

## KALEIDOSCOPE

## Unrest in RMG factories

### Guard against provocations

THE garment sector is in the news again and this time for the very wrong reasons. Violence had run into the second day on Sunday in the Ashulia industrial area, which saw the region turn into a virtual battlefield with the police and garment workers locked in pitched clashes on Saturday also. And this in spite of the assurance of all the parties that normalcy would be restored and regular work would resume from Sunday.

Production in almost 350 factories in that area had to be suspended as a consequence of the violence that initially involved workers of one garment factory and was subsequently joined by hundreds of others from other factories, following rumors that a co-worker had died due to torture by the security staff of that factory.

Reportedly the 'dead worker' was in the custody of the police, having been handed over to them for some offense. The consequence has been not only loss of production in these factories but death of at least one and injury to hundreds, police personnel included, and damage to a large number of public and private transports. The highway traffic was disrupted too for a long period.

It is very disconcerting to see such situation arise in the garment sector that has been enjoying a peaceful environment for a long time; and it is hard to rationalise the workers' behaviour, because we find it very difficult to believe that workers would set upon their own factories without bothering to verify the truth. Therefore, will we be wrong in suggesting that the matter was deliberately engineered to create disruption in the sector, which had been performing very well in spite of the political heat obtaining in the country at the moment? We also fail to understand why 'discontentment' in one factory would be allowed to spill over in the entire area. And where was the factory administration who apparently failed to scotch the rumour? It speaks of a poor worker-management relationship. And where was the industrial police whose job it is to prevent unrest in the area from spreading?

We urge extreme caution of all the parties. The last thing the country can endure at this moment is breakdown in the RMG sector.

## Refugee issue at OIC meet

### Bangladesh makes its point

THE International Ministerial Conference on Refugees in the Muslim World held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan has had a special import. For one thing, it was the first of its kind under the auspices of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) with UNHCR very relevantly as one of the co-organisers. For another, the overwhelming number of Muslim refugee in Muslim countries have so far been drawn less than desired level of international attention. As though they are consigned to the periphery of mainstream refugee concerns.

In this backdrop, Bangladesh's foreign minister Dipu Moni brought into a sharp focus the issue of Myanmar refugees that Bangladesh has been hosting for the last two decades.

Bangladesh being at the receiving end was rightly concerned over the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. The issue impacted Bangladesh in two ways: First, although herself a developing country, she couldn't shake off a certain humanitarian concern; secondly, it was clearly an economic and social burden on a developing country like Bangladesh.

But Dipu Moni placed on the table concrete proposals to address the refugee issues across a broader spectrum. Her suggestions went down well with the other delegations who followed up with their own statements.

Particular mention may be made of our foreign minister highlighting the necessity of international dialogue and engagement with non-OIC countries. She laid emphasis on identifying the root causes of protracted refugee situations and addressing them at the source. Also, she articulated the principle of international burden-sharing, given 'the shrinking global space for asylum and a growing trend of asylum fatigue.'

As for burden-sharing, the host countries need to be engaged in decision-making and analysis of deficit and disconnect relating to refugee protection. Bangladesh thought that the financial and economic contributions of the host countries should be accounted for in the official records and discourses on protection. It is not enough to recognise such needs appropriate mechanisms will have to be evolved to meet them under UNHCR umbrella of

# Leave the man alone, please!



SYED FATAHUL ALAM

THE great English essayist and lexicographer Samuel Johnson remarked about his critics: "A fly, Sir, may sting a stately horse and make him wince; but one is but an insect, and the other is a horse still." Being a great literary critic himself, Dr. Johnson would not let his critics get away with their critiquing so easily.

True, no one is beyond criticism. In all ages, people who won acclaim at home and abroad for their good work had to face criticism. Of course, by criticism is meant here critical appreciation of the work or works of a person. If Professor Yunus's brain-child Grameen Bank and its approach to the problem of poverty alleviation and empowerment of rural women are to be brought under the microscope of scholarly scrutiny by social scientists, economists and development thinkers, then that would be a great service to the thinking public. Professor Yunus himself would welcome that kind of criticism, even if it is aimed at demolishing his theory that the social ills like abject poverty could be addressed through microcredit and women in rural society could be empowered through increasing their access to small sized loans.

