

Yunus may sue Telenor

Allegations of violating deal, money-laundering, breach of laws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

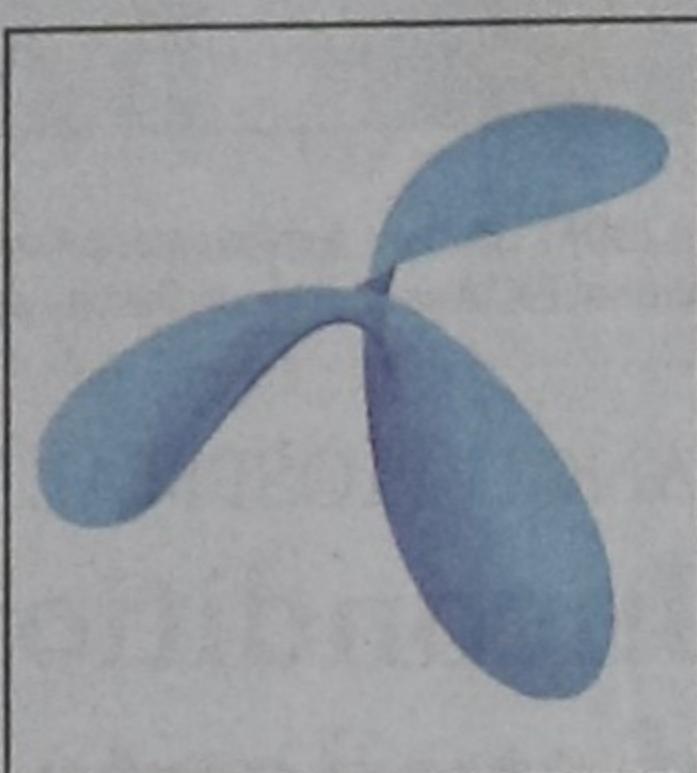
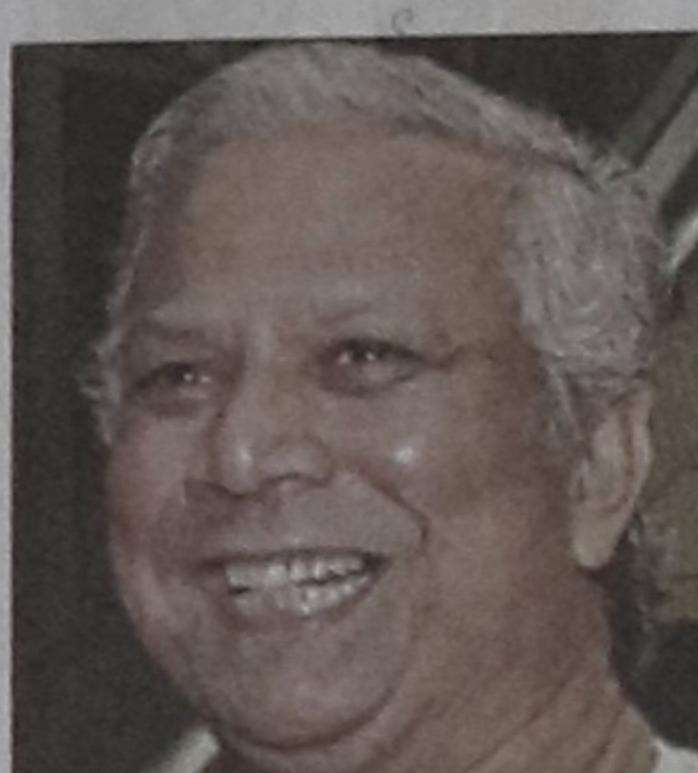
Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus might take legal actions against Telenor to force the Norwegian telecom operator to honour a deal concerning their joint subsidiary in Bangladesh.

Telenor owns 62 percent shares while Yunus' Grameen Telecom holds the remaining stakes in GrameenPhone, launched in 1996.

