

Satellite phone service in Bangladesh soon

By Staff Correspondent
Bangladesh is going to be covered by satellite telephone service (STS) by the second half of this year.

Asia Cellular Satellite (ACS) Bangladesh, a nominated national service provider of ACS International, will launch the service, says a press release.

The service, known as Global Mobile Personal Communication by Satellite (GMPCS), will cover the entire Asia-Pacific region through the Garuda-1 satellite.

ACS Bangladesh is also planning to install its own gateway in Bangladesh for interconnection with other local operators including BTB, Sheba, GP and AKTEL, the release said.

Ericsson will supply the satellite hand sets for the system and dual-mode satellite phones can be used both with the satellite and the GSM systems.

Two youths arrested with phensidyl

BARISAL, Jan 31: Police arrested two youths along with 165 bottles of phensidyl syrup from Kaunia branch road in the town early Friday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided a residence in the area and arrested Nasir, 20, and Khokan, 22.

Another report from Manikganj adds: Passengers caught a young man along with pipegun from a bus on Singur-Manikganj road at Garadia bus terminal Thursday.

The young man, identified as Abdul Khaleque, 20, of Deputali village in Singur thana, was handed over to police.

UNB correspondent from Sirajganj reports: Police arrested a man along with a gun from a house at Dighangal Nimalta in the town early Friday.

Foundation stone of Tk 16 cr jail laid in Chandpur

CHANDPUR, Jan 31: Home Minister Rafiqul Islam has said the government's aim is to turn prisons into 'correction centres' for criminals instead of a place for their punishment, reports BSS.

The government has laid emphasis on vocational training for prisoners so they can earn money and lead normal life after being freed from jails.

The minister said while laying the foundation stone of a new prison building in the district yesterday.

Besides, the government is considering to hand over to the prisoners' portion of their income on release, he said.

The jail will be constructed at a cost of Taka 16.33 crore.

Construction of new prisons is essential as there is lack of space in the existing ones, the minister said.

The function was also addressed, among others, by Inspector General of Prisons Brigadier Waliur Rahman, president and general secretary of Chandpur district Awami League Sirajul Islam and Fazlul Haq Sarkar, deputy commissioner, police super and chief engineer of Public Works Department.

Opposition leader goes on trial in S'pore today

SINGAPORE, Jan 31: A law restricting free speech is expected to be put to the test on Monday as an opposition politician goes to trial for addressing crowds without police approval, reports AP.

Singapore Democratic Party chief Chee Soon Juan flouted the Public Entertainment Act on December 29 and January 5 when he spoke to hundreds of people in the busy financial district on domestic and foreign policy issues.

Chee says the law, which requires a police permit for any public address or meeting, is wrong.

At issue in the case is the constitutional guarantee of free speech, and indirectly, freedom of the press and the controlled political system that has allowed the dominant People's Action Party to steer this tiny Southeast Asian city-state from a colonial backwater to a prosperous financial and manufacturing centre.

Chee's first trial is scheduled to begin Monday, and if convicted, he faces a maximum 5,000 Singapore dollar (US\$3,000) fine and a possible five-year ban from running for office.

His defiant actions are highly unusual in this orderly, business-minded country. Political dissent has been curtailed, and avenues for alternative views are almost non-existent, he says.

Pathological laboratory opens at BUET

By DU Correspondent
A modern pathological laboratory has been set up at the BUET Medical Centre.

Vice Chancellor Prof Nuruddin Ahmed inaugurated the laboratory yesterday.

The laboratory's facilities include radiology, ECG, ultrasonography and pathology.

Presided over by Prof Shameem Z Bosunia, the inaugural was addressed, among others, by Dr Azizul Islam and Dr Md Shahjahan Ali.

Deans, head of departments, teachers and other university officials were also present.



Dhaka Leprosy Control Project brought out a colourful procession in the city yesterday marking the World Leprosy Day.

ME peace deal: Deadline expires with little implementation

JERUSALEM, Jan 31: A peace deal tailored by the United States to meet the needs of both parties — security assurances for Israel, 13 percent of the West Bank for the Palestinians — was to have been completed by today, reports AP.

But after three months, little has been implemented.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of using the Israeli elections as an excuse to hold up the deal.

Netanyahu countered that the peace deal tailored by the United States to meet the needs of both parties — security assurances for Israel, 13 percent of the West Bank for the Palestinians — was to have been completed by today, reports AP.

