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Surprising suggestion

Review body wants GB to take over Grameen Telecom

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

A government committee's recommendation that Grameen Bank take over the ownership of Grameen Telecom that holds over 34 percent share in Grameenphone is unrealistic and has no legal basis, said legal and telecom experts yesterday.

The committee, appointed by the government to review the management structure and activities of Grameen Bank, in its report also said it must be ensured that the microlender has ownership in Grameen Telecom so that its borrowers can benefit directly from the telecom operations.

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Grameen gets clean chit

Muhith says govt body finds no anomalies in Norwegian fund handling; but GB crossed its authority on some counts

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

A government committee that reviewed Grameen Bank's operations cleared it of any corruption in the handling of a Norwegian fund and said the microlender's interest rate is the lowest compared to the country's other microfinanciers.

The committee thinks the fund has not been used for any dishonest purpose, said finance ministry officials, quoting the review report submitted to Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday.

It gives Grameen Bank a clean chit for the second time after the Norwegian government cleared clouds over the issue by saying the fund had not been used for unintended purposes.

In an instant reaction, Grameen Bank expressed satisfaction over the report's findings on two pressing issues: the handling of the fund and microcredit interest rates.

The committee, headed by Prof AK Monaw-war Uddin Ahmad, gave details of the formations and present status of Grameen Bank and 48 other associated organisations, in the report.

The committee said the microlender crossed its authority in forming and financing its associated organisations,

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REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

- Fix MD's retirement age at 65 years
- GB interest rate lowest at 20 pc
- Reduce GB borrower director number from 9 to 6
- Pick 3 directors with rural economy experience
- Ensure Grameen Bank ownership of Grameen Telecom
- Bring GB, social business under one framework
- Microcredit Regulatory Authority should monitor GB

Talks invitation 'dark design'

Says Khaleda to boycott dialogue; JS body shocked at language of her letter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia yesterday boycotted the talks on constitutional amendment she was invited to by the parliamentary special committee, terming it "conspiratorial".

Khaleda, also the chief of main opposition BNP, said the special committee's proposal for discussion is a "dark design" of the government only to achieve political gains.

"So, this meeting will be meaningless," Khaleda said in a letter to the special committee's chief Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, who on the committee's behalf invited the opposition leader to the talks scheduled for yesterday morning.

Khaleda in her letter cited four reasons as to why she skipped the talks. She however did not question the legality of the parliamentary special committee on constitutional amendment, although her party had refrained from nominating its lawmakers to work with the committee, terming the body's formation illegal.

Her refusal to join the talks and the language she used

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CONSTITUTIONAL APPOINTEES
4 parties for JS role

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four political parties representing the current parliament yesterday proposed introduction of parliamentary confirmation for appointments to constitutional posts.

Top leaders of Jatiya Party, Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, and Ganotantri Party placed the same proposal separately to the parliamentary special committee on constitutional amendment, on the second day of the committee initiated talks on amending the country's supreme charter.

The four allied parties of ruling Awami League proposed formation of a constitutional commission or a constitutional select committee for

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

A jovial woman in Manikganj winnowing freshly reaped boro paddy. With the start of harvesting of the year's main rice crop, government expects some respite in the volatile domestic market. If weather permits, achieving the Boro output target of 18.7 million MT would be a great relief for the government that already borne the bill for 74 percent of the 1.1 million MT rice import this fiscal year.

11 killed in Cox's Bazar

Gunfight, mob-beating leave 10 robbers, 1 villager dead

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Ten robbers were killed in gunfights with police and mob beating in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

A villager was also killed in the exchange of fire between the gang and the police that left at least 21 others including four policemen bullet-hit.

The robbers carrying guns and sharp weapons also attacked villagers who chased them.

The series of incidents started at

Ratnapalong village in Ukha upazila around 2:30am as a gang of 23 dacoits looted valuables from four houses, police said.

Of the dacoits, six were killed in firing while trying to escape a police dragnet and four were beaten to death by villagers.

The dead were suspected as Rohingya refugees, Cox's Bazar Superintendent of Police Nibash Chandra Majhi told The Daily Star.

The villager killed in the gunfight was

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Huji hideout busted

Accused in Udichi, Ramna blasts cases arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday arrested two members of banned Islamist militant outfit Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji), including its acting chief Abdul Hannan Sabbir, from a hideout at Keraniganj.

Sabbir, 51, is an accused in sensational cases for carrying out bomb attacks on an Udichi programme in Jessore and a Pahela Baishakh celebrations event at Ramna Batamul, said Rab officials at a press conference at its headquarters in the capital.

The other arrestee Ainul Haq, 28, was coordinating recruitment and secret training of Huji militants.

Sabbir was also sued in a case filed for planting a 76 kilogram bomb at Sheikh Hasina's rally venue at Kotalipara in Gopalganj in 2000.

According to Rab, the arrestees rented a house near Pachgona Government Primary School in Ati Bazar area a month ago by disguising themselves as garment workers.

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Abdul Hannan Sabbir

2001 POST-POLLS VIOLENCE

Over 200 minority women raped

Probe finds links of several top BNP-Jamaat leaders

M RAHMAN

Over 200 minority women were gang raped allegedly by the then ruling BNP-Jamaat alliance cadres in 15 months since October 2001, finds the judicial commission probing the 2001 post-polls violence.

The barbarous act was intended to force them to leave the country. They were, in the eyes of the culprits, enemies as they voted for Awami League, said commission sources.

The commission has also found involvement of some BNP and Jamaat leaders in the oppression on minorities and Awami League workers.

Of the BNP leaders, the commission named Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Abdul Wadud of Khagrachhari, Joynal Abedin, also known as VP Joynal of Feni, Nadim Mostafa, HM Selim of Bagerhat, Maulana Shakhawat Hossain of Keshabpur in Jessore, Abdus Sobhan of Pabna while the Jamaat leaders are Maulana Matiur Rahman Nizami and Abu

Taher of Comilla.

On Sunday, some other commission sources told The Daily Star that Delwar Hossain Sayedee, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Maj (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, Ruhul Quddus Talukdar Dulu, Hafiz Ibrahim and Zahir Uddin Swapan were among the leaders of the then government who led the oppression.

Talking about some incidents in Bhola, commission sources said Maj (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and his men picked up one of their rivals and shot him dead.

In another incident, Hafiz and his men tore off clothes of another rival and forced him walk around a local market.

Family members of the deceased and witnesses of the killing incidents gave depositions to the commission. Some people also appeared before the commission with witnesses of the atrocity and brutality they faced.

Hafiz, however, refuted the allegations and challenged the commission.

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