

Rebuilding lives

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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 ICDDR, we bought some equipment and found a local landlord willing to rent space at a low rate.

"And we call it Aparajevo," 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."

Aparajevo 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 Aparajevo," 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."

EC backtracks

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"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-

2 killed, 40 hurt as train

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roof of the train, the OC said, adding that at least 40 more passengers had sustained injuries.

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

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

A three-member committee headed by Divisional Transport Officer (DTO) of Railway Eastern Zone Md Nazmul Hossain 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 remained suspended for more than five hours as seven trains remained stranded at 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 while Sylhet-bound Sylhet Mail at Talshar station, situated in between Akhaura and Brahmanbaria; Sylhet-bound another train Surma Mail at Brahmanbaria, and Akhaura-bound Titas at Paghachang, a place in between Brahmanbaria and Akhaura.

Dhaka-bound Turna Nishitha Express from Chittagong got stranded at Koshba,

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 2001.

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 criminals, 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

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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 spokesperson.

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 in 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 opposition leader the next day inviting her to Gono Bhaban to hold talks. She also asked Khaleda to withdraw the hartal, but the latter declined to do so saying she could meet the PM

'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 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 increase cooperation, and both viewed the other as a development opportunity, Hua said.

"We hope and expect that Australia can work hard with China in this regard."

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade declined to comment, saying: "It is the long-standing practice of Australian gov-

Nizami's trial at final stage

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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 on 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.

BNP banks on Hefajat

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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 18-party combine -- Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) and Khelafat-e Majlish -- are playing vital roles in organising the November 15 gathering, said the sources.

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 rally and advised them to ensure a massive anti-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, a Shahbagh activist who was branded as an atheist.

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

Only a day before, she had issued a 48-hour ultimatum to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to meet opposition's demand for non-party caretaker government system.

A number of leaders of Hefajat and the opposition said BNP and Jamaat had backed the Islamists in a bid to destabilise the administration.

Law enforcers, however, managed to flash out the

AL to rely on fresh blood

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More than 500 aspirants have been selected so far for the 300 constituencies. And the figure 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 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 through three surveys and view-exchange meetings between the AL president and grassroots leaders.

"The list will be firmed up after conducting the survey," a member of the AL presidium and the Parliamentary Board told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

BNP opposes RPO change

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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 for the next polls.

The rally held at Suhrawardy Udyan was organised by the BNP-led 18-party alliance to protest the killing of their activists during the recent hartal across the country.

Fakhrul said if the EC acted against people, they would not pardon it and would "blacklist" it for this.

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 change the code of conduct. "It will destroy politics in the country and politics will not be in the hands of politicians."

At the rally, Fakhrul said the government has no interest in dialogue and negotiation. When people created pressure for dialogue, it just staged

Kenya president's trial postponed

CNN ONLINE

The International Criminal Court yesterday 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 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

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New York was the pioneer of a ban on smoking in bars, restaurants and public places -- initially criticised -- but since adopted in cities across the West.

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.

But the move will be unpopular among those who feel that outgoing Mayor Michael Bloomberg has already over-stepped the line between protecting public health and interfering with personal choice.

City hall has said that in 10 years the percentage of adults who smoke has fallen from 21.5 percent in 2002 to 14.8 percent in 2011.

Among young people it has remained unchanged since 2007, at 8.5 percent according to official statistics.

Nizami's son.

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.

The tribunal has recently termed Jamaat a criminal organisation because of its wartime role in the verdict in Jamaat guru Ghulam Azam's case.

ICT-2

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday completed recording cross-examination of Nasir Uddin Ahmed Mallik, second prosecution witness in the case against Jamaat leader AKM Yusuf.

Yusuf's lawyer Syed Mizanur Rahman completed Nasir's cross-examination before the three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan adjourned the proceeding until November 6.

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

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 sub-committee, district and upazila unit presidents and general secretaries are on the list, said AL insiders.

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

The AL adopted a unique method to select the candidates. Top grassroots leaders proposed three names in each constituency on the basis of 10 questions about their image, education, popularity, financial strength and connection a drama over centring on this.

Referring to the death toll during the hartal, Sadeque Hossain Khoka, convener of Dhaka City BNP, said about 20 of their activists were killed.

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Abdullah Mohammad Taher also spoke at the rally.

New Programme

Fakhrul announced that the alliance would hold protest rallies in all upazilas, demanding immediate release of the alliance leaders and activists arrested during the hartal.