

GRAMEEN BANK COMMISSION Target 48 entities

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Many legally independent organisations bearing Grameen Bank names are being forced to supply documents to the Grameen Bank Commission although they are not part of the microcredit organisation.

Officials of the organisations said the government-formed commission had recently sent them letters, demanding certified copies of the minutes of the board meetings and the annual audit reports since their inception.

The three-member panel has sent letters

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



48 organisations under scrutiny

- Commission seeks minutes of board meetings and audit reports
- Threatens legal actions if entities fail to comply with letters

From 3pc to 25pc share Govt eyes larger Grameen stake

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

The government plans to raise its stake in Grameen Bank back to 25 percent from 3.29 percent in an apparent move to tighten control over the microlender, said officials.

The government has paid only Tk 1.80 crore against its share of the paid-up capital since Grameen's inception three decades ago, causing the government share to plummet from 25 percent to a meagre 3.29 percent.

It is now preparing to pay Grameen Bank Tk 13.20 crore to push its share back to 25 percent in the organisation that has paid-up capital of Tk 60 crore, said a finance

SEE PAGE 2 COL 8

GARMENT WORKERS Yunus calls for minimum int'l wage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof Muhammad Yunus has called for an international minimum wage for garment factory workers to shield them from exploitation.

In an interview with the BBC Bangla Service yesterday, the founder of Nobel Peace Prize winner Grameen Bank said the minimum wage could be implemented in all garment-producing countries.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Fate hangs in the balance

Mozena, Dipu Moni talk on Ticfa, GSP only diplomatically

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The much-talked-about Ticfa deal was not related to the GSP facility, assured Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and US Ambassador Dan W Mozena yesterday.

Asked about Bangladesh's prospect of retaining the US Generalised System of Preference (GSP) facilities, Mozena at a press conference in American Centre in the morning said, "The GSP review process is probably too far a long way at this point. It's being evaluated right now."

At another press conference in the foreign ministry in the afternoon, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said there was no link between the US GSP facility for Bangladesh and the Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework Agreement (Ticfa).

"Export to the USA under GSP is less than one percent of the country's total export to the US. But the GSP facility is involved with the image of an exporting country like Bangladesh and we want GSP to continue so that it does not have any adverse impact on any other market," she added.

Dipu Moni noted that it was important for all stakeholders including owners, buyers and the government to make contribution to retaining the GSP facility.

The government had undertaken steps regarding amendment of the labour law, work safety measures and trade union rights after the collapse of Rana Plaza and the fire incident in Tazreen Fashions, she said, adding, "After all these steps in place, response from the US side regarding GSP is

positive."

Asked whether the signing of Ticfa was conditional to retaining the GSP facility, the US envoy said, "Ticfa is Ticfa and it does only one thing, which is establishing a forum to meet once or twice a year and identifying obstacles to increase trade and investment, and overcoming those obstacles. It is not related to GSP ... it is related to having a forum."

He said the US had already signed Ticfa agreement with more than 40 countries. "If this is good for Bangladesh to have this forum, then let's sign it. If it is not a good thing, Bangladesh should never sign it."

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said it was a policy matter which was being discussed for long. Ticfa

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

LABOUR UNREST No production in 60 RMG units

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Production in at least 60 garment factories at Ashulia on the outskirts of Dhaka was suspended yesterday due to labour unrest, said BGMEA President Atiqul Islam.

Some affected garment owners announced the closure of their factories for an indefinite period as agitated workers had been vandalising the factories demanding a wage hike, lunch allowance and other facilities.

Production was suspended partly in Ha-Meem Group, Ananta Garment, Medlar Apparels, Radiance Garment and Bando Design.

The BGMEA president, however, said production in other parts of the country had been going on smoothly.

Meanwhile, the Ashulia based garment makers last night decided to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



HEFAJAT LEADER'S CONFESSION BNP embarrassed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A senior BNP leader said yesterday his party had made a mistake by backing the May 5 rally of Hefajat-e Islam at Shapla Chattar in the capital.

"I had told the party high-ups right from the beginning that it would be wrong to support Hefajat's programmes, and it would harm the BNP's image," said the BNP leader on condition of anonymity.

He didn't refute Hefajat leader Babunagari's statement in court to the effect that the BNP-led alliance had patronised Hefajat's May 5 rally at Shapla Chattar. "I cannot talk about it with anyone now," he said.