Pointing out Telenor's alleged involvement in illegal internet telephony services and allegations of violating environmental law and employment of underage workers by its subcontractors, the 'banker of the poor' demanded that Telenor authorizes complete transparency in the matters, making public the investigation reports and shareholders' agreement.

"We cannot allow the name of Grameen to be tarnished directly or indirectly by inappropriate operations," Yunus said in a statement distributed through PR Newswire yesterday.

Telenor, meantime, said yester-



day that it hopes for an amicable solution to the row with Muhammad Yunus over GrameenPhone which it aims to list on the Dhaka bourse, according to wire services.

The Nobel laureate also hoped that legal actions might not be needed after all 'because the owners of Telenor will require the company to honour the intention it had expressed in 1996 for transferring ownership and control of GrameenPhone to the poor of

interviews. Referring to the 1996 deal, Yunus said Telenor and Grameen Telecom agreed that the joint company should become a locally operated company within six years with Bangladeshi management and majority Bangladeshi ownership.

"This has not happened. Telenor is unwilling to let go control of the company," complained Yunus adding, "We now are being told that the words of the written agreement in a legal sense are non-committal statements. We relied on the words of the agreement."

Saying that Grameen Telecom believed in the agreed intentions of the parties, business ethics, and generally accepted company government rules of conduct, believing that the Norwegian public listed company would do as agreed, Yunus wrote, "Telenor now tells me that it was a mistake to rely on their words."

Yunus' statement about a possible lawsuit surprised and disappointed the Telenor authorities.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

SQ Chowdhury, Obaidul Qader freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

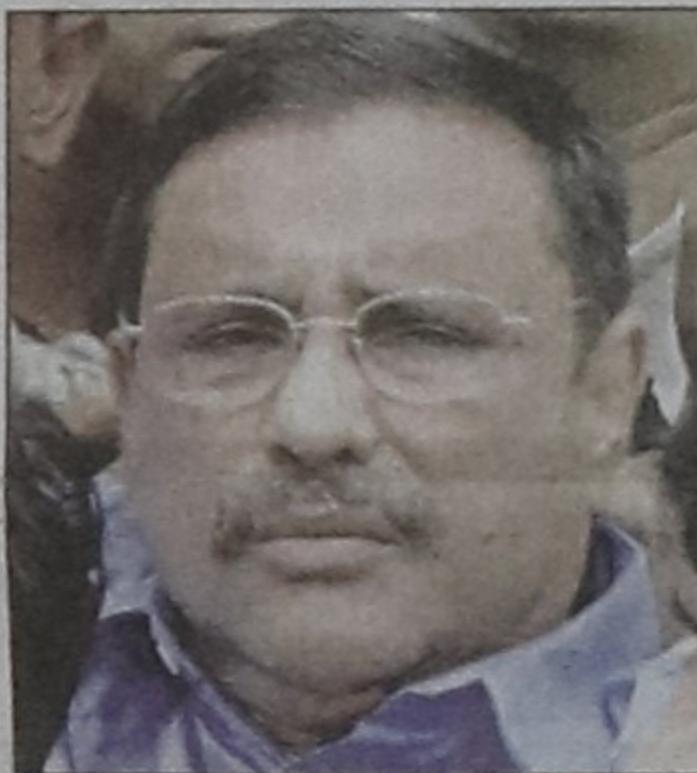
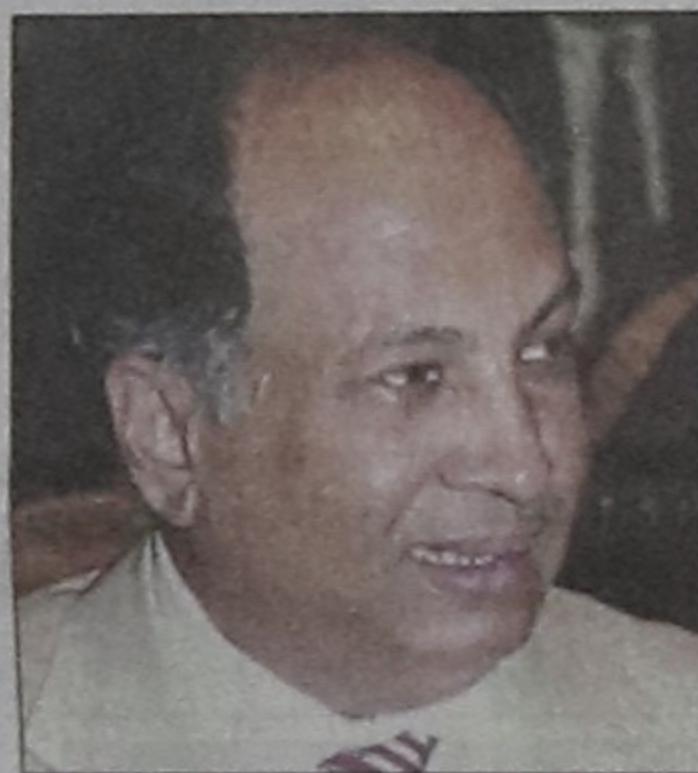
Detained former premier Khaleda Zia's parliamentary adviser and BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and former Awami League (AL) state minister Obaidul Qader were released from jail on bail yesterday.

