# **DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 4, 2010**

## Grameen Bank's

FROM PAGE 1 fabrication and baseless. Our whole background story was given in Professor Yunus's letter of January 8, 1998.This letter has been circulated by the news agency along with their report. Any reader will immediately know how baseless the report is. We are

including this letter along

with this rejoinder. There was no wrongdoing in the agreement between Grameen Bank and Grameen Kalyan. Decisions were taken by Grameen Bank Board, with due deliberation, good faith, and with good intentions to benefit the poor. The actions taken by the Board were viewed as the best use of the funds at the time, a way to ensure Grameen Bank would remain financially accountable for the money while still ensuring that the borrowers received the most possible benefit from donors' grants.

For the grant that Grameen Bank received from Norad and other donor agencies under its third extension phase, Grameen Bank and donors agreed that a 2% interest rate would be fixed on the grant and that interest would be used to create a Social Advancement Fund (SAF) for the welfare of Grameen Bank borrowers and employees. The creation of SAF was our suggestion, donors happily agreed to it. Grameen Bank believed

that if the SAF was kept within Grameen Bank and managed by Grameen Bank then it would not receive the attention it deserves. The core activity of Grameen Bank, the lending programme, would always get precedence. Grameen Bank may not pay sufficient attention to create welfarebased programmes for its members and employees. Moreover, Grameen's tax

exemption period expired on December 31, 1996. At that time, it was uncertain whether the government would extend the tax exemption period after December 31, 1996. If the government would not extend the period then the contribution to the Social Advancement Fund as expenses would not be considered an expenditure of Grameen Bank. As a result, 40% tax would have been imposed on contribution to Social Advancement Fund. It might compel Grameen Bank to reduce or stop charging 2% interest on revolving fund to contribute to SAF, which would be a violation of the agreement with donors. Professor Yunus explains this in his letter dated January 8, 1998, which we have attached to this statement. Under these circumstances, the need for a new organisation emerged. This led to the creation of Grameen Kalyan as the dedicated organisa-

tion to utilise the interest Grameen Kalyan was created by the Grameen Bank board (Board Decision 42.8, dated April 25, 1996) in 1996 for the benefit of the Grameen borrowers and employees (90 percent of whom come from low income families), after taking into consideration the opinion of the renowned chartered accountant firm of Bangladesh named Rahman Rahman Huq and Co of Bangladesh, affiliated partner of KPMG.

Grameen Kalyan is a notfor-profit company under company law. No individual owns any share in this company. The profit of this company is not divisible and can only be recycled into its operation to maximise its stated objectives of providing primarily healthcare and education services to Grameen Bank's members

and employees. Empowered by a board decision and executing an agreement between Grameen Bank and Grameen Kalyan under which an endowment to the extent of Taka 3917 million 014 thousand was created by simultaneous notional "transfer" of

money. Grameen Kalyan was never given the control and possession of the fund. This simultaneous transfer and Grameen Bank receiving it back in the form of a loan created an opportunity to charge interest on this loan. That interest income was ear-marked to finance borrowers Social Advancement Fund (SAF) as agreed by the donors earlier within the Bank. It was a financial innovation to benefit the poor. Grameen Kalyan received 2% percent interest on the money. This money was to be used to provide education and other services to the borrowers and employees of

The programmes run by Grameen Kalyan with the interest accumulated in the SAF included:

Grameen Bank.

1.0 Provide support for higher studies for the academically accomplished children's of borrowers

2.0 Scholarship programmes for the academically accomplished children's of borrowers

3.0 Provide healthcare

services to the borrowers at

low cost through healthcare

centres in the villages. Currently it operates 51 health centres throughout the country.

4.0 Medical expense loans and assistance programmes for the employees and their family member

5.0 Provide assistance for the employees' household loan programme

The actions taken by the Board, which is comprised of nine elected representatives of Grameen Bank borrowers. and three senior representative of the government, were viewed as the best use of the funds, a way to ensure Grameen Bank would remain financially accountable for the money while still ensuring that the borrowers received the most possible benefit from donors' grants. Afterwards not only Norad's money, but the 100% of all donor's money to the extent of Taka 3,474 million 501 thousand was "transferred back", from Grameen Kalyan to Grameen Bank, although the money was always in the Grameen Bank's account. Only SAF fund money amounting to Taka 442 million 512 thousand remained with Grameen Kalyan as it was created out of the inter-

Some print and electronic media stated that Grameen Bank transferred Taka 7 billion to Grameen Kalyan which is absolutely false. Grameen Bank transferred to Grameen Kalyan Taka 3917 million 014 thousand as mentioned before and transferred back Taka 3474 million 502 thousand which is stated earlier. These can be verified through Grameen Bank's annually audited accounts.

