

PM's hotline in cold fit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prime minister's telephone hotline has been out of order since Friday night due to a fire in the cable box.

The cable box in front of the Military museum at the Bijoy Sarani caught fire, disrupting the services, police said.

Safiqur Rahman, deputy divisional engineer, of the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB), filed a case with the Tejgaon Police Station claiming that it was an act of sabotage.

But primary police investigation revealed that the fire might have been caused by careless disposal of cigarettes in the cable box by passers-by.

"The cable box had no cover," said a police officer of the Tejgaon Police Station. "The cable box was exposed to the public and a mishap like this may happen due to careless disposal of cigarette. We saw no evidence of sabotage."

He said the BTB was callous in keeping the hotline system uncared for.

PSC refutes test scam, won't cancel exams

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Public Service Commission (PSC) yesterday brushed aside allegation of leakage of questions of the preliminary test for 24th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations held on Friday.

It also dismissed suggestions for cancellation of the test. A Dhaka University student went to the Ramna Police Station Friday to lodge a complaint about the question leakage about one and a half hours before the start of the test.

He saw the officer-in-charge of the police station with a hand written copy of the leaked out questions. Out of the 75 questions of his copy, 72 appeared in the question paper.

Each copy of leaked questions was sold at TK 10,000 at Mohsin Hall and Salmuall Hall of Dhaka University and at Dhaka College Thursday night, many examinees

alleged.

"There is no ground to cancel the test", PSC Chairman ZN Tahmidia Begum told reporters yesterday. She added that the test was held properly and that her office received no allegations of question leakage until the test was over.

Questions of the preliminary test were leaked out in the city and other parts of the country on Thursday night.

Following reports of question leakage in different national dailies, the PSC and its various sources investigated the matter and found that the report is not true, a PSC press release claimed yesterday. The press release was sent following a meeting of PSC with Tahmidia Begum in the chair.

The PSC maintained utmost secrecy in the process of preparing and printing questions, the press release added. It also said the

chairman and other members supervised the process.

PSC distributed sealed-off packets of question papers at the examination centres, which were opened at 3:30pm when the examination began, the release further said.

PSC inspectors visited different centres in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna during the test, but did not come across any allegation of question, said the press release, signed by Sheikh Muhammad Alauddin, controller of examination of the PSC.

In June last year, questions of the test for appointment of assistant teachers at primary schools were leaked. The authorities took a fresh test following allegations of leakage.

In January this year, questions

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Dhaka signs sci-tech cooperation deal with Washington

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and US signed a scientific and technological cooperation agreement yesterday.

The two countries will exchange personnel, information, and technology under the deal and collaborate on subjects of mutual interest.

The cooperative activities will depend on the availability of funds.

"This is a model agreement and Bangladesh is the first country with which we have negotiated such an agreement," Christina Rocca, visiting US assistant secretary of state, told newsmen yesterday after the deal.

"This is an opportunity for us to develop in science and technology," Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, science and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Science and Information & Communication Technology Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan (2nd-L) and US Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca (2nd-R) sign a deal on scientific cooperation yesterday.



Body of college student found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of a college student was recovered at Ambagan in the city's Malibagh area yesterday.

Getting a telephone call, police recovered the body of Wazed Ali Khan Rafi, 19, a second year student of Sheikh Borhan Uddin College, at about noon. The victim's throat was slit with sharp weapon.

Rafi went out of his residence at Rampura on Friday in the evening to see his grandmother who lives at 502, Ambagan. As he did not return home at night, the family lodged a general diary with Ramna police yesterday.

After the recovery, police called the victim's family who identified the body. It was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately. Police said they have started investigation.

None could be arrested in this connection till last night, the duty officer at Ramna police station said.

JCD factions clash at CU: 7 injured

CU CORRESPONDENT

At least seven leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) were injured in a clash between two factions of the student body on the Chittagong University campus yesterday.

The two factions -- one led by Abdullah Al Noman and the other by Wahidul Alam Mir Nasir -- clashed over formation of the JCD CU committee. The committee was formed recently.