The main agency through which he has tried to prove the worth of his approach is Grameen Bank. And from any enlightening discussions on the subject we would be able to know if the Grameen model has at all any

relevance to the problems of poverty and economic empowerment of rural women in particular, if the successes Grameen model's proponents, especially Professor Yunus, claim have any basis or not. Or if it (Grameen model) has really done some good then what are its strong points and what are its weaknesses. We have not heard anything of this kind from some political leaders who have, of late, come down heavily on Professor Yunus afresh following US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's visit to Bangladesh.

Everyone knows of the anti-Yunus tirade of abuse that began in Bangladesh from the establishment and its loyalist quarters about two years back in the wake of a Norwegian

of the unsuspecting public are being served with are nothing but very crude and uncivil remarks meant simply to demean the man personally. This is very unfair.

LGRD minister and Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam even questioned Professor Yunus's contribution in establishing peace for getting the Nobel prize. We are surprised at this unkind comment from Syed Ashraf, who, unlike many of his cabinet colleagues, is known to the public for his sobriety. If he or the government he represents has any doubt about the Nobel Committee's judgement in matters of awarding him peace prize, then wouldn't it be more appropriate for him to place the

attacks both Prof. Yunus and another name in the development world Sir Fazle Hasdan Abed, the founder of Brac.

This time it is not for GB or its activities or Brac's role among rural people that have drawn Mr. Barua's wrath on them. He is angry because being not politicians themselves they have dared to tread the sacred (!) arena of Bangladesh politics by speaking about caretaker system of government with reference to next parliamentary election. He even questioned their right to broach such a political issue. Will he say in which political dictionary has he found that one has to be in active politics and gain popularity -- are they also not popular in their respective fields of activities -- before making a suggestion about issues of political nature? Is there any bar even in our Constitution that a citizen has to first join active politics before she/he is able to make a comment or suggestion on the prevailing political affairs? Are not Professor Yunus and Sir Abed citizens of Bangladesh?

There are many people in Bangladesh who do not see eye to eye with Professor Yunus and his Grameen model to address poverty. But still they would never ridicule him for the recognition he gained worldwide for his work and the coveted Nobel Prize that he won. On the contrary, any sensible and self-respecting person would simply accept facts and give him his due. If you can't appreciate him, can't you at least leave the man alone?

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television channel's reporting on alleged irregularity in the financial transactions of Grameen Bank (GB). But that spate of anti-Yunus hysteria stopped after the Norwegian Minister for Environment and International Development Erik Solheim in December, 2010 (The Daily Star report, December 8, 2010) cleared Grameen Bank of the allegation that it embezzled donor's fund. The government also formed a probe body later which also gave GB a clean chit.

What we are now witnessing is another bout of verbal abuses against the favourite whipping boy of the government leaders. What members

issue before the Nobel Committee itself than ridiculing the prize's recipient, Prof. Yunus?

A new convert to the Awami League (AL), the industry minister Dilip Barua who, in the not-so-distant past was a Left-wing politician from a very militant revolutionary camp, looks like quite a transformed person now after he jumped on the AL's bandwagon during the last parliamentary election (held in 2008). We would not be surprised had he criticised Prof. Yunus from his erstwhile a position of communist leader. Surprise, surprise, he sounds more Catholic than the Pope when, in the same breath, he

## POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

# Climate change talks from Durban to Bonn



SALEEMUL HUQ

THE last Conference of Parties (COP17) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was

held in Durban, South Africa in December 2011 and came out with the Durban Platform of Enhanced Action (DPEA). The next round of talks under the UNFCCC is going to be held in May in Bonn, Germany, in preparation for COP18 which will be held in Doha, Qatar in December 2012.

Although not a COP, the talks in Bonn will nevertheless be important to resolve a number of key issues before COP18 in Doha. Some of these are described below.

**National Adaptation Plans (NAP):** In Durban, the guidelines for National Adaptation Plans (NAP) were agreed, and now the discussion in 2012 will focus on initiating the actual process to prepare such NAPs, and the financial support to be provided both for the process and implementation of these plans. Parties and multilateral organisations were invited to submit their views on the financial support for designing of NAPs and some have done so.