Palestinians are violating the deal by releasing militants rather than cracking down on them.

The timetable of the staged accord signed by Israel and the Palestinians at the White House on Oct. 23, 1998 was to be completed by January 31.

According to the agreement, Israel was to have withdrawn troops from 13.1 percent of the West Bank and released 750 Palestinian prisoners. In addition, a route for Palestinians traveling from the West Bank

and Gaza Strip was to have been operational by now, construction for a Gaza sea port should have been under way and an economic agreement between the two sides implemented.

"The only thing Israel has done is accuse, the Palestinian Authority of not implementing its commitments," Erekat said.

Netanyahu froze the accord in December, claiming that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat had contributed to an anti-Israeli atmosphere.

Khaleda visits injured leader

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia visited an injured BNP leader at the Chest Diseases Hospital in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Ehsanul Haq Munna, youth secretary of Jessore district BNP, received bullet injuries in Jessore town during the January 26 hartal, said a press release.

Begum Zia stayed beside him for some time and inquired about his treatment.

She was accompanied by BNP leaders, including Major (Retd) Kamrul Islam, Mahfuz Hasan Tripti and Delwar Hosain.



Students marching in a procession on the Dhaka University campus yesterday demanding introduction of a 'code of conduct' to check incidents of sexual harassment.

Fighting in Philippines eases

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines, Jan 31: Sporadic clashes between government troops and Muslim rebels eased Sunday in several southern towns as Philippine officials began visits aimed at preventing more fighting, officials and rebel leaders said, reports AP.

The fighting on Mindanao island in recent weeks has killed scores of combatants, displaced tens of thousands of villagers and threatened peace talks between the government and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

"We hope this peace will hold," said Mohagher Iqbal, an MILF spokesman.

Sen Teofisto Guingona, accompanied by aides and military escorts, met rebel leaders in Camp Abubakar, the guerrillas' main camp in Maguindanao province, to appeal for peace and find out the cause of the skirmishes, Iqbal said.

Defence Secretary Orlando Mercado also flew to Mindanao to bring rice and relief goods to villagers forced from their homes by the hostilities, officials said.

The fighting had continued Saturday despite efforts by government and rebel leaders to implement a ceasefire forged earlier in the week.

Most of Saturday's clashes were reported in Matanog town in Maguindanao, near the main MILF camp. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Pak population growth rate stands at 2.3 pc

ISLAMABAD, Jan 31: Pakistan's population growth rate in 1998 stood at 2.3 per cent, registering a decline of 0.3 percentage points in comparison with that in the previous year, reports Xinhua.

The latest report by Pakistan's National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) says that if the current declining trend continues, Pakistan will be able to bring down its population growth rate to 2 per cent by 2001.

Pakistan's demography indicates that the decline in the population growth rate began in the early 1990s and the downward trend continued in the decade.

The population growth rate stood at 3 per cent in 1991 and after that gradually fell to 2.6 per cent in 1997.

President takes control of reshaped Angola govt

LUANDA, Angola, Jan 31: President Jose Eduardo dos Santos has taken over control of a reshuffled government that was sworn in Saturday amid the renewed civil war against UNITA rebels, reports AP.

Dos Santos failed to reappoint or replace former Prime Minister Franca van Duinen, who was voted off the party's central committee at its annual congress in December.

The president, who has also assumed control of the armed forces, appointed a new defense minister, Kundi Paimama, to replace Pedro Sebastiao who was highly criticized by other ministers after the intelligence services failed to detect the rebels' military buildup ahead of last month's return to war.

The new appointments also included Fernando dos Santos as Interior Minister, Botelho de Vasconcelos as oil minister, Joaquim David as finance minister and Aguiar Jaime as governor of the Angolan national bank.

Former Oil Minister Albina Assis was re-appointed as industry minister.

Dos Santos has led the governing Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, or MPLA, since 1979.

Strike observed in Jerusalem to protest house demolition

JERUSALEM, Jan 31: Shops and businesses shut down across the traditionally Arab sector of east Jerusalem today to protest Israel's demolition of an Arab home last week, reports AP.

The general strike in popular tourist areas including the Arab market in the walled Old City, was called by Fatah, the PLO's mainstream organisation headed by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Salah Zuharka, a Fatah leader in the city, accused Israel of a systematic policy of demolishing Palestinian homes, in order to increase the city's Jewish population.

