



## Letter from Ilias' daughter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The daughter of missing BNP leader M Ilias Ali yesterday handed over a letter to visiting US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton informing the top US diplomat about her father's disappearance.

The Daily Star received a copy of the handwritten letter. Below is the full text of the letter:

Dear Mrs. Hillary Clinton  
Congratulations for visiting Bangladesh. I like to draw your kind attention that my daddy Mr. M. Ilias Ali, ex-parliament member is a patriotic political leader & organizing secretary of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). On 17 April, 2012, he was kidnapped at around midnight by some unknown thugs. No one is able to give my daddy back to me. It has been too long since he last kissed me. Everyday, before going to school, he used to kiss me but now there is none. I feel very sad & lonely. My world is empty without my dad. I know you love the people of Bangladesh very much. You are also a mother. I want to hug & kiss him again. I firmly believe that if Govt. is interested then my dad will soon come back to me.

So, please raise the issue to the Govt. of Bangladesh & help them to get my dad. Wish you brilliant success.

Best regards,  
Saiara Nawal  
Daughter of M. Ilias Ali

## Inflation

percentage point and stood at 9.93 percent last month, which was 10.10 percent in March, according to government data released yesterday.

Inflation soared to double digit in March last year and continued thus since then.

The prices of coarse and fine rice marked a fall and people's purchasing power also improved, pulling down inflation, said Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

## Sins of Muslims

security and the breakdown of unity that Islamic countries are facing these days is a result of the sins of the public and their transgressions," Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Sheikh was quoted as saying by al-Watan newspaper.

In a Friday sermon, he accused "chaotic" people of wearing mask of "democracy and equality" for actions leading to injustice and instability within the umma, or Muslim nation.

Revolts that erupted last year have removed Arab autocrats in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen and are still raging in Syria and Bahrain. They gave voice to millions of people who suffered decades of repression but have alarmed Gulf Arab rulers.

Ties between Riyadh and Cairo were strained by the fall of President Hosni Mubarak, a close Saudi ally, and by the rising power of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, an organisation viewed with suspicion by many Gulf governments.

On Friday an Egyptian delegation visited Saudi King Abdullah to smooth a spat caused by protests at the Saudi embassy in Cairo, which had led to the recall of the Saudi ambassador. The king later ordered the envoy back Cairo and the embassy said he would return on Saturday.

Last month, the grand mufti was criticised after international media quoted him as saying all churches in the Arabian Peninsula should be destroyed, angering Christian bishops in Austria, Germany, and Russia. The comments could not be verified by Saudi officials.

## Hillary meets Yunus

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residence of the US ambassador to Dhaka.

The meeting between Prof Yunus and Clinton, an ardent supporter of the pioneer of microcredit, comes almost a year after Prof Yunus resigned from Grameen Bank, which he set up three decades ago.

The meeting would take place at a time when the financial health of Grameen Bank is looking shaky and the government is apparently trying to take over about 50 legally independent associate organisations linked to the bank.

In March 2011, only five years after winning the Nobel Peace Prize, Prof Yunus was ignominiously thrown out of his job as managing director of the bank, which shocked many of his admirers and supporters around the world.

"The Banker to the Poor" had challenged the legality of the central bank letter in court. But the High Court upheld Bangladesh's Bank's decision. He also had appealed against the verdict with the Supreme Court but the decision remained unchanged.

Prof Yunus, who also received the US Presidential Medal of Freedom, the King Abdul Aziz Medal, and the Ramon Magsaysay Award, resigned on May 12 last year to avert undue disruption in Grameen Bank activities.

Bangladesh Bank's move to remove him came several months after a documentary film was aired on a Norwegian TV channel alleging that Grameen Bank had transferred donors' money, given to Grameen Bank, to another sister organisation. This generated an uproar at home and abroad.

A section of Bangladeshi media jumped to take a swipe at him publishing fabricated stories one after another. At the same time, political heat was fanned with politicians belonging to the ruling alliance making provocative comments.

Later, Norway refuted the allegations saying no irregularities or corruption had taken place, giving Prof Yunus a clean chit.