It is expected that in Bonn initial discussions will be held for the preparation of a COP decision on this matter at COP18 in Doha in December. It will be important to provide finance at least for LDCs as soon as possible so that more countries can develop their NAPs in a participatory and transparent manner. The results may also provide an important input into the Durban Platform on the post-2020 agreement, for example by assessing

the adaptation costs post-2020

**Loss and damage**  
The Durban COP took an important step forward by agreeing a work programme on loss and damage. It includes a series of expert workshops. The first expert workshop of the work programme took place in Tokyo, Japan in March. It focused on the assessment of risks of loss and damage. The discussions showed that there is still a substantial need to further define what should be understood as loss and damage in the UNFCCC context. However, it also became clear that this issue has strong linkages both with adaptation and mitigation, so from loss and damage point of view driving forward both

UNFCCC, which could include some kind of international mechanism, regional or international climate risk insurance facility. The process beyond COP18 should also address the role of loss and damage in the post-2020 agreement, building on work already done.

**Adaptation Committee (AC)**  
The Adaptation Committee was established in Durban. Originally, it was expected that the first meeting would take place before the Bonn session, but there are still outstanding nominations from different regions, which is an area of concern. It is not yet clear whether the first meeting will take place right after the Bonn session, as it is usually organ-

be the first time that serious discussions will be held on this issue. The main point of contention is how the Durban Platform links to the other major negotiating tracks, namely the Kyoto Protocol (KP) track and Long-Term-Cooperative-Action (LCA) track. The other issue is with regard to timings for agreeing the post-Kyoto framework. Some countries (notably the United States of America) are trying to postpone it to 2020 while many others (including the LDCs) are pushing for completion by 2015.

**Bangladesh's role**  
Bangladesh will be fielding a team of officials from the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF) and experts as it does at all UNFCCC sessions. The team is ably led by Dr. Q. K. Ahmed and they meet every day to plan their tactics and inputs. They have been playing a significant support role to the Chair of the LDC Group as well as on their own.

Two important contributions that Bangladesh has made as a major player have been on pushing the topic of loss and damage -- and carrying out some important research on this topic to present at COP18 in Doha. The other is to raise the issue of migration due to climate change impacts, which is still very much a taboo topic for many of the (mostly developed) countries in the UNFCCC process.

The Bonn talks are not expected to come out with any major decisions, but they will lay the groundwork for making those decisions at COP18 in Doha. These will in turn determine whether we will have to wait until 2020 for a new global treaty or be able to do it by 2015.

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agendas is crucial. Furthermore, preparation of a technical paper as well as literature review on this aspect is being undertaken by the Secretariat.

Later in the year, as part of the work programme, regional workshops will take place on the range of approaches to address loss and damage, including impacts related to extreme weather events and slow onset events. The workshops are likely to take place in Ethiopia (June), Mexico (July) and the other two in countries from Asia and the SIDS. At COP18 a decision should be reached providing a clearer way forward, perhaps a next phase of the work programme which elaborates concrete approaches under the

ised. The nomination for Adaptation Committee is a crucial step, as it must reflect balanced and a broad range of expertise and representation. The LDC Group has unanimously nominated Dr. Sumaiya Zakeldien from Sudan as their representative on the Adaptation Committee.

In addition to the items mentioned above there are also important discussions to be held on the Nairobi Work Programme on Adaptation as well as on Least Developed Country matters.

**Durban Platform**  
The Durban Platform is the main outcome from Durban and Bonn will

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

May 14

**1747**  
War of the Austrian Succession: A British fleet under Admiral George Anson defeats the French at the First Battle of Cape Finisterre.

**1787**  
In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, delegates convene a Constitutional Convention to write a new Constitution for the United States; George Washington presides.

**1796**  
Edward Jenner administers the first smallpox vaccination.

**1935**  
The Philippines ratifies an independence agreement.

**1940**  
World War II: The Battle of the Netherlands ends with the Netherlands surrendering to Germany.

**1948**  
Israel is declared to be an independent state and a provisional government is established. Immediately after the declaration, Israel is attacked by the neighboring Arab states, triggering the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

**1955**  
Cold War: Eight communist bloc countries, including the Soviet Union, sign a mutual defense treaty called the Warsaw Pact.