If we convert the aforesaid amount at the prevailing exchange rate of 1996, then the 'transfer' stands at about US \$ 96 million and the 'transfer back' stands at approximately US \$ 85 million. Thus all the donors money was transferred back and only US \$ 11 million remained with Grameen Kalyan as it was created out of interest. So the report where it mentions that Grameen Bank transferred US \$ 100 million and transferred back only US \$ 30 million is completely false.

All necessary entries had been made in the books of accounts of Grameen Bank to replace the transfer, though no physical fund transfer took place, as the fund was with Grameen Bank all along. The fund in question never went out of the Grameen Bank's account and the question of Professor Yunus siphoning this amount is false and baseless. All these talk about siphoning off are just empty words for sensationalism.

According to the management and board of Grameen Bank, there was no violation of any provision of the agreement with Norad. It was a matter of differing views on the subject. Norad considered it a departure from the provision of the agreement, while Grameen Bank thought it was done within the agreement. Grameen Bank did not want go into battle on this issue and so jeopardise our excellent relationship. Grameen Bank reversed its decision and restored the status quo.

The concerns brought up by Norad and the Norwegian government were treated with the utmost seriousness by Grameen Bank and Professor Yunus, and both sides worked to resolve the differing interpretations of a clause in their initial agreement and arrive at a solution in a satisfactory manner. By restoring the status quo, the matter was amicably resolved. It never came back since then. None of the parties involved felt aggrieved.

This is an excerpt from the Norwegian embassy's letter dated May 26, 1998: H.E. Ambassador Hans Fredrik Lehne and Einar Landmark write, "The Embassy highly appreciates your cooperation in solving this issue, and is pleased to have arrived at a solution which is satisfactory for Grameen Bank as well as the embassy".

Reports gave the impression that these transactions were somehow secretive. There was nothing secretive about. It was a matter of honest disagreement. Grameen Bank's deci-

sion-making has always remained very transparent. Grameen Bank's board is always chaired by a distinguished citizen of the country appointed by the government. Government appoints two high officials as members of the board besides the Chairman. The ordinance by which Grameen Bank was created requires the Bank to be audited by two chartered accountant firms every year and submit the accounts to the government as well to the tax department. Grameen Bank also sent these reports every year to all donors. In addition, it is inspected by the central bank annually. In addition to all current statistics relating to the operation

of Grameen Bank, all audited

reports of the Bank, from

1983 to 2009, are displayed

on its website. Moreover,

Grameen Bank regularly publishes "Grameen Bank at a Glance" monthly and posts it on its website, which introduces Grameen Kalyan in the following way.

Grameen Kalyan

Grameen Kalyan (wellbeing) is a spin-off created by Grameen Bank. Grameen Bank created an internal fund called Social Advancement Fund (SAF) by imputing interest on all the grant money it received from various donors. SAF has been converted into a separate company to carry out its mandate to undertake social advance activities among the Grameen borrowers, such as, education, health, technology, etc".

Grameen Bank is Nobel Prize winning bank. We take pride in our transparency and our service to the poor.

#### 3 killed

**FROM PAGE 1** 

Our correspondent from Kushtia reports, a Rab team raided a sugarcane field in Jorpukuria village of Gangni upazila in Meherpur where Bachchu and his accomplices gathered around 6:00am.

As the Rab team approached the spot, the gang opened fire on the law enforcers, triggering a 'gunfight', said Assistant Superintendent of Police Sheikh Jahidul Islam of Bachchu was killed in the

'gunfight' while his cohorts managed to flee.

Police recovered the bullethit body of the deceased from the field and sent it to Meherpur General Hospital morgue for post-mortem examination. Two guns were also recovered from the spot.

Police said Bachchu was accused in eight cases including murder, extortion and abduction. Our Barisal correspondent

adds, a team of Rab-8 raided the west end of Payerpur bridge in Bakerganj upazila, where a gang of robbers had gathered around 4:40am. Seeing the members of the

elite force, Al Amin and his cohorts opened fire prompting the Rab personnel to hit back. At one stage of the 'shootout', Al Amin was hit by bullets

and died on the spot while his accomplices fled. The deceased was accused in 17 cases including extortion and robbery, said Syed Rabiul

Islam, officer-in-charge of

Bakerganj Police Station. One foreign-made pistol, three bullets and a sharp weapon were also recovered from the spot.

