

Bangladesh lags far behind its neighbours in telecom sector

World Bank study reveals

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is the first country in South Asia to allow private participation in the telecommunications sector.

But the implementation of reforms has not been rapid and the country has fallen behind most of its neighbours in this sector, according to a World Bank study.

The study said Bangladesh's National Telecommunications Policy of 1998 reflects international best practice. But delay in its implementation limited private sector entry and delayed investment.

ment.

"As a result, the availability and quality of telecommunication services in Bangladesh lags international and regional benchmarks," said the bank's draft Country Framework Report for Private Participation in Infrastructure.

The report titled 'Private Solutions for Infrastructure in Bangladesh' referred to the 1998 Telecom Policy Statement that had outlined its objective of improving teledensity to "one telephone for 100 people" by 2000.

As the unofficial goal of the

Telecommunications Ministry is now 3.3 by 2005, the study of the WB and Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF) said: Achieving this goal will need a capacity increase of 3.5 million lines.

However, teledensity had reached only 0.79 by 2002, the study said. "This translates to more than 70 per cent of the population without telephone access. It is not surprising, therefore, Bangladesh ranks lowest in telephone access as compared to its neighbours."

When only 0.79 people out of 100 in Bangladesh have the main-line telephone, it is 24.98 for China, 3.94 for India, 6.17 for Indonesia, 49.9 for Malaysia, 1.34 for Nepal, 2.9 for Pakistan and 4.4 for Sri Lanka.

The study found that teledensity might not be relevant for a country like Bangladesh, rather India could be a good example in providing telephone access through public call offices (PCOs).

With a teledensity of just around 4, India reached telephone access to 70 per cent of its population through one million PCOs, 400,000 of which are located in rural areas.

In contrast, Bangladesh has only a little over 4,000 PCOs (one PCO per 12,000 population against India's one PCO per 1,000), resulting in more than 70 per cent of the population having no access to a telephone.

However, private Grameen-Phone reached telephone to 20,000 villages out of 68,000 villages.

The major suggestion of the WB-PPIAF study for the telecommunications sector is corporatisation and eventual privatisation of the government-owned monopoly.



Australian Minister for Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Philip Ruddock visited the Centre for Bangladesh-Australia Arsenic Mitigation at Boro Moghbazar yesterday.

PHOTO: PTD

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(MD. FAZLUL KARIM)
Director, Industries & Commerce



Rubble of old road divider is scattered on the road, creating obstacles to vehicular movement.

PHOTO: STAR

Ruddock calls on Sircar

BSS, Dhaka

The visiting Australian Minister for Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Philip Ruddock MP made a courtesy call on Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar at his Sangsad Bhaban office here yesterday.

They discussed various matters relating to bilateral and international issues.

The Speaker said Australia and Bangladesh have a very good rela-

tions and the two countries are very closely sharing their happiness and sorrows for long time.

He appreciated the immigration policy of Australia saying many Bangladeshi students are now going to that country for higher studies.

He underlined the importance of boosting economic cooperation between the two friendly countries.

Hasina meets Italian senate president

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina called on Italian Senate President Marcello Pera in Rome yesterday.

During the courtesy call, Hasina shared her opinion with the Italian leader on a global democratic institution, according to a message received in the city yesterday.

Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury was also present at the meeting.

Hasina left Dhaka on Thursday morning for Italy to attend an international roundtable organised jointly by the Italian Ministry of External Affairs and the No Peace Without Justice.

A large number of Awami League leaders and workers including Bangladeshi expatriates in Rome received Hasina when she arrived at the Fiumicino airport.

BRAC University lecture on sustainable design

Angan, the forum for co-curricular activities of Department of Architecture, BRAC University, organised a lecture on sustainable design on Thursday.

Dr. Elizabeth Dean Harmann, associate professor of Rhode Island School of Design, USA, delivered the lecture on materials/process/systems.

She described the conceptual ideas of landscape architecture and design principles and explained her works and research experience in the USA, Europe and the Middle East.

Dr. Elizabeth pointed out that preservation of culture and landscape could be possible through sustainable design.

Child affairs news Sangbad and Prothom Alo in the lead

UNB, Dhaka

The Sangbad and the Prothom Alo, two Bangla dailies, were ahead of other newspapers in terms of publishing child affairs news, according to a PIB study.

And The Daily Star topped the list of newspapers in the category of pictures on event of child affairs (38.53 per cent).

The study also revealed that the Ittefaq led the dailies in editorials on child affairs (10.35 per cent).

The Inqilab published the highest number of features on child affairs (32 per cent), followed by the Bhorer Kagoj (20 per cent).

Research Officer Afroza Kamal of Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) conducted the 'Child affairs news in the newspapers in Bangladesh: A study', randomly scanning seven newspapers for three months in 2001 and 2002.

The dailies are Ittefaq, Sangbad, Janakantha, Prothom Alo,

Bhorer Kagoj, Inqilab and The Daily Star.

Publishing child affairs news made the Sangbad (74 per cent) and the Prothom Alo (73.41 per cent) the front-runners.

The Bhorer Kagoj carried seven per cent advertisements on children-related products and issues.

The seven dailies published 33.08 per cent news on child rights while 18.45 per cent on child rape and 14.09 per cent on child killing.

The Prothom Alo published the highest percentage of child rights news (34.28), closely followed by Janakantha (32.68). The Daily Star carried the highest percentage of child rape news (32.52).

The Janakantha led the others in child entertainment news (16 per cent) while The Daily Star published the highest number of success stories of children (8.58 per cent).

The Prothom Alo, Janakantha and Inqilab also carried child success stories on a fairly large scale.



Newly elected office-bearers of Sonali Bank Employees' Union take oath at a function yesterday. Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka were present on the occasion.

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