical documents and books, Jamaat was constitutionally banned after the country's independence due to its anti-

Prosecutor Ali made a suggestion that the then president Ziaur Rahman gave Jamaat the opportunity to return to politics in 1979.

"It's not true," the witness said, adding, Jamaat became active in politics after religion-based parties had been allowed by the constitution.

Ali asked the witness if he was aware that Farooq Maududi, son of Jamaat-e-Islami founder Abul A'la Maududi, had termed Jamaat and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir extremist and terrorist organisations during his recent Dhaka visit.

"I do not know. He is not involved in Jamaat's politics and is known as anti-Jamaat," said

The defence witness also claimed that Jamaat was banned for its movement against the autocratic governmen, not for terrorist and communal activities in the then Pakistan.

criminal organisation because of its wartime role in the verdict in Jamaat guru Ghulam Azam's

witness in the case against Jamaat leader AKM Yusuf. Yusuf's lawyer Syed Mizanur Rahman completed Nasir's cross-examination before the

November 6. On October 8, Nasir, a freedom fighter from Morelganj in Bagerhat, testified that he had seen

2 killed, 40 hurt as train Chittagong Mail train at Akhaura, and a

roof of the train, the OC said, adding that at

injuries. The injured were taken to different local hospitals and clinics for treatment.

The cause of the derailment could not be district correspondent. ascertained immediately, said Abdul Motalib, station superintendent of the junction.

A three-member committee headed by in Jamalpur, and Billal Hossain, 16, son of Divisional Transport Officer (DTO) of Railway Eastern Zone Md Nazmul Hossain Netrakona. was formed to investigate the cause of the derailment by three days, he added.

The rail communications of Dhaka with Chittagong, Sylhet, Noakhali, and Chandpur Langaljora level crossing around 5:35am remained suspended for more than five yesterday, said Khokan Sarker, officer-inhours as seven trains remained stranded at charge of the GRP at Jamalpur Railway different stations after the incident.

Communications, however, resumed around 8:30am when a salvage train removed the coach from the track.

Chittagong-bound Turna Nishitha Express got stuck in Brahmanbaria Railway Station standing by the door of the compartment, while Sylhet-bound Sylhet Mail at Talshar the OC said. station, situated in between Akhaura and Brahmanbaria; Sylhet-bound another train Jamalpur General Hospital, but he suc-Surma Mail at Brahmanbaria, and Akhaurabound Titas at Paghachang, a place in yesterday, the OC added.

between Brahmanbaria and Akhaura. Dhaka-bound Turna Nishitha Express from Chittagong got stranded at Koshba,

Demu train at a place between Comilla and least 40 more passengers had sustained Akhaura railway stations.

Two youths killed in train accidents

Two youths were killed in two separate train accidents in Jamalpur, reports our The deceased were identified as Omar Ali,

22, of son of Gyan Miah of Langaljora village

Shakawat Hossain of Durgapur upazila in Omar, who had hearing impairment, was run over by a Dhaka-bound commuter train from Dewanganj while he was crossing

In a separate incident, Billal fell down from a Dewanganj-bound commuter train from Dhaka near the Nandina Railway Station around 9:30pm on Wednesday as he was

Critically injured Billal was taken to cumbed to his injuries there around 2:30am

Police recovered the bodies and sent those to Jamalpur General Hospital morgue for autopsies.

BNP banks on Hefajat

sources.

fulfil the Islamist body's requirements for staging a mammoth gathering.

Top leaders of her party's Dhaka city unit have been

instructed to cooperate with Hefajat organisers. Besides, Jamaat-e-Islami and its allies in the 18party combine -- Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) and a Shahbagh activist who was branded as an Khelafat-e Majlish -- are playing vital roles in organising the November 15 gathering, said the

Many leaders of IOJ components -- Khelafat-e Islami and Nezam-e Islam -- are also working to make the rally a success.

A number of leaders of IOJ and Khelafat-e Majlish hold top positions in the Hefajat-e Islam. They were among the key organisers of the Hefajat's much-hyped May 5 rally.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, a Khelafat-e Islami leader, who also holds posts at IOJ and Hefajat, said he recently met Khaleda at her Gulshan office.

