



Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan inaugurates two dredgers of DBL Dredging Ltd in Madaripur on Saturday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Canadian PM welcomes all immigrants

AFP, Ottawa

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau welcomed immigrants Saturday in a sunny Twitter message written in stark contrast to Donald Trump's order temporarily banning all refugees and many Muslims from travelling to the United States.

"To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada," Trudeau posted on Twitter.

The message comes one day after Trump signed a sweeping executive order to suspend the arrival of refugees for at least 120 days and impose

tough new controls on travellers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen for the next three months.

Since then, travellers from those countries have been stopped from boarding US-bound planes, triggering angry protests and detentions at airports.

Some who were already in the air when Trump signed the executive order were detained on arrival, The New York Times reported.

But a federal judge blocked part of the Republican's temporary immigration ban on Saturday, ordering authorities to stop deporting refugees and other travellers stuck at US airports.

Myanmar's NLD lawyer

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returned from a government delegation trip to Indonesia.

"He [Ko Ni] was shot while he was waiting for a car outside the airport. Ko Ni died on the spot," he told AFP.

There were no reports on possible motives behind the murder but the daylight slaying will do little to calm already heightened nerves within Myanmar's Muslim community.

Myanmar's border regions have simmered for decades with ethnic minority insurrections.

But it is rare for prominent political figures to be murdered in Yangon, the country's booming and largely safe commercial hub.

However in recent years Myanmar has witnessed a surge of anti-Muslim sentiment, fanned by hardline Buddhist nationalists.

Ko Ni, a legal advisor to the NLD, was a rare voice advocating religious tolerance and pluralism.

In late 2015 Suu Kyi's NLD party won a landslide election victory, ending decades of military-led rule.

But in what analysts widely saw as a sop to Buddhist hardliners the party fielded no Muslim candidates, despite boasting many senior Muslim figures in its ranks.

Suu Kyi has also faced international censure for her failure to criticise an ongoing army crackdown against the Muslim Rohingya minority in western Rakhine state.

Since the launch of the crackdown in October at least 66,000 Rohingya have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh leaving security forces are carrying out

BNP to send

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colleagues to place to their preferred names, which she will finalise and send to the committee.

On Saturday, the search panel requested political parties to suggest five names for the appointment of the chief election commissioner and other commissioners by January 31.

The BNP will hold another meeting today before sending the names, party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told journalists yesterday.

When the last search committee was formed in 2012 before the formation of the Election Commission, the BNP did not send any name.

Probe body

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"We've formed the committee to probe the matter," he told The Daily Star at his ministry office yesterday.

The minister said on Saturday that he directed the secretary of the ministry to form a committee to this end.

The committee, led by Additional Secretary Sushen Chandra Das, would start investigation soon, said an official of the ministry. The two other members of the committee are Joint Secretary Md Ziaur Rahman Khan and Deputy Secretary Md Aminur Rahman.

Daily Prothom Alo also ran three stories on this issue.

India

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The project was signed in October 2011 in presence of the then power minister Sushil Kumar Shinde, Manipur Chief Minister O Ibobi Singh and top National Hydro Power Company officials.

It is being executed as a joint venture of the NHPC, Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited and the Manipur government.

The project envisages construction of 162.8-metre high rock fill dam with an installed capacity of 62x250MW, with firm power generation of 434.44MW.

Bangladesh will face adverse impacts of the Tipaimukh dam, including environmental deprivation, economic crisis and drought, Bangladeshi green activists say.

Water might dry up from the Surma and Kushiara rivers and its 60 branches and distributaries that support agriculture, irrigation, navigation, drinking water supply, fisheries, wildlife in numerous haors and low lying areas in the entire Sylhet division and some peripheral areas of Dhaka division.

The river system also supports internal navigation, wildlife in haors, and industries like fertilisers, electricity, gas, etc.

At the press conference, they placed a 17-point demand for strengthening UPs, the lowest tier of local government bodies.

"We will continue discussing with the government to realise our demands. If discussion fails, we will be compelled to wage a movement," Swapan said at the venue.

The group's General Secretary Firoz Siddique and coordinator Dilip Kumar Sarker also spoke at the programme.

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No meddling

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The UP chairmen and members also demanded establishment of a local government commission to coordinate overall activities of different local government institutions.

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Refusing the allegation, Jihadul Kabir, superintendent of Pabna police, said they were not aware of that. Sharif was killed in the "gunfight".

Yunus Centre responds

FROM PAGE 1

before and Yunus Centre has responded every time. Most of these allegations were made over and over again since 2011. They have been thoroughly responded to on each occasion. All national newspapers printed these responses devoting exclusive full pages in August, 2012. We are sorry that we have to repeat our responses once again. We are again laying out the facts against every accusation made by Honorable Prime Minister.

Honorable Prime Minister: Yunus has lots of money but does not pay tax. He sues taxmen not to pay tax. He does not pay taxes on the huge amount he keeps in fixed deposits. We don't know the sources of his income. Where does all the big money come from?

