

DOWN TO EARTH

The jinxed telephones

By A S M Nurunnabi

Dhaka's telephone system is yet to develop into a properly organised entity suitable for a growing metropolitan city. It suffers from so many ills that its users feel constantly frustrated so much so that it is often regarded as a curse instead of a boon.

The most frequent irritating phenomenon is one of cross-connection. This provides a variety of experience in human nature. One who becomes its victim can have for instance, the unwanted privilege of eavesdropping on romantic dialogue, abuse of exchange of words between two callers, when one doggedly refuses to lay down his phone for the facility of the other caller. One caller even could overhear conversation between a top brass of the Government and his private secretary about some confidential official matter.

The poor audibility during internal trunk calls is another irritant. During such calls, you will have to raise your voice to the point of hoarseness and prick your ear to get result from your communication.

Other irritating things include absence of dial tone for long spells, sudden disruption of connection between two users, interference of several voices on the line when one is going to dial a number. Another dreaded thing which may befell any subscriber is when his bill includes charge for some overseas calls which he has never made. All arguments against this will be of no avail with the concerned authority.

The ever-recurring complaint against the telephone department is the one relating to over-billing. Several subscribers who are very careful

about the use of their telephones have complained that though their daily calls do not exceed 5 or 6 making a monthly total not exceeding 200 calls, they are billed for 500 to 600 calls a month. When complaints are made to the appropriate quarters, their reply was that the reason might be surreptitious use of the telephone for calls on NWD.

In this context, it may be mentioned that some subscribers in the Dhanmondi often complain that for some hours, particularly in the morning, their telephones become dead and thereafter, they come to life. They wonder whether this phenomenon of periodic life-after-death has any bearing on possible link-up with any unauthorised telephone, thereby causing over-billing for them.

In many instances, the operators manning local enquiry/internal trunk booking lines remain exasperatingly unresponsive. Where the local enquiry, in response to a request, gives a required number, it is found to be wrong. This seems to indicate that the Enquiry Section operators are not posted with the latest position or they are careless.

Under the analog system which covers the major part of the city, it is not possible to get a correct number at one go; very often one has to make two or more calls to get the correct number. The subscribers, under the system are, however, penalised, as they are required to pay for the wrong calls also. This seems to be unfair. It is, therefore, suggested that, in all fairness, the telephone department should consider the desirability of allowing some rebate, at least by

10 per cent to the subscribers under the analog system on the monthly bill on account of the frequent wrong calls.

The telephone has provided an easy means of avoiding queries from members of the public concerning this pending business. In this respect proper telephone etiquette does not appear to have developed yet. It is often a frustrating experience to reach a public official by telephone. Where the calls are first received by PAs or private secretaries, the initial result is often abortive. In the interest of healthy public administration, proper telephone etiquette should be developed. A suitable time for subsequent calls or interviews with the caller may be arranged by the personal staff of the officials concerned.

A beginning in this direction seems to be urgently needed because it is alleged by many that the public officials (with some exceptions) are often impervious to the elementary decency in their communication with members of the public whose business is pending with those officials.

The situation is all the more distressing in many of the offices where PBX systems are installed. Some of the operators manning the PBX lines seem to be so unenthusiastic about receiving calls that it is after repeated attempts that they condescend to answer. This situation also needs to be improved.

The telephone using public will be relieved of a major cause of frustration and both creation if the telephone authority would seriously look into these irritants in our day-to-day life and effect necessary remedies.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inspecting the march past by the cubs participating in the national camporee inaugurated at Mouchak yesterday. — PID photo

Scouting to be geared

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Manzoor-ul Karim, President of Dhaka Region Scouts Prof Md Yunus Mia and the National Commissioner (Development) of Scouts Anwarul Alam.

About 1,500 cub scouts are taking part in the camporee at Mouchak while similar camporees were simultaneously started in Comilla, Rajshahi, Bagerhat and Chittagong. The theme of this year's camporee is "children are future."

The Prime Minister recalled the contribution of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman for various initiatives taken for the development of children.

She said the Shishu Academy was set up by him as he was fond of children. Shaheed Zia was first to introduce 'Nutun Kur' programme in Bangladesh Television, she said.

The Prime Minister said the present government would take all possible measures for the flourishing of children's talents. "We want to bring smiles on your faces," she told the cubs.