Following the clash, the Wahidul Alam Mir Nasir faction called a strike on the campus today demanding expulsion of what it said non-students and outsiders from the committee.

The injured were identified as Mohammad Selim, president of JCD CU unit and Sadeq, Shohel, Selim, Masud and Khorsheed.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Table with prayer timings for Sun Rises, Sun Sets, and Azan/Jamaat for Mar 2 and Mar 3.

Delhi triples budget for border with Bangladesh

Rs 80 cr allocated for barbed wire fencing

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India's proposed new budget for 2003-4 provides for a 300 per cent increase in allocation for strengthening the border with Bangladesh, Finance Minister Jaswant Singh said when he presented the budget in parliament on Friday.

The sharply increased budgetary allocation, which comes at a time of heightened tension between the two countries over the push-in issue, will go into maintenance work along the Indo-Bangla border and purchase of boats and reconnaissance aircraft for the Indian Border Security Force (BSF).

Rs 80 crore has been earmarked

for construction of barbed wire fencing, up from Rs 36 crore in the outgoing fiscal ending March 31.

The budget has also proposed allocation of Rs 120.68 crore for road construction along the border, marking an increase of over Rs nine crore from the previous year.

Both these amounts are part of the government's non-planned expenditure.

India's defence budget for 2003-4 has been increased by 14 per cent to Rs 65,300 crore against last year's revised estimate of Rs 56,000 crore.

However, this allocation in real terms marks an increase of Rs 300 crore only in view of the fact that an unspent amount of Rs 9,000 crore from last fiscal is being included in

the new budget.

The unspent amount had been set aside for acquisition of advance jet trainers, submarines and a navy ship, all of which are still awaiting a decision.

The coming fiscal's defence allocation represents about 2.4 per cent of India's gross domestic product (GDP) as against Pakistan's 4.6 per cent and China's 5.5 per cent, putting India among the lower ranking South Asian countries in terms of defence spending.

Singh however made it clear that the government was committed to modernising the armed forces

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Uttara murder Five youths arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested five youths on Friday night for their alleged involvement in the killing of a housewife in Uttara.

They arrested -- Iqbal Hossain, Faruk, Mohammad Ali, Alauddin and Motaleb -- were interrogated by the Uttara police. But they claimed to be innocent.

Badrunnesa Aziz, wife of Petrobangla General Manager Azizul Haq, was shot dead at her Uttara flat on Friday by robbers.

Eight robbers rang doorbell of Azizul's home at Road No. 1, Sector 6, at 1:45pm to commit a robbery.

As Badrunnesa opened the door and screamed for help, the robbers shot her dead.

The arrested have been placed on a seven-day remand for interrogation.

Uttara police said they were involved in burglary, snatching and robbery.

Police raided different areas looking for more suspects.

The postmortem of Badrunnesa was held at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue yesterday morning.

Her namaj-e-janaja was held at a mosque in Uttara after the johr prayer. She was later buried at the Mirpur graveyard.

Three cops, one ansar charged with extortion

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Speedy Trial Court-4 in Dhaka yesterday framed charges against three policemen and an ansar in an extortion case.

The accused are sergeant Abhijit Dev Ray, constables Sirajul Islam and Mofizul Islam and ansar Anwar Hossain.

The accused pleaded not guilty and demanded justice before the court after the charges were brought against them.

Magistrate Al Mamun fixed March 6 for trial of the case.

In the case filed with Mirpur police station on February 18, it was alleged that ansar Anwar Hossain and constable Mofizul Islam were caught by the Rapid Action Team (RAT) while extorting money from a rickshaw-van puller at Gabtali embankment that evening -- two other accused -- sergeant Abhijit and constable Sirajul -- managed to escape. They were later arrested.

Rickshawpuller Motiur Rahman filed an extortion case against the four the same day.

Another accused in Sabbir murder case arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Another accused in Sabbir Alam murder case was arrested yesterday.

Action on a tip-off, plainclothes policemen raided a hotel in Tanbazar area of the town at around 11.30 am and nabbed Liton.