### Capital

FROM PAGE 16

Dredging quantity of 13 crore cubic metre have been fixed for the first phase, for which a total cost of Tk 4201 crore 80 lakh has been estimated.

Of the total amount, the Bangladesh government will provide Tk 509 crore 10 lakh while Tk 3692 crore 70 lakh will

come from project aid. On the other hand, 19.74 crore cubic metre dredging has been earmarked for the second phase, in which estimates have been made with a total cost of Tk 7271 crore 66 lakh involving project aid component of Tk 6501 crore 16

### CJ may place

FROM PAGE 1 Sources said the chief justice would officially request the top judges for their wealth accounts but would not make it mandatory to publish their assets details.

An SC judge at a function in Dhaka yesterday requested the chief justice to receive wealth statements of all judges of the highest court, like the lower court judges, for the sake of transparency.

Justice SK Sinha also said the family members of judges should give their wealth statements so that people have faith in the judges.

Former chief justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim on February 7 this year had told the media at his office that judges of the Appellate and High Court divisions should publish their wealth statements in the interest of a

transparent judiciary. He had also said that the judges in India place their wealth statements in annual court reports and he felt that the judges in Bangladesh too should do that.

President of the Supreme Court Bar Association Khandker Mahbub Hossain recently told The Daily Star that all the judges of the Appellate and High Court divisions should disclose their wealth statements.

Since the 2008 elections, no minister or ruling party lawmaker, apart from Finance Minister AMA Muhith released their annual wealth statement to the public even though it was promised in Awami League's election manifesto.

## Artificial crisis

NEWS

FROM PAGE 16

Manikaloy Barua, general manager of the factory, said they had floated an open tender so that all contractors could take part but surprisingly there were only two participants.

MD Zahirul Haque said, "We may buy raw material at only 10 percent more than the price estimated by higher authorities." "I cannot accept any higher

rate quoted by the contractors," Zahirul said, adding that he will discuss the matter with higher authorities to resolve the crisis. A factory staff alleged that

Raja Miah has a secret deal with some key officials that ensures his supply of 120,000 pieces of bamboo to the fac-Raja said he has been sup-

plying bamboo to the factory

for many years. He said his involvement in the supply chain does not prove any secret deal. He said the scarcity of bamboo and high demand are

stockpiled bamboo at Jettyghat.

Jettyghat is rotting, so the contractor has to sell it off as soon as possible."

Abdus Sattar, a bamboo trader, said, "There should not be any crisis at this time because this is the best season for collecting bamboo. Water level of the Kaptai Lake is high and accessibility to the mountains through the waterways is wide open now."

Basically, supply drops during dry season when water in the lake reduces drastically, and bamboo cannot be transported from remote areas at that time, he added.

Md Jahidul Kabir, divisional forest officer (DFO) of Pulpwood Plantation Division at Kaptai, said they have adequate pulpwood gardens for supplying raw materials to the factory. Contractors selected by the factory often fail to deliver on time, he claimed. On September 22,

Rangamati Deputy Commissioner Sourendra Nath Chakrabarty, in an emergency meeting, directed all concerned not to transport the reasons for spiked prices bamboo outside the district for the interest of the news-A staff of the factory said, print factory. Since then "The factory authorities bamboo traders have been should bear in mind that the stockpiling it at Kaptai

## Govt to go tough

this year.

Highway, at Bathulia on Dhaka-Aricha Highway and Sitakunda on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway.

"Of them, installation of the weighbridge at Sitakunda is in the final stage," Deputy Secretary to the Communications Ministry Shamim Iqbal, who is working with the issue, told The Daily

He said installation of the remaining weighbridges would be completed by April

Now there are two weightmeasuring stations on either side of the Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge to monitor weight of goods-laden vehicles crossing the bridge. But hundreds of trucks, lorries and covered vans cannot be checked due to the absence of such stations on Dhaka-Chittagong, Dhaka-Sylhet, Dhaka-Mawa and Dhaka-Aricha highways.

Bangladesh has about 2.40 lakh kilometres of roads and 15,000 bridges. About 22,000 kilometres of them are highways that are constructed and maintained by the Roads and Highways Department (RHD).

These roads and bridges are being damaged mainly because of the overloading of vehicles, sources say.

According to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) statistics, about 77,000 registered trucks, lorries and covered vans ply roads. Almost all of them carry more than twice their capacity, which is the key reason behind roads and bridges getting damaged fast.