Later Begum Zia went round some tents where the cubs will be staying for next three days. On arrival at the venue the Prime Minister was given a hearty welcome by the cubs. On way back to Dhaka,

Begum Khaleda Zia went to the venue of the seventh national girls guide camp '91 at Barotipara. For the guides it was a pleasant surprise to see Begum Zia amid them. Today was the concluding day of the camp.

Speaking briefly on the occasion, Begum Zia said the motto of the girls guide movement was service to the distressed humanity. She expressed the hope that the guides would contribute their mite to the national development activities alongwith their studies.

Begum Zeba Rashid Chowdhury, national guide commissioner, presented Begum Zia with a crest of the organisation.

Report from Rajshahi says, the third National Cub Camporee of Rajshahi region began here Friday.

Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi NA Habibullah formally inaugurated the camporee and visited the campus. In all 100 cub teams comprising 700 cubs from sixteen districts of Rajshahi division are taking part in the camporee.

The main programmes of the camporee included different sports and physical display of the cubs, cub carnival and camp fire.

BCL founding anniversary today

By DU Correspondent

The various factions of the Bangladesh Chhatra League observe the 44th founding anniversary today.

Bangladesh Chhatra League was founded on this day of 1948.

During the 44 years, the organisation has split into several factions.

The splitting spree began after independence. A group of rebel Chhatra League leader broke away from the Awami League to form the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD).

The split in the JSD in the eighties led to the emergence of the different factions of the organisation.

They have taken up elaborate programmes including discussion meetings, rallies and laying wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar to mark the day.

Chhatra League (SA) has taken a series of programme today including hoisting of flag atop its central office and garlanding the portrait of Bangabandhu at 6 am. Later BCL (S-A) workers will gather at the Central Shaheed Minar and hold a rally.

JSD (Inu) backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (N-S) today will host the national and party flag atop its central office at Balaka Bhaban in the morning and will later hold rally in Madhu's Canteen premises and lay wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar.

BCL (N-S) also will gather and hold rally at the 'Aparajay Bangla' at Dhaka University at 10 am on January 6. It will arrange a reunion of its activists at the TSC of Dhaka University. It plans a discussion meeting, staging drama and a colourful cultural function on January 7.

BCL (L-A) has plans to hold a reunion at Jatiya Grantha Kendra (National Book Centre) today. Justice Abdur Rahman Chowdhury will attend the programme as the chief guest.

BCL (K-I) has arranged a discussion meeting at its central office at Bangabandhu Avenue with its President Khoshed Alam in the chair.

JSD (Rab) backed Chhatra League will arrange a discussion meeting at Jatiya Grantha Kendra tomorrow (January 5) at 4 pm in observance the 44th founding anniversary with its president Bazlur Rahman in the chair.

The Midnight File

US backs full Russian membership in IMF, WB

WASHINGTON, Jan 3: The United States said today it supported full immediate membership for Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and in the World Bank. The Soviet Union had been a special associate member of both 156-nation organizations since the autumn. Washington had opposed full membership until reforms were undertaken and certain guarantees given on loan repayments, reports AFP.

Rangoon revokes status of 5 more NLD MPs

BANGKOK, Jan 3: Burma's election commission has revoked the status of five more opposition members of parliament in a campaign against the party that won the 1990 general election. Four members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and one independent candidate have been convicted of criminal offences and violating the election law, official Rangoon radio said, reports Reuter.

Russian copter with Cubans land at Miami airstrip

MIAMI, Jan 3: A Russian helicopter apparently fleeing Cuba with about 20 men, women and children aboard landed Friday morning at a Suburban Airport, authorities said. The aircraft touched down at Tamiami Airport, a public strip for small aircraft about 10 miles (16 kilometers) southwest of Miami International Airport, reports AP.

Burma violates

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Minister during his visit to Yangon in November last.

Myanmar Ambassador conveyed to the Foreign Minister that his government was ready to take all measures to defuse tension now prevailing along the common border of the two countries.

The Ambassador also explained his government's position on the issues and its willingness to work in cooperation with Bangladesh for restoration of peace and stability along the border.

He also conveyed his country's warm sentiments and goodwill for Bangladesh.

Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman and Additional Foreign Secretary A. H. Mahmood Ali were present at the meeting.

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at large.

A police team led by Tofazzal Hossain, Officer-in-Charge, Demra, raided the house of Lokhman at Demra in plain dress at about 3:30 pm Friday. From there they arrested them but Lokhman, the owner of the house managed to escape.

During the 15-minute operation, police had a gunbattle with Mukim Gazi and his men. Gazi fired thrice at the police. He also exploded at least eight crackers but failed to escape, police said.