The brazen removal of Prof Yunus from the bank has apparently started to affect profitability of its core business--a fact that was repeatedly stated by supporters of his official residence.

The BSF has killed 10 Bangladeshis and injured 43 others in the last four months.

The BSF chief, though, in an interview with BBC on January 7 said it is not possible for them to stop firing along the border. His statement showed the BSF's lack of willingness in lowering the number of border killings to zero.

Home Minister Shahara Khatun had toured India in February. During her trip, her counterpart P Chidambaram renewed his pledge. "We have reiterated that we don't intend to continue firing and killing along the border," he maintained.

The agricultural workers have been advised to inform the BGB personnel before going to work in bordering fields at night. The BGB members will inform the BSF about this in advance to ensure they do not open fire on the workers not taking them for smugglers.

These intensive awareness programmes have been very effective in reducing border killings by the BSF, said the BGB chief.

The BSF in March proposed imposing curfews along the border at night, but the BGB disagreed. "Imposing curfews is only a temporary solution. It will not solve the problem at all, rather will undermine people's constitutional right to movement," he added.

Contacted, State Minister for Home Shamsul Hoque Tuku said, "Killing along the border is an old issue and I don't claim that such homicides have stopped."

"If we look at the statistics of border killings since our independence, we will notice a declining trend," he said.

He expressed satisfaction saying that the country for the first time has been able to convince India that killing on the border is inhuman.

According to statistics of Odhikar, the border killings have declined over the last few years.

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Prof Yunus.

The bank incurred a loss of Tk 24 crore last year.

Grameen Bank is the first bank in the world, which provides money to poorer people without asking for collateral. Its 83.5 lakh borrowers, most of them women, own 97 percent of the bank.

Its microcredit operations have been copied across the world including the United States. It has lent \$10.3 billion since it began operations.

FM goes to Delhi

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here yesterday.

The joint commission, conceived as a foreign minister-level annual event during Manmohan's Dhaka visit seven months ago, will explore newer avenues for cooperation, they added.

Bangladesh has long been pressing for a Teesta water-sharing accord, which was expected to be signed during Manmohan's visit but was scuppered in the face of objections from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Mamata, meanwhile, had a meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister SM Krishna here two days ago, but none of them made official comments on whether they had discussed the Teesta issue.

India, on the other hand, has been pushing for an extradition treaty under which northeastern Indian insurgents allegedly holed up in Bangladesh will be sent back.

According to the itinerary released by the Indian external affairs ministry yesterday, Dipu Moni and her Indian counterpart SM Krishna will meet at The Oberoi Hotel tomorrow morning. The two will have a joint media interaction after the meeting.

Dipu will attend the concluding ceremony of the year-long celebration of Rabindranath Tagore's 150th birth anniversary at Vigyan Bhavan at 6:20pm.

On Tuesday, she will have separate meetings with Indian Minister for Water Resources Pawan Kumar Bansal and Home Minister P Chidambaram. She will then call on Manmohan Singh at his official residence.

He will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and several other government leaders.

Bangladeshi leaders during their meetings with Pranab are expected to raise the issue of implementing a joint statement signed during the Indian prime minister's visit to Dhaka last year, said foreign ministry sources.

The Indian minister will also pay a courtesy call on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office at 4:30pm.

Among others who received Pranab at the airport were Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, Prime Minister's International Affairs Adviser Gowher Rizvi, Economic Affairs Adviser Dr Mashir Rahman and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pankaj Saran.

Deadly clashes

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Officials at Al-Zahra University hospital said on Friday they received two people who died in the skirmishes outside the ministry. A frontline medic group said they died of gunshot wounds.

The health ministry reported one death and said he was a conscript soldier.

At least 296 people were also hurt in the clashes, the health ministry said in a statement, including 131 treated in hospital.

Earlier on Friday, military police charged the protesters, chasing them down side streets near the ministry on foot and in military vehicles, firing birdshot and assault rifles into the air amid chaotic scenes.