Yunus Centre: The allegation of avoiding paying taxes is completely false. Professor Yunus always pays his taxes in full and without fail. He pays substantial amounts in taxes every year. Honorable Prime Minister has given false information to the nation from the floor of the Parliament. Professor Yunus never tried to avoid due taxes by making excuses. His tax files have been investigated repeatedly in order to find fault with them but every time it has come out clean. According to newspaper reports all banks in the country were asked last month to give his and his wife's financial dealings with them. Nothing new came out of these bank reports either.

There are three sources of Professor Yunus' income: 1) Speaking fees from the lectures he gives at various conferences around the world. He is one of the highly prized speakers in the global speaking circuit. This source of his income accounts for bulk of his income. 2) Royalties from his books published in over 25 languages. His books have been included in the New York Times bestsellers list, 3) Income from fixed deposits generated from items 1 and 2.

Source of each receipt under items 1 and 2 are made available to tax authorities. So the question of not knowing the source of income does not arise.

He remits his earnings from lectures and books back to Bangladesh through formal banking channels. All details are always given by the banks and are submitted to the tax authorities. To claim that sources of his income are not known to the government is not the truth. It would be very surprising to believe that relevant agency of the government did not brief the Prime Minister and inform her of the facts. If they did not do it so far even after the repeated concerns expressed from the highest level of the government about this information they should be taken to task for causing embarrassment to the Honorable Prime Minister for giving the nation false information on the floor of the parliament.

Professor Yunus keeps his money in fixed deposits in the bank. He has never invested in stocks and shares. He does not own any share in any company anywhere in the world. (It is incorrect to claim that he owns shares of Grameenphone). Not paying taxes on fixed deposits is again a meaningless allegation as tax on fixed deposit is paid at source. Since he pays taxes on all of his income that also includes income from the fixed deposits too.

Tax authorities are always provided with all the details of his fixed deposits and all his other accounts.

It is correct that he contested in the court regarding some tax claims made by taxmen. This legal action was needed from Professor Yunus because of sudden departure by the tax authority from a longstanding interpretation of a tax law applied in cases of all previous tax returns of Professor Yunus. In addition this change was given retrospective effect causing an enormous tax burden. Professor Yunus went to the court to seek redress for these claims.

Honorable Prime Minister: Muhammad Yunus is a "cheat" as he did not give Grameenphone profits to Grameen Bank in "breach of the promise he made before setting up of the telecom company". Grameenphone, she claimed, was supposed to be a joint venture between Grameen Bank and Grameenphone. Dr. Yunus sold share of Grameenphone. He had turned Grameenphone into his personal property. About 30 percent of Grameenphone shares were in his hand and the rest was sold to others.

Yunus Centre: All government records in various ministries and agencies will show that the Honorable Prime Minister is wrong on all of these counts. The creation of Grameenphone went through a long series of formalities. None of the records of the government would bear the Prime Minister out. Here are the basic facts about Grameenphone.

Grameenphone was born as a Joint Venture Company. Lead partner in this joint venture of Grameenphone is a Norwegian company, Telenor, which is owned by the Norwegian government. The second owner of Grameenphone is Grameen Telecom which is a non-

profit company registered under section 28 of the Company's Act which has no private owner. Grameenphone is a publicly listed company. There are thousands of small shareholders of Grameenphone throughout the country. Because of Professor Yunus Grameenphone is the only telecom company in which 45 percent of ownership is in Bangladeshi hands including thousands of small investors. All other telecom companies are entirely foreign owned.

Grameen Telecom borrowed money from Soros Foundation to invest in Grameenphone. At no stage did Grameen Bank own any share of Grameenphone.

As mentioned before, all the documents of Grameenphone are available to the government. All information is available to the relevant government agencies. These will show that Professor Yunus never owned any share of Grameenphone at any stage of the company, nor does he own any share now. Therefore, the question of his selling shares to anyone does not arise. Similarly, since Grameen Bank did not own any share of Grameenphone at any time, the question of Grameen Bank selling shares of GP does not arise either. Grameen Telecom never sold any of its shares to anyone except in the case of selling shares to general public, as agreed by all partners of Grameenphone and the Government of Bangladesh.

Grameen Telecom operates the Village Pay Phone programme to give poor women entrepreneurs the opportunity to sell phone services in the village. Grameen Telecom is the pioneer in the whole world in bringing telephone services to the poor, to the women in particular, and to the villages for the first time in telecom history of the world. Hundreds of thousands of women made a good income from Grameen Telecom from its Village Phone Programme. Because of the significance of this programme, it has been recognized as the milestone in the history of technology. Grameen Telecom's Village Phone Programme is on display in the Glasgow Museum of Technology. As a nation we can take pride in having a place in the museum of technology. Because of the path breaking work of Grameenphone, telephone services today are so affordable. A mobile phone is now within the reach of almost all people in Bangladesh even in the remotest areas.

Profits from Grameenphone that come to Grameen Telecom, a non-profit company, are used entirely for projects that support the welfare of the common people of the country through Grameen Telecom Trust.

All documents relating to the agreement made at the time of formation of Grameenphone and also about the ownership structure of Grameenphone are publicly available and may be reviewed by anyone who is interested.