Immediately after their arrest, Demra police informed the Dhaka Metropolitan Police control room. A heavy contingent escorted the three to the control room and later locked them at Motijheel Thana custody amid tight security.

Police recovered a revolver, four bullets, three crackers and 20 knives from his possession, police said.

Mukim Gazi and his two accomplices will be produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court today (Saturday).

Crackdown

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police stations along the frontier areas.

When asked if the anti-smuggling drive was a transient one, a high government official said, "The smugglers will face harder days ahead."

He said the government was pledge-bound to continue its war against smuggling which was crippling the national economy. Armed with adequate financial and logistic support, he said, the government would face the traders of illegal goods. He said that a budget of Taka five crore has already been earmarked for the anti-smuggling drive which would last till its total stoppage.

"This time it is not easy for the smugglers to resume their activities because the government takes up the problem as a priority one," Shah Abdul Hannan, who heads the task force, said the campaign would last one year or more till the wiping out of smuggling once and for all. However, the control mechanism would be relaxed with the awareness sharpening among the people and their support to the government programmes against smuggling, he said.

Sources involved in the drive indicated that motivational programmes, including slogans and screening of anti-smuggling documentaries, would also go hand in hand with the ongoing programme.

Pay scale

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gladesh Secondary Teachers Association.

Earlier, the Education Minister attended a function on installation ceremony of the Mirpur Girls Ideal Laboratory Institute students Union at Mirpur.

Presided over by the Principal of the institute, the function was addressed by Amanullah Aman MP as special guest.

Compensation to Shantibahini victims' families demanded

CHITTAGONG, Jan 3: Rangamati Citizen Security Council today brought the bullet riddled bodies of Karnaphuli Paper Mills workers in front of the local press club demanding compensation for the victims' family, reports UNB.

Nine workers were killed by the outlawed Shantibahini at Dumdulia forest range near the Indian border of Tripura on Thursday.

The council leaders at a rally in front of the press club urged the government to ensure security of life and property in troubled hill districts.



Ghali takes over as UN chief

United Nations, Jan 3: Boutros Ghali began his job as UN chief Thursday with a traditional welcome, but there were high expectations that he would move quickly from protocol to reforming the world body's bloated bureaucracy, reports AP.

The 69-year-old Egyptian diplomat is the sixth UN leader and first from the African continent. He succeeds Peruvian Javier Perez de Cuellar, whose 10-year tenure ended on Tuesday at the close of 1991.

Ghali arrived Thursday morning in the black Mercedes reserved for the Secretary-General and was met with applause by UN employees.

The UN security forces, honour guard stood at attention as Ghali was greeted first by Aly Temour, a fellow Egyptian who is chief of protocol.

A smiling Ghali then shook hands with other UN staff members and told them "Happy New Year."

Seconds later, he walked briskly into the Meditation Room, the non-denominational chapel that is the traditional first stop for new heads of the United Nations. Egypt is an overwhelmingly Muslim nation, but Ghali is a Coptic Christian.

Ghali proceeded to his office on the top floor of UN headquarters, which commands a sweeping view of the

East River and much of New York City, and greeted about 20 members of his staff.

Ghali emphasized team work and said: "With this cooperation we will create a new momentum in favour of this organization."

He said he wants the United Nations to "play a more important role in peacekeeping, peace-building, economic and social cooperation, and above all, defending human rights and democratic institutions all over the world."

Ghali also posed for photographers in his expansive office. When told to smile, he said, "You have to make a joke."

The new Secretary-General quickly got down to business.

He reappointed Alvaro de Soto as one of his under secretaries-general. De Soto, a Peruvian diplomat, spent the last 20 right-wing government and leftist rebels. The talks resulted in a ceasefire agreement on New Year's Eve.

No other appointments were immediately announced by Ghali.

He already met with ambassadors from nine nations which have already paid their full assessments for the 1992 regular budget. The ambassadors represented Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden.

The nine countries said in a statement that by paying their dues so promptly they were showing their confidence in

the United Nations.

The 1991 general budget was in arrears of \$42 million because many nations were behind in their dues payment.

At the end of the year, the United States owed \$266 million in outstanding dues, the Soviet Union \$46 million, South Africa \$45 million, Brazil \$17 million and Argentina \$14 million.

Expectations are high that Ghali will move to shake up what has been described as a moribund UN bureaucracy.