Overloading is one of the major reasons for cracks developing on the road section of the Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge, they

In the past various governments including the last caretaker government tried to stop overloading of goods-carrying vehicles but failed in the face of protest or strike and rising prices of essentials. In 80s, there were

weighbridges at Kalyanpur in Dhaka, Fouzdarhat in Chittagong and Madhabpur in Hobiganj to control overloading of trucks. But the weighbridges went out of order due to lack of usage and maintenance.

## Razzak hattrick

FROM PAGE 1

put Razzak alongside Pakistan off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq in an exclusive club, but also give him a five-wicket

The Mpofu wicket was also Zimbabwe's last as they were bowled out for 191 runs, which the Tigers eclipsed in only 39.4 overs with Rokibul Hasan and Junaed Siddiqui hitting important half-centuries.

But Zimbabwe's vulnerability to spin again came to the fore as Shakib Al Hasan too was in his elements, picking up four wickets to celebrate his 100th ODI. After paceman Shafiul Islam had Chamu Chibhabha sky one to wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim, the Shakib-Razzak pair was devastating.

Brendan Taylor fell to Shakib after a promising 28 before Razzak opened his account for the day with the wickets of Regis Chakabva and Tatenda Taibu. Zimbabwe were starting to look slightly dangerous before the 29-yearold from Khulna ended the visitors' innings with his flurry of wickets.

Tamim Iqbal began the Tigers reply with a coverdriven six off Utseya and remained dominant despite losing Imrul Kayes in the sixth over. The left-hander's prom-

### Chinese train

FROM PAGE 16

ministry.

two major cities of Beijing and Shanghai. It's scheduled to commence operations in 2012 and will halve the current travel time to five hours. State television footage

showed the sleek white train whipping past farm fields. The project is part of a massive government effort to link many of China's cities by high-speed on heavily used lines.

rail and reduce overcrowding China now boasts some of the fastest passenger trains in the world. The speed of 302 mph (486 kph) was the fastest yet for an unmodified conventional commercial train,

ise of a big knock was building through five crisp boundaries but after hitting his second six (off Price), he tried to repeat the shot off the next ball, but fell for 44 off 48 balls.

Rokibul and Junaed followed up Tamim's momentum with a 72-run third wicket stand that sealed the game for the hosts, both batsmen looking progressively confident. Junaed's innings could have ended when he was on just a single but Zimbabwe captain Elton Chigumbura dropped a sitter at mid-off and the doughty Rajshahi lad struck 53 off 83 balls with the help of four

boundaries and a six. Rokibul too released some of the pressure of not doing well against New Zealand, reaching his eighth ODI fifty with a six over mid-wicket. His 79-ball 65 also contained six boundaries, the last two being the best shots of the day -- creaming the ball through the cover, beating two fielders inside the circle and one in the boundary.

#### 4 held

Shamsunnahar Hall around 7:45pm.

Police also seized their motorbikes.

Witnesses said the bikers were constantly honking their horns surrounding the female students and uttering slang.

At this, a group of male students chased the bikers and caught them near Teacher-Student Centre (TSC), said a student. Angry DU students then

beat up the youths before handing them over to Shahbagh police.

#### 'Robber' FROM PAGE 16 However, his cohorts fled the

scene, he added. Police on information res-

cued Alamgir in a critical condition and took him to nearby Gonoshasthya Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries. Police also recovered

machetes, a knife and grill according China's railway cutting instruments from the spot.

say, as disruption caused by snow continues. Overnight, temperatures fell as low as -20C in Braemar, Aberdeenshire. There are severe warnings of heavy snow for parts of central and eastern Scotland, Wales

colder

BBC ONLINE

have reduced services, trains in East Yorkshire are cancelled, and there are virtually no services north of Glasgow. Many schools are closed again in Scotland - including all schools in Fife, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, North Lanarkshire and the

and north-west England.

Gatwick Airport has

reopened but delays remain.

Southern and Southeastern rail

Weather across

UK to become

"much, much

The UK will be "much, much,

colder" on Friday, forecasters

are closed in England. Several rail services in England and Scotland are either cancelled or severely disrupted, and drivers are again warned of icy roads.