A blanket of thick smoke engulfed Abbassiya square, where several thousand secular and Islamist protesters had gathered, some marching there from Cairo's Tahrir Square, to denounce the ruling military council.

The clashes began when some protesters threw rocks at the military police, prompting troops to respond with water cannon and later tear gas.

Bleeding protesters were ferried away by motorbike and ambulances rushed to the scene, an AFP reporter said. State television showed several soldiers wounded.

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## JU strike

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to end their programme at around 4:00pm as eight students have been on hunger strike for five days at a makeshift camp in front of the VC's residence.

Earlier, agitating teachers under the banner of Shikkha Samaj on Thursday postponed their demonstrations upon assurance from the PM.

The prime minister at separate meetings on Thursday asked representatives of both agitating teachers and followers of VC to break the deadlock.

Meantime, Shakila Sharmin, general secretary of Jahangirnagar Sanskrity Jote, following a press conference said they have called off the strike as they believe the PM would consider their one-point demand.

She added they would resume demonstrations if the PM failed to meet their demand.

She demanded proper security measures on the campus as activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League are allegedly threatening general students.

Earlier, Kobori told the students the PM has already taken proper measures to overcome the stalemate at JU.

She also said Prof Sharif Enamul Kabir should step down as students [and also teachers] are going on hunger strike demanding his resignation.

On behalf of Bangladesh Committee of Cinema Directors, its President Md Abdul Hannan yesterday announced solidarity with the agitating students.

Following an attack on cultural activists by BCL on the campus on April 28 and arrest of two university teachers, students and teachers jointly staged demonstrations against the VC and embarked on hunger strike on May 1.

## Pranab

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During his stay, Pranab will attend the closing ceremony of the joint celebration programme marking the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore.

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## Hold talks for credible polls

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priorities in Dhaka and Washington DC by turns.

"We want to see Bangladesh as a prosperous democratic country despite challenges of democratic process," said Hillary, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a two-day visit.

Her visit, first by a US secretary of state since 2003, reflects USA's growing interest in strengthening ties with Asian nations.

In 1995, Hillary visited Bangladesh as the US first lady with her daughter Chelsea. In 2000, Bill Clinton, the then US president and Hillary's husband, visited Bangladesh.

Hillary stressed the need for a consensus among all in Bangladesh on fundamental issues for the sake of democracy, sustainable development and the rule of law.

"Democracy must flourish in Bangladesh," she said.

"We support flourishing of democracy and the rule of law. We urge all political actors to work together for the good of this country."

Hillary said in a strong democracy "everybody has to be rowing in the same direction because you are all in the same boat. You are going to make progress together or you are going to run into very turbulent waters."

Everybody has a role to play in democracy, said Hillary.

"We came as a friend and partner...we raise these issues as we are friend and partner of Bangladesh."

On the Grameen Bank issue, Hillary said the Bangladesh government should allow the organisation to operate freely. She also underscored the need for picking an acceptable and respected person as its managing director.

Referring to the civil society's role, the top US diplomat said civil society is a model and inspiration for flourishing democracy in any country. It is essential that civil society groups operate freely in Bangladesh.

Following an attack on cultural activists by BCL on the campus on April 28 and arrest of two university teachers, students and teachers jointly staged demonstrations against the VC and embarked on hunger strike on May 1.

## Onus is on parties

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government of political repression.

Referring to the recent disappearance of BNP leader M Ilias Ali, she said people are panicked following the incident.

"Party" acting secretary general could not attend the meeting as he has been on the run due to police cases.

We didn't declare any destructive programme, but the government is filing numerous cases against our leaders. Even we are not getting justice from the court," said Khaleda.

Hillary said these are sad incidents. She hoped the government will take necessary measures to overcome the situation and find and rescue Ilias in good health.

The secretary of state asked the BNP chairperson about the country's internal

situation including politics, said Shamsher, a former foreign secretary.

Khaleda said people want free and fair elections as it is a pillar of democracy. Election will not be acceptable to anyone if it is held without participation of all parties, she added.

Hillary, in reply, said she had discussed the issue with the Bangladesh government.