Ganges water

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Since Ganga Jal is expensive, the bottlers suggest diluting it in a gallon of tap water of somebody else's brand. In India, it sells for 5 rupees (19 cents) per 200 millilitre (6 ounce) packet more than a bottle of cola or a pint of milk.

The sanctity of the water is an important part of the marketing, especially in predominantly Hindu India. The Gup-tas, who are not related, say they have sold dollars 8,700 worth of water since August.

Millions of Hindus visit the Ganges every day for religious rites. A dip in the river is said to wash away sins; a trickle of the water into the throat of a dead man assures a better incarnation, in the next life.

The first export shipment worth dollars 10,000 - was made in September to an Indian department store owner in Florida.

The Hare Krishna movement is very interested," Ved Prakash Gupta added. He also figures the West Coast of the United States, with its propensity for New Age phenomena, is a natural.

He said the profits will go to charity, which he thinks will silence any protests that the Ganga Jal bottlers are exploiting religion.

JS session

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(Repeal) Ordinance, 1991, the Pourashava (Amendment) Ordinance, 1991, the Chittagong City Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1991, the Dhaka City Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1991, the Khulna City Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1991, the Rajshahi City Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1991, the Investment Board (Amendment) Ordinance, 1991, the Local Government (Union Parishads) (Amendment) Ordinance, 1991, the Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Ordinance, 1991, and the Water Resources Planning Ordinance, 1991.

A panel of chairmen for the winter session of Parliament will be constituted and obituary reference adopted at the opening sitting.

Parliament sources said that today's sitting may be adjourned for three-days after the address of the President.

Talking to UNB, Acting President of Awami League and Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad hinted at a stormy and heated session. He said his party would raise debate on a number of political and economic issues.

"The Awami League will play a strong and effective role to press the Treasury Bench for resolving the major political and economic issues now confronting the nation," Azad said.

Meanwhile, the Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) had hectic deliberations Friday to determine a strategy on how to compel the ruling party to concede to its demands.

The question of boycotting the President's inaugural speech at the winter session of parliament also featured prominently during the deliberations. A final decision on the issue will be taken today.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: According to ALPP sources, the party leaders would contact AL Chief Sheikh Hasina at Singapore over telephone for her advice about the strategy. The ALPP will finalise its stance and course of action when it meets again today at 10 am.

The BNP Parliamentary Party discussed the agenda for the winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad in a meeting on Friday at the Sangsad Bhaban.

Presided over by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, the meeting began at 6 pm in the Treasury Bench conference room.

Briefing newsmen following the three-hour-long meeting, LORD Minister and Party General Secretary Abdus Salam Talukdar said the agenda on the inaugural day of the fourth session of the fifth parliament

were discussed at the meeting.

He said members were also briefed about the upcoming bills to be introduced from the Treasury Bench at the session. He added that eight bills from the local government ministry will be introduced at the session.

The BNP Parliamentary Party members also discussed the abolition of the upazila system and the amendment to the Upazila (Repeal) Ordinance.

The LORD Minister said that the Indemnity (Repeal) Ordinance also came up for discussion at the meeting.

In reply to a question, Salam Talukdar said that the talks were continuing at the Special Committee on the Indemnity (Repeal) Bill and added that the BNP would decide on the issue after the Special Committee comes up with its decision.

Problems of local constituencies of individual members also came up for discussion at the meeting, the BNP General Secretary said.

Jamaat-e-Islami Parliamentary Party held a meeting at the Sangsad Bhaban with its leader Maitur Rahman Nizami in the chair. Meeting sources said the party will press for the introduction of its caretaker government bill in the winter session. The bill proposed by Jamaat seeks to hold future parliamentary elections under a neutral caretaker government.

Student leader's wife killed in fire

JHENIDAH, Jan 3: A young woman, wife of a student leader, was killed in a devastating fire at her residence at Hlamduha area in the town on Thursday night, reports UNB.

Her husband Malek (25), District President of Jatiya Chhatra Dal also received serious burn injuries.

Witnesses said the victims could not get out of the room as it was chained from outside. Relatives of the victims alleged that the house was set on fire by some unknown, miscreants at the midnight when the victim Abdul Malek (25) and his wife Selina Khatun (20), were asleep.

Neighbours rescued the victims and sent them to the sadar hospital where doctors declared Mrs Malek dead.

Later Malek was transferred to the Jessore hospital for better treatment.

Activists of Jatiya Chhatra Dal damaged five vehicles, barricaded different streets in the town for more than two hours and called for a half-day hartal in the town tomorrow (Saturday) protesting the incident.