Borders - and more than 2,000

Snow showers in many areas have eased but the Met Office is now warning of heavy snow in some areas. The warnings for Scotland apply to Strathclyde and Central, Tayside and Fife, while there are icy road warnings for Orkney and Shetland, the Highlands, and the southwest, Lothian and Borders. In England, as well as heavy

snow forecast for the North West, there are warning of widespread icy roads across whole swathes of the country including the Midlands, the east, London and the southeast, the south-west. There are similar warnings for Northern Ireland, and heavy snow and ice in Wales. Temperatures plunged

overnight to -16C at Aberdeen airport and -15C in Edinburgh, while both Manchester airport and Yeovil recorded -10C. The thermometer at RAF Leeming, in North Yorkshire, was showing -17.9C on Friday morning, making the coldest night recorded at the station since records began in 1945.

### Anti-tobacco

pictorial warning will make them realise the hazards of smoking and tobacco use, said Iqbal Masud, member of the health ministry drafting committee.

Experts say that the countries where pictorial warnings have been introduced witnessed a visible decline in tobacco consumption. The draft amendment also recommends that the govern-

items and offer easy loans to farmers for growing other crops but tobacco. However, the provision of keeping smoking zones in public places has not been

ment increase tax on tobacco

kept in the draft amendment. Iqbal Masud said, "In most cases, people do not smoke in designated smoking areas. That is why, there will be no smoking zones in airports or other public places as per the draft.'

He said the drafting committee is yet to finalise the definition of the personnel to be authorised for the enforcement of the proposed law. The committee thinks police and union parishad chairmen or members could be given the authority. The draft amendment also

says that the owner, caretaker or manager of a public place must put up a "No Smoking; Tk 300 fine for violating the law" warning sign in their establishments. If an owner, caretaker or manager does not put up the sign s/he will be finedTk5,000. Taifur Rahman, advocacy

and media coordinator of Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, Bangladesh, said the existing law has loopholes for which tobacco control could not be ensured to a significant level He said the existing law

defines only cigarettes as tobacco items whereas the draft law includes chewing and other forms of tobacco under its concern. Besides, the law of 2005

bans promotion of tobacco items (cigarettes), which has been enforced in the media. However, indirect advertisement still prevails at shops and markets in the name of carrying out corporate social responsibilities, said Iqbal Masud. According to Global Adult

Report 2009, use of tobacco among adults have shot up to 43.3 percent last year which was 37 percent in 2004. It means, around 4.13 crore people are smoking or chewing tobacco. The report also said that an alarming 45 percent of adults are exposed to passive smoking.

Tobacco Survey Bangladesh

### Khaleda collects

FROM PAGE 1

and police. Most her belongings were taken to the Baridhara house

of BNP leader and DCC councillor Abdul Qaiyum and others to the residence of her brother Sayeed Eskander in Baridhara and the house of Tarique Rahman's father-inlaw in Dhanmondi, party leaders said.

Khaleda's counsel Nasiruddin Asim said the authorities did not allow any of the BNP chief's lawyers to be present during the handover of the items to her representatives. A group of lawyers includ-

ing Asim, Mahbubuddin Khokan and Mehnaz Mannan went to Jahangir gate early in the morning. But military police barred them from entering the cantonment. The BNP chief's lawyers

and party leaders said the removal of her belongings from the cantonment house started at about 10:20am. Most items were shifted to Qaiyum's Baridhara house by a covered and a pick-up van by 2:00pm.

Two more covered vans with her belongings departed from the house for Qaiyum's at 2:30pm and at 4:45pm while another left for Sayeed Eskander's Baridhara residence shortly after 6:00pm. A microbus carrying

Khaleda's effects was unloaded at Shamim Eskander's house where she is staying now. Party leader Amanullah

tion leader's belongings on her behalf at Qaiyum's house. Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, personal assistant of the BNP chairperson, said only Khaleda's two sisters-inlaw and personal secretary were allowed to enter the

house after army personne

Aman received the opposi-

had packed her effects. Wives of Sayeed and

#### Social welfare FROM PAGE 16

According to the minister these organisations lend people money and collect it imposing high interest.

