

## Hail Yunus

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Muhammad Yunus as the world's recognition to his contribution in resolving poverty, our New Delhi correspondent reports.

In a congratulatory letter to Yunus, Singh said, "The Grameen Bank chief is an outstanding South Asian and as a South Asian rejoice."

Describing Yunus as his friend, Singh told accompanying Indian journalists in Helsinki, where he is attending India-European Union summit that the microcredit movement Yunus has launched has important lessons for tackling poverty, particularly the problem of rural poverty.

"It's a well-deserved honour," the Indian prime minister said adding it was no surprise that the world at large has recognised Yunus's contribution in resolving the problem of poverty.

Singh, in a message addressed to Yunus, said, "On behalf of the people of India and on my own behalf, I salute this magnificent achievement that has brought honour and pride not only to Bangladesh but to all people of South Asia."

Former US first lady Senator Hillary Clinton in a message congratulated Muhammad Yunus and recalled that he went to Arkansas 20 years ago to cooperate with her and her husband, former president Bill Clinton, in introducing microcredit to the USA, BSS reports.

"Since then I availed the opportunities of hearing the people who were benefited from the microcredit programmes when ever I visited Bangladesh and other countries," she said.

"It still impresses me when I hear about plans of improving the fates of the low-end women and their families through Grameen programmes," she said adding, "I also nominated Dr Yunus for Nobel Prize."

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez praised Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus as a helper of the poor and called the Bangladeshi economist and microcredit pioneer a friend, UNB reports.

Chavez paused during a televised speech Friday night to read a news report on Yunus' selection for the prize along with his Grameen Bank.

"Let's give a round of applause to our friend," Chavez said, calling him an "example in the fight against poverty."

Yunus founded the Grameen Bank in the 1970s and pioneered the concept of microcredit - very small loans to would-be entrepreneurs without access to collateral. The practice has spread around the world and helped millions of people overcome poverty. "We're going down that road," said Chavez, who has promised to eventually eliminate poverty in his oil-producing country.

Indian Congress chief Sonia Gandhi in her message addressed to Yunus said, "You and the Grameen Bank have also shown the world the discipline and the integrity with which the poor pay back loans. We take great pride and joy in your winning

the Nobel Peace Prize and wish you and Grameen Bank every success in your future endeavour."

Hailing the award to Yunus, Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram said, "There can be no better guarantee for peace than prosperity and Yunus has brought prosperity to a large number of people."

He said he was pleased that a man from the subcontinent got the award. "He has demonstrated that women are deserving and reliable borrowers," he added.

Women groups in India also welcomed the Nobel Peace Prize for Yunus and Grameen Bank. CPI (M) politburo member and Member of Parliament Brinda Karat said the award was a recognition of Yunus's good credit policy that changed the lives of poor women.

Leading social activist Aruna Roy, who won the Magsaysay award, said Yunus was always concerned with poverty and dedicated his life for the uplift of poor women.

Ranjana Kumari of the Centre for Policy Research said Yunus has helped women repossess faith in themselves. "The Grameen Bank worked for the poorest of the poor women and proved that women can change the economy of society with their own effort. The high repayment rate of the Bank is also important in the growing economy," she added.

Mathew Tirus, Executive Director of the NGO Swadhan, said the Nobel Peace Prize for Yunus and the Grameen Bank would give a leg-up to microcredit sector and the poor need a savings bank model like Grameen Bank and not only credit.

YSP Thorat, former chief general manager of rural credit and planning department of the Reserve Bank of India, recalled that he has worked with Yunus and said, "We will invite the Grameen Bank founder to India and seek his advice on how to upgrade our model to suit our socio-economic condition."

"The one thing I have learnt from him is that it is not necessary to debate over economic principles of poverty. What is important is to do something about it," Thorat, chairman of National Agriculture and Bank for Rural Development, said.