The BNP chief at the meeting enquired about their activities as well as the planned November 15

government demonstration, he said.

Hefajat-e Islam, a Qawmi madrasa-based organisation, was not on the scene when the Shahbagh movement started on February 5. Its presence was felt with the killing of blogger Rajib,

labelling it an "associate of atheists".

After thousands of Hefajat members had taken position that night at the Shapla Chattar, the BNP chairperson called upon her party leaders and activists to lend a hand to the Islamists.

ultimatum to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to meet opposition's demand for non-party caretaker government system.

in a bid to destabilise the administration.

Law enforcers, however, managed to flash out the

Islamists from Shapla Chattar at the cost of lives of 18 Hefajat men and police.

After the operation, the BNP-led opposition alliance and Hefajat started saying hundreds were killed in a "bloody massacre".

against the Hasina government terming it anti-Talking to The Daily Star, some opposition leaders said they think Hefajat's anti-government

reasons behind their unexpected and landslide victory in elections to five city corporations. Again on April 6, a few lakh Islamists assembled under the banner of Hefajat-e Islam at Motijheel and

gave the government three weeks' time to meet their demands. The rally was the culmination of a propaganda

orchestrated by the Jamaat-e-Islami that organisers of the Shahbagh movement were atheists.

14 get 32-yr jail for murder

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced 14 people to 32 years' rigorous imprisonment for killing businessman Kamrul Hassan in Joydevpur upazila of Gazipur in October

The convicts are Jalal alias Shah Jalal, Nazrul Islam, Moniruzzaman, Babul Hamid Member, Golam, Shahjahan, Alam, Jamal, Sabur, Biplob, Helal, Kashem and Aminul.

Of them, Babul, Alam, Golam and Jamal have been on the run while other convicts were present at the courtroom during the judgment.

The punishment to the fugitives will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender, the court added. On October 9, 2001, a group of crimi-

nals, led by Hamid Member, hacked Kamrul, an inhabitant of Pirujali village in Joydevpur upazila, to death over a previous enmity.

On the following day, a murder case was filed against 14 people with Joydevpur Police Station.

After investigation, Joydevpur police submitted a charge sheet to Gazipur Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in February 2002, accusing 21 people in the Kamrul murder case. The court also acquitted seven others as

the charges brought against them were not proved.

Judge Shahed Nur Uddin of the Speedy

Trial Tribunal-1 pronounced the verdict.

UN chief calls

FROM PAGE 1

spokesperson said in a statement yesterday. Ban is hopeful that the recent steps to initiate dialogue will continue and urged all parties to ensure an environment "conducive to credible and peaceful elections", says the statement.

The latest outbreak of violence had

reportedly killed at least a dozen people and injured many others, added Ban's spokesper-On August 23, the UN secretary-general made phone calls to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia

urging them to hold talks for a peaceful

resolution to the ongoing political crisis.

In May this year, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernández-Taranco during a visit to Bangladesh said the country was witnessing a significant increase ir violence after more than 30 people had died and 60 others were injured in clashes between police and protesters in Dhaka.

At the time, he called upon all stakeholders to work together to create a conducive environment for free, fair, credible, inclusive and non-violent elections. In September, expressing concern over the

political situation here, US Secretary of State

John Kerry in letters requested Hasina and Khaleda to hold constructive. However, in latest turn of events the opposition leader on October 25 called a

nationwide 60-hour hartal from October 27 giving the government two days' time to initiate dialogues on a non-party election-time government. In response, the premier called the

protest the killing of their activists during the opposition leader the next day inviting her to recent hartal across the country. Gono Bhaban to hold talks. She also asked Khaleda to withdraw the hartal, but the latter they would not pardon it and would "blacklist" it declined to do so saying she could meet the PM

prepare for the polls.

of the board, said the party would give nomina-

tions a bit early to avoid intra-party feuds and

ensure that the candidates get enough time to

On the issue of dropping the controversial

submit the forms by November 15, he said. "We will complete the entire nomination procedure by this month," said the AL policymaker.