BNP spokesperson Shamsuzzaman Dudu, however, cast doubts over the authenticity of the confessional statement of Babunagari, detained secretary general of Hefajat-e Islam.

"Only Allah knows what really happened at the time when he gave the statement. No lawyers or journalists were present there at that time," he told journalists at the party's Naya Paltan office.

Several statements were made under Section 164 in the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

POLITICAL DIALOGUE Progress slow, says Mozena

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador Dan Mozena has said the preliminary steps towards political dialogue between the ruling and opposition alliances were being taken but progress was slow.

"People are talking to each other. People aren't sure about the other side. So this will not be easy, this will not be fast," he said at a press conference at the American Centre yesterday morning.

"I can only hope that it will inch its way forward and then gain momentum because I think it will yield results; I mean free, fair and credible election that everybody wants. And dialogue I think is the best way to achieve that result," he added.

When his attention was drawn to the zero

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

NEWS ANALYSIS

After Col Taher, there is more

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

All these years, indeed decades, after the execution of Col Abu Taher in dubious circumstances, the 198-page judgement by the High Court on his trial and hanging restores his reputation before the country.

But, of course, Taher's reputation has never been in question. What was in question was the sordid manner in which the martial law regime, where General Ziaur Rahman was the strongman with a pliant president ASM Sayem beside him, sent Taher, clearly one of the bravest of freedom fighters, to a premature end.

Now that justice has finally been done to Col Taher, questions naturally arise over other crimes committed in Bangladesh between 1975 and 1981. Those were the years when conspiracy, mayhem and murder vitiated the country's politics and left the state hobbled through an absence of strong, legitimate national leadership.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Man dies in cop custody

Family alleges torture as it gave half the money demanded in bribe for his release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth, detained over four murders in Sonargaon upazila of Narayangaj, died after police had tortured him for his failure to pay the money demanded for his release, said the victim's relatives.

Twenty-six-year-old Shamim Reza, a sand trader, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday morning while he was in jail custody.

The magistrate's inquest report says Reza had marks of injuries in his face, hands and legs. He died of injuries inflicted by beating, sources in the morgue said.

Reza had been picked up by a team of law enforcers of Sonargaon Police Station on May 14, Reza's brother Iqbal Hossain told The Daily Star.

However, Officer-in-Charge Atiqur Rahman said Reza was arrested on May 19 and made a confessional statement in court under Section 164.


Iqbal said that when he along with his uncle visited Inspector (investigation) Arup Tarafder at his quarters on May 18, they found Reza there, badly beaten and handcuffed.

"We were asked to give Tk 5 lakh to stop the torture but

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

SAVAR TRAGEDY PROBE

- Rana is guilty of
- Using poor mixture of cements & sands in building Rana Plaza
- Using extremely low quality rods
- Ignoring factory & fire safety rules
- Allowing installation of very heavy machines on upper floors that contributed to disaster



Savar Municipality guilty of

- Giving permission to a 9-storey building that was previously approved as a 6-storey building
- Ignoring the building code
- Not monitoring building construction

HOME PROBE INTO SAVAR TRAGEDY Rana Plaza was built poorly

Tough punishment to Rana, his aides and factory owners recommended

M RAHMAN

Extremely poor construction materials and violation of construction rules contributed to the collapse of the nine-storey Rana Plaza in Savar on April 24, revealed a government probe body yesterday.

The crash was one of the largest industrial building collapses in the world that claimed 1,127 lives and maimed over 2,000 others.

The probe body, formed on April 25 by the home ministry to investigate the reasons behind the collapse, revealed its findings to reporters at the home

ministry after handing the report over to Home Secretary CQK Mustak Ahmed.

The investigation body recommended building owner Sohel Rana, his aides, and the authorities of the garment factories be tried under section-304 and 34 (manslaughter) of the penal code. A court could sentence them to life imprisonment if found guilty.

Regarding substandard materials, the head of the probe body, Mainuddin Ahmed, said, "The ratio of cement and sand in the mixture was not proper and extremely low quality

iron rods and cement were used."

Mainuddin, an additional home secretary, said the local municipality authorities first gave permission for a six-storey building, and later gave permission for another four floors on top of that.

The municipality did not even follow the Bangladesh National Building Code while issuing the permissions to Rana Plaza.

Sohel Rana, owner of Rana Plaza, erected the building for commercial purposes and later built more floors to house garment factories, violating the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

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