Nakhat Mor, deputy managing director of ICICI Bank, one of biggest Indian private banks, said Yunus has proved that even market-based institutions can have a positive impact on social issues.

Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh Chai Xi congratulated Mohammad Yunus and his Grameen Bank on winning the Nobel Peace Prize, UNB reports.

In a message Chai Xi said, "I have the honour and pleasure, on behalf of the Chinese government and in my own name, to extend my warmest congratulations to you [Yunus] and the Grameen Bank for your remarkable contributions to the global sustainable peace and development through poverty alleviation initiatives based on microcredit schemes."

"The spring up and growth of the Grameen Bank model vividly not only

illustrates your personal outstanding genius and willpower, but also maps out how important the collective consensus, concern and confidence play in the long campaign for liberating global poor below from repressive economic and social swamp," he added.

He expressed his firm belief that under the dynamic leadership of Yunus the Grameen Bank will make even greater contributions to mankind and the poverty reduction in particular in the days to come.

Bangladeshis expatriates living in different countries including UK, USA and the Middle East celebrated the winning of Nobel Peace Prize by Muhammad Yunus.

The Bangladeshis exchanged greetings, embraced with each other and distributed sweets as soon as they heard the exciting news through the media.

Many sent SMS and emails to their friends and relations in Bangladesh.

They believe winning the Nobel Prize would enhance the image and honour of Bangladesh and Bangladeshi living abroad.

## PM

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Airport for Jeddah at 7:35pm. The visit is supposed to be her last official foreign visit as the tenure of this government expires on October 27.

Family members of the PM, including her son Arif Rahman and his wife, ruling BNP lawmaker Mosaddeq Ali Falu, former state minister Mir Nasiruddin and Principal Secretary to the PM Dr Kamal Siddiqui and two senior officials of the foreign ministry accompanied her.

The PM's eldest son Tarique Rahman and his wife are learnt to have left for Saudi Arabia on Friday.

"It is an official visit to Saudi Arabia. The prime minister will hold talks with the Saudi leadership, and they will discuss matters concerning bilateral relations," said Enayet Mawla, a director at the foreign ministry.

Officials at the foreign ministry said Khaleda would call on King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud today in Makkah and she would have a meeting with Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz on October 17 in this holy city.

The official news agency BSS reports that on the sidelines of the official talks, heads of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) will call on the prime minister.

On conclusion of her official engagements, Khaleda will perform Umrah and go to Madina to perform Ziarat at the Hajar Mubarak of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM).

The Bangladesh community in Jeddah will host an iftar reception in honour of the PM tomorrow.

At the airport, Khaleda was seen off by Finance Minister Md Saifur Rahman, LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Foreign Minister Moshed Khan, State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar, chiefs of the three services and senior civil and military officials.

Hosaf Chief Moazzem Hossain

explained.

In response to an appeal from a number of concerned citizens to keep the garment sector out of the purview of the strike, he said the strike is meant for the realisation of demands of workers and employees of all sectors of the country and it would be illogical to keep garment sector out of the strike's purview.

Garment workers also demanded the government stop harassing the innocent garment workers for their alleged involvement in destructive activities.

Roy Romesh Chandra read out a written statement at the programme while President of Sramik Jote Abdul Kader Howlader, President of Sramik League Abdul Matin Master, General Secretary of Jatiya Sramik Federation Shafiquddin Ahmed were also present.

Sramik League secretary Roy Romesh Chandra said according to the proposed pay scale, a garment worker would get only Tk 37 a day with which one cannot afford to buy one kg of rice and a kg of potato from the Eid-ul-Fitr vacation.

"Garment workers and leaders are not involved in any destructive and counter productive activities," he said ruling out the allegation of ransacking garment factories that surfaced once again after the October 10 strike.

Persons involved in destructive activities must either be agents of the government or of the garment owners, he added.

The RMG industry has reached a viable state with backbreaking labour by the workers and these workers cannot do anything that would ruin the industry, Romesh

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