A good number of zilla parishad administrators, upazila chairmen and vice chairmen, municipality mayors, retired military and civil bureaucrats, former top leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League and other associate bodies, assistant secretaries of the AL central subcommittee, district and upazila unit presidents and general secretaries are on the list, said AL

A few former AL leaders, known as reformists, would also be considered for party ticket, said the

three names in each constituency on the basis of 10 questions about their image, education, popularity, financial strength and connection

for choosing candidates, he said.

"The list will be firmed up after conducting the

Clean image, popularity, competence and contribution to the party are among the criteria

we will nominate candidates in all 300 constituencies, as the components of the Awami Leagueled grand alliance will participate in the polls independently," said Zafarullah, also a member of the AL Parliamentary Board. Party's nomination forms will be sold on

November 10 and 11 and the aspirants have to

a drama over centring on this.

Sadeque Hossain Khoka, convener of Dhaka City Jamaat-e-Islami leader Abdullah Mohammad

Taher also spoke at the rally. New Programme Fakhrul announced that the alliance would

FROM PAGE 20 New York was the pioneer of a ban on smoking in bars, restaurants and public places -- initially criticised -- but Cigarette taxes are also the highest in the US. Authorities hope that raising the legal age for

buying cigarettes will reduce the number of smokers aged 18-20 by 55 percent.

ICT-2 The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday completed recording cross-examination of Nasir Uddin Ahmed Mallik, second prosecution

Yusuf ordering his cohorts to kill several Hindus at Morelganj launch terminal on the night of May 19, 1971. Three of the victims were shot dead as Yusuf's accomplices executed the order, he added

Yusuf, historically known as the founder of the infamous Razakar force, is facing 13 charges of crimes against humanity and genocide commit-

rally and advised them to ensure a massive anti-

liberation activities.

From a grand rally on May 5, Hefajat leaders called for ouster of the Awami League government

Only a day before, she had issued a 48-hour

A number of leaders of Hefajat and the opposition said BNP and Jamaat had backed the Islamists

AL leader Amir Hossain Amu, also a member

More than 500 aspirants have been selected so far for the 300 constituencies. And the figure

share seats with its allies in the grand alliance. In that case, the AL might leave around 50 seats for the Jatiya Party, Workers Party, Jatiya

Samajtantrik Dal, Samyabadi Dal and other

parties. The party will conduct its fourth and final survey by November 10 to see whether any changes are required in the list of those selected ings between the AL president and grassroots Kazi Zafarullah told The Daily Star, "The controversial lawmakers will not get party ticket this

"If the BNP doesn't take part in the election,

BNP opposes RPO change

Referring to the death toll during the hartal,

City hall has said that in 10 years the percentage of

Among young people it has remained

Nizami's son.

The tribunal has recently termed Jamaat a

three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan adjourned the proceeding until

Hefajat in different parts of the country, especially in villages, launched a massive campaign

propaganda accusing government of killing thousands on the night of May 5 is one of the

AL to rely on fresh blood

could go up, as more names are likely to be included in the list, said the sources. If the BNP participates in the polls, the AL will

through three surveys and view-exchange meetleaders survey," a member of the AL presidium and the

Parliamentary Board told The Daily Star on

The government-proposed amendments to the

RPO have been passed by parliament and the EC

has made a draft of the electoral code of conduct

condition of anonymity.

for the next polls.

Earlier, BNP standing committee member

Moudud Ahmed at a programme at the Jatiya Press Club, lambasted the government as well as the EC for amendments to the RPO and the bid to the hands of politicians."

no interest in dialogue and negotiation. When Fakhrul said if the EC acted against people, people created pressure for dialogue, it just staged

hold protest rallies in all upazilas, demanding

lawmakers from the list, AL presidium member insiders.

> sources. The AL adopted a unique method to select the candidates. Top grassroots leaders proposed

BNP, said about 20 of their activists were killed.

immediate release of the alliance leaders and activists arrested during the hartal.

change the code of conduct. "It will destroy The rally held at Suhrawardy Udyan was politics in the country and politics will not be in organised by the BNP-led 18-party alliance to

At the rally, Fakhrul said the government has