The organisations deprive

the government of tax. The

government will mull a law to

monitor them, he said. "I have collected information about micro credit business of the last two years. I felt the lack of cooperation from every sphere, especially from the people who are involved in this business," said Enamul Haque, adding that these organisations obtain licence from five-six government institutions and as a result, the source of their fund and

closed. The government has already served notices to these organisations and taken initiatives to stop their activities, added the minister.

expenditure remain undis-

Asked whether he was referring to the recent allegation of breaching agreement with a donor organisation against Prof Muhammad Yunus, Enamul Haque replied in the affirmative and added that, "You [journalists] should verify the merit of the allegation as the reports in the

media were shocking." On government's next course of action, he said the government would take actions, if necessary, after evaluating and examining the

Shamim Eskander went there to collect Khaleda's belongings at about 10:20am. The army personnel there asked them to wait in another room, he said. The opposition leader

moved out of the house on November 13 leaving behind her belongings. The cantonment board

gave her 72 hours from yesterday to take away her possessions from the house, said He claimed Khaleda's

representatives wanted to

collect her belongings on Thursday. But the cantonment board did not allow them to do so, rather moved some of the items elsewhere. Sources in the army said it sent her a message on Wednesday to take her pos-

after receiving a copy of the judgment on the cantonment house. Khaleda lost the legal battle for the house at the Supreme Court on November

29. She had been residing in

sessions from the house right

#### the house since 1972. Fake pir's

**FROM PAGE 16** local pir Tofura Begum. They

drank the "blessed water" and fell sick. Police, on information, sent them to a local hospital and then to Sylhet MAG

Osmani Medical College Hospital where doctors declared Rifat dead, family sources said. Rifat passed the HSC exams this year and was about to

enrol in a university. Tofura is on the run. Officer-in-Charge of Sylhet Police Station Khondaker Naoroj Ahmed told The Daily

Star that four people including

two aides of Tofura and the

house help of the victim were

On the allegations brought

#### picked up for quizzing. Grand alliance

FROM PAGE 1

against Prof Muhammad Yunus by some media houses, Ashraf said, "He [Yunus] is a role model in Bangladesh. His bad reputation can tarnish the country's image. Bangladesh Bank should investigate the matter and the Awami League will give its opinion after scrutinising the documentary

[aired on a Norwegian tv channel recently]." Terming prime minister's 12-day tour of Russia, Belgium and Japan fruitful, he said she would disclose different features of the visit within a day or two through a press confer-

About allegation of mass arrests before the November-30 hartal, he said, "The government only took preventive measures. We were the victims of mass arrests while we were in the opposition. We do not

want its repetition." He called upon the main opposition party to return to

parliament. Prime Minister and party chief Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting, while party leaders Matia Chowdhury, Sahara Khatun, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Dipu Moni, Mahbubul Alam Hanif, Yusuf Hossain Humayun, Jahangir Kabir Nanak attended among others.

### New rice

July to September due to low rainfall during the period. But the cultivation of the droughttolerant rice saved him a con-

in Nilphamari said, "I could not cultivate aman previously as rainwater does not stay in my relatively high paddy field unless it rains heavily. But this season the drought-tolerant rice has earned me a good harvest despite a little rain.'

nearly 1,600 kgs of rice. Rabeka said she cultivated BR-11 in the past. She hardly

MA Bari, country manager of STRASA, said experiment on rice had been done earlier in India's drought-prone regions and farmers were benefited through it.

tolerant rice, Shabaghi, in 2009," he said. Bari said drought affects around 1 lakh hectares of land,

mostly in Barindra and the

director. Bari said the BRRI and the RDRS had the rice cultivated in Barindra and Rangpur-

drought-tolerant variety of rice

to farmers," said the country

Dinajpur regions. MG Neogi, head of agriculture of RDRS, said some areas in Rangpur, Kurigram Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh witness very little

rainfall during the aman sea-

son due to climate change compelling farmers to irrigate paddy fields. "If farmers in the areas cultivate this rice, they won't have to spend money on irriga-

tion," Neogi said. He said normally aman paddy withers if lands remain dry for two weeks. But the drought-tolerant paddy plants remain unaffected in the same situation for 15 to 23 days.

Dr Hamid, liaison officer of

IRRI in Bangladesh, said, "We observed that drought in October had affected aman yield adversely for the last few years. But the experimental cultivation showed that the drought-tolerant rice remained unaffected."

He said the BRRI applied to the National Seed Board for the release of seeds of the rice as high yielding variety of drought-tolerant rice.

variety, it will be the first drought-tolerant rice in

If the Board releases it as a Bangladesh.

FROM PAGE 1

allegation.

siderable amount of money. Mosharraf Mia of Tupamari

Rabeka Sultana of Kathalbari in Kurigram had grown the rice variety on her one acre of land and harvested

got 800-1,000 kgs of rice for failing to irrigate the field when there were no rain.

"The Indian government released seeds of the drought-

north, during the aman season. "More areas in the country are likely to suffer drought due to climate change. It is high time Bangladesh introduced a