SQ Chowdhury was released from Kashimpur Jail in Gazipur at about 11:45am after 19 months of his arrest by the joint forces at his Dhamondi residence on February 3 last year.

Salauddin is accused in six cases including those filed for extortion and amassing illegal wealth. He was granted his sixth bail on August 28.

According to sources, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed a case against him on charges of amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 9.46 crore and concealing information of wealth worth Tk 91 lakh in his statement submitted to the commission.

The caretaker government published a list of 50 top graft suspects on February 18, asking them to submit their wealth statements. Salauddin's name was on



Salauddin Quader Chowdhury

Obaidul Qader

the list.

Upon getting released, Salauddin demanded unconditional release of detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Meanwhile, former state minister for sports and AL joint general secretary Obaidul Qader was released from the prison cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) at 12:15pm. Upon release, Qader reached the jail authorities on Thursday but they took one day's time

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Tarique likely to stay abroad during parliamentary poll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tarique Rahman, recently released from detention, is likely to leave the country this week for treatment abroad and might not return before the parliamentary election slated for the third week of December, BNP and family sources said.

Many junior leaders of BNP, who threw their weight behind the young senior joint secretary general hoping to enjoy his blessings in the party and ahead of the poll, will however desperately try to bring him back as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is also expected to be released on bail this

week as lawyers of the former prime minister decided to file bail petitions in two of the graft cases against her.

Out of the four cases filed against the BNP chief, she already got bail in two -- Zia Orphanage Trust graft case and Barapukuria coal mine scam case. But she has yet to petition for bail in Niko and Gato graft cases.

"We will move the petitions on Sunday seeking bail in the two cases," Barrister Nasiruddin Asim told The Daily Star yesterday.

He hoped that Khaleda will be released through the same judicial process which had set free her elder

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

AL to press EC for holding both polls as per 'roadmap'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At second round talks with the Election Commission this week, Awami League will press hard for national election before upazila polls, full withdrawal of the state of emergency and changes in some new electoral provisions.

"We want both the parliamentary and upazila polls, but they should be held as per the roadmap," AL Presidium member Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the EC must hold the general election first if it is to avoid "breaching its own electoral

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

roadmap". In the EC roadmap announced last year, the time marked down for national election is June 15 to December 31 and that for upazila polls is between November 3 and December 31. The commission has lately announced it plans to hold first-phase upazila polls on October 23.

Suranjit said they would seek a consensus with the EC at the talks on September 9. But if the commission refuses to change its plan, his party would resort to street agitation to press home its demand for national election first.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

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