Honorable Prime Minister: Following his defeat in the legal battle, Yunus got angry and he and an editor of a famous newspaper met with the World Bank President and also lobbied with Hillary Clinton to stop funding for Padma Bridge.

Yunus Centre: It is to be noted that Professor Yunus exceeded 60 years of age during the last tenure of Awami League Government in 2001. But the government never raised the issue of Professor Yunus' age. Grameen Law does not specify any retirement age of the Managing Director.

Bangladesh Bank never raised the issue of retirement age in their reports either during the eleven years. But the issue was raised in 2011. At this point Professor Yunus submitted a writ petition to the High Court. The court refused to accept the petition for hearing on the ground that he does not have Locus Standi, which means he is not eligible to submit the petition. He appealed to the Appellate Division but his appeal was refused on the same ground. He accepted the court decision and stepped down immediately.

In the past Professor Yunus categorically rejected the claim that he influenced the World Bank through a telephone call to his friend Hillary Clinton in withdrawing the WB funds for Padma Bridge. This time Prime Minister has presented another version of the story claiming Professor Yunus along with an Editor of a newspaper met the World Bank President to lobby for withdrawal of funds for Padma Bridge. No matter which way the story is told, Professor Yunus continues to reject it. He had repeated many times, and repeats it again in this rejoinder that Padma Bridge is a dream of the people of Bangladesh and that he would dedicate all his energy to realize this dream.

Honorable Prime Minister: Professor Yunus is a user.

Yunus Centre: The review committee of the Government that did an in-depth review of Grameen Bank in 2011 came to the conclusion that GB has the lowest rate of interest of any microlending organization in the country. It was a report commissioned

by the government which concluded that.

Furthermore, the Grameen Bank is owned by the 9 million women who borrow from it. If GB makes profit, it goes to them. Not a single penny from the bank's profits has ever gone to Professor Yunus or any other individual who is not one of the women borrower-owners of the bank. Professor Yunus was always a salaried employee of the bank, never a owner to share its profit. How that makes him a 'user', is a difficult logic to fathom.

Honorable Prime Minister: 70% of the country was under water in 1998 and GB staff tortured people for installments.

Yunus Centre: The standing policy of Grameen Bank is to suspend collection of weekly installments in a situation of disaster, and turn the bank into a humanitarian organization to save life, feed people, house them, and take care of the sick. Priority for the bank is to save lives. Grameen Bank staff is known for their commitment to help the poor borrowers to overcome their problems. That's what earned the bank worldwide admiration and respect.

It is not true that GB staff would torture members for installments given the prevailing culture of the institution in disaster situation.

Honorable Prime Minister: Yunus was behind "the harassment, repression and torture" of my son, daughter, sister and my cabinet members by US intelligence agencies in the name of probing corruption allegations against them.

Yunus Centre: This is an unfounded and baseless story. Professor Yunus rejects such a fictitious story.

Honorable Prime Minister: Yunus evaded tax of some 40 to 50 Grameen companies.

The Finance Minister followed up the Prime Minister's statement with similar false allegation stating that most Grameen companies do not pay taxes, and that they claim tax exemption like Grameen Bank. Yunus has established 40/50 companies with the Grameen name, which don't pay taxes. Only GB was exempt from giving tax, not these companies.

Yunus Centre: This is a completely baseless accusation. All companies created by Professor Yunus strictly comply with the laws of land and always pay due tax. In fact, even after comprehensive attempts to find faults, no evidence of tax evasion has ever been found by the authority.

All of the organizations created by Professor Yunus regularly pay tax and VAT. None of the companies receive any tax exemption or any tax privilege. They are all audited yearly and they all submit their tax returns regularly. Just like any other business organization, these organizations also come under the oversight of respective regulatory agencies.

Princes reveal

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The move follows criticism of other tributes, notably the £5 million memorial fountain in Hyde Park.

William and Harry have appointed a committee to help choose a sculptor and raise funds for the statue, which is expected to be in place by the end of the year.

Diana brought up the young princes in Kensington Palace, which became a temporary shrine when she and her boyfriend Dodi Fayed died in a car crash in Paris in 1997 – more than a million bouquets of flowers were laid outside the railings.

Friends of the Princess praised the initiative, while arts luminaries called for the public to be involved in the choice of sculptor.

Rosa Monckton, a confidante of Diana who chaired the committee behind the memorial fountain, said she had deliberately ruled out a statue at the time 'because she spent her whole life being stared at. I didn't think it was appropriate. But now, 20 years on, it is absolutely right.'

"The boys at that time were not old enough to make any decisions, but now there is a whole generation who didn't know Diana or what she looked like. It think it is a fantastic idea and the right time to do it."

But she warned Diana, who was 36 when she died, may prove difficult for a sculptor to capture, saying: "She was particularly elusive as a character and it will be very interesting to see what they do."

CJ wants

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Earlier on January 16, the District and Sessions Judge's Court in Narayanganj found 35 people, including 25 former Rab officials and expelled ruling Awami League man Nur Hossain, guilty of abduction and murder of seven people and destroying evidence in April 2014.

The court handed down death penalty to 26 people, including 16 former Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) men, and jailed nine others for various terms.