Police have so far arrested five people in connection with the murder. Of them, three are FIR named accused.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

US terror-risk list

Inclusion of Bangladesh unjust, Hasina tells Rocca

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US government's inclusion of Bangladesh in its special list of Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) is "unjust", Sheikh Hasina told the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca yesterday.

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief also requested Rocca not to deport any Bangladeshi from the US without giving chance for appeal.

Rocca called on Hasina at the latter's Dhanmondi residence. Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury later briefed newsmen on the meeting.

Rocca told the opposition leader that registration of Bangladeshis

under the INS is nothing against the country. All countries will be brought under the process as part of domestic security measures, she said.

During the talks, Rocca termed Bangladesh-US relations as "rich".

Saber said an AL delegation will visit the US soon to know the situation Bangladeshis are facing there.

Rocca urged the opposition party to join the parliament actively to make it the centre of discussion on all issues. They also discussed other issues including democratic practice, good governance and human rights.

Hasina told Rocca that the government was not co-operating with the opposition to make the parlia-

ment lively. AL wanted to discuss all issues including push-in attempts by India, price hike of essentials, bomb blasts and export of natural gas. But they brushed aside most of the proposals of AL members.

Besides, opposition members did not get any chance to take part in the Prime Minister's question hour in parliament, Hasina said.

Rocca said the Prime Minister's question hour in parliament is useless without participation of the opposition.

The opposition leader alleged that the Speaker was not neutral and that the Leader of the House dictated him. "The Prime Minister

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Agitating lawyers sit in front of the Supreme Court building yesterday to protest the non-confirmation of services of six additional judges by the government.

Congress pushes BJP off Himachal Pradesh

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) yesterday was voted out of power in the northern mountainous state of Himachal Pradesh by the Sonia Gandhi-led Congress Party.

But the ruling Congress in the northeastern state of Nagaland appeared to suffer a major setback to Nagaland People's Front, a newly formed coalition of regional parties. In Tripura, another state where elections were held for a new legislature, ruling Left Front is poised to retain their hold, leaving their

nearest rival Congress-INPT alliance far behind.

Meghalaya, one of the three northeastern states which, along with Himachal Pradesh, went to poll on February 26, appeared set for yet another spell of fractured mandate with no party seeming to secure majority on its own.

Congress won majority in the 68-member Himachal Pradesh legislature making handsome gains in the state it had lost in the previous assembly elections in 1998.

Elections were held to 65 seats as polling in three constituencies was

put off due to inclement weather.

The BJP leadership admitted the anti-incumbency wave and factionalism in its Himachal unit led to its defeat in the state. BJP General Secretary Pramod Mahajan said the party lost in 16 to 17 constituencies because of the presence of rebel BJP candidates.

The BJP's defeat in Himachal was so emphatic that several of its ministers lost the poll.

Although Himachal Pradesh is not a politically crucial state -- it contributes only four members to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

One killed, 49 injured in UP polls violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One person was killed and 49 others were injured in election-related violence in Kishoreganj, Munshiganj and Satkhira yesterday.

In Kishoreganj, gunfight between supporter of two rival chairman candidates left one person killed and nine others injured at Abdullahpur Bazar during the election to Abdullahpur Union parishad yesterday, accordingly to UNB.

Ashik, 18, supporter of chairman candidate Kamalpasha died

on the spot. The injured were taken to different hospital and clinics.

In Munshiganj, twenty people were injured, four with bullets, in post-election clash between the supporters of two defeated chairman candidates at Nalukandi in Gazaria upazila yesterday.

The armed clash ensued when supporters of BNP-backed candidate Guljar Hossain attacked the supporters of Awami League supported candidate Amanullah at Tetultala in the morning.

Both the groups traded gunshots and used lethal weapons

during the clash.

The injured were admitted to hospitals in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Munshiganj.

Our Correspondent from Satkhira reports: At least 20 people were injured in a post-poll violence in Munshiganj Union under Shyamnagar upazila yesterday.

According to police and local people, a group of BNP activists led by Monsur Ali Sardar, a defeated chairman candidate, attacked the supporters of the winning chairman Asim Kumar Mridha in the same union in the morning.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8