Israel destroys dozens of Arab homes every year it claims are built illegally or without permits.

A 23-year-old Palestinian demonstrator was shot by Israeli troops last week during a house demolition and died later of his wounds.

30 killed in Lanka battle

COLOMBO, Jan 31: Sri Lankan gun boats sank a flotilla of Tamil rebel craft in the north-east of the country, killing at least three top fighters as 27 more guerrillas were killed elsewhere, the two sides said today, reports AFP.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said they lost three senior cadres, including a self-styled woman major sea Tiger, during a pre-dawn sea battle with the navy off the coast of Mullaitivu on Sunday.

The LTTE's clandestine Voice of Tigers radio gave no details of government casualties, but said the fighting lasted more than five hours, the defence ministry in a statement here said one navy boat was damaged in the confrontation.

In a ground attack near the eastern town of Vakkara, army soldiers ambushed a group of Tiger guerrillas and recovered the bodies of nine, the defence ministry statement said.

Nat'l consensus in key areas a must for progress: Sayeed

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed yesterday said national consensus is needed in the areas like poverty alleviation, spread of education and curbing terrorism for the greater interest of the people, reports BSS.

Exchanging views with the members of the Bangladesh Public Relations Association (BPRA) at a city hotel, he said, "Once the opposition political parties along with the government take similar stand toward these ends, a positive and qualitative change will be seen in the politics of the country."

"It will also close the back doors for the conspirators for ever to assume state power" Prof Sayeed added.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Information Abul Kalam Azad was present on the occasion.

Presided over by BPRA president Khaleque Bhuiyan it was also addressed, among others, by BPRA general secretary Mirza Tarekul Quader, office-bearers M Tazul Islam, Nurul Islam and Shetu Barua.

Prof Sayeed said there might be differences on many issues between the political parties but it would not be wise to create any gap in solving the basic problems now prevailing in the country. He said we all must have a common goal to lead the nation toward progress within the shortest possible time with a common agenda.

Referring to different development initiatives undertaken by the government the State Minister said these programmes would not be implemented properly unless all political parties consider those as

their own for the development of the country.

Prof Sayeed said it was widely felt that most of the institutions and enterprises of the country now lack efficient and skilled professionals due to prevailing social problems and instability.

"But the present government led by prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has laid emphasis on solving these problems and manpower development especially in the rural areas," he said adding "this is for the first time that a government had allocated Taka 5500 crore for rural development."

He said PROs could help bridge the gap between the government and people of the country through upholding the ongoing development activities run by the government. He sought cooperation and constructive suggestions from them.

Responding to different BPRA demands including government supports to institutionalise the professor and formulation of a national policy for the public relations profession, the State Minister said the government is considering to evaluate the public relations profession through establishing an institution.

Abul Kalam, president of BPRA and a Parliament Member of the ruling Awami League, said if the PR professionals are no evaluated properly, the higher educated and the meritorious newcomers in the profession would certainly become frustrated. He underscored the need for reactivating the profession through providing them with the scope of advancement immediately.

Sariakandi pourasabha inaugurated

BOGRA, Jan 31: LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman formally inaugurated Sariakandi Pourasabha today, reports BSS.

The number of country's pourasabhas has reached 183 after the inauguration of Sariakandi Pourasabha.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said the coming pourasabha elections would be held in a festive mood across the country. "The opposition decision to boycott the poura polls and take a stand against the people would be suicidal for them," he said.

Zillur Rahman said people would resist any evil design of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and a part of Jatiya Party against the upcoming pourasabha elections. He urged all to strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for smooth progress of the ongoing development work of the government.

The inaugural function was also addressed by Awami League publicity secretary Abul Mannan, Mahila Awami League president Ivy Rahman, district Awami League president Mamtaz Uddin and general secretary Ferdous Ahmed Mukul. Sariakandi thana Awami League president Principal Manzil Ali Sarkar presided.

Later, about one thousand leaders and activists of different political parties, including BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami, joined Awami League. Those who joined the Party included, Hat Sherpur Union Parishad (UP) Chairman, M Nazrul Huq Mandal, Sariakandi sadar UP Chairman Zillur Rahman, Chaliabari UP Chairman M Zinnat Ali, Kazla UP Chairman ABM Shamsuddin and Kalibari UP Chairman Mahbubur Rahman.

'Jagannath Hall' Repression Day' programme ends

By DU Correspondent
A two-day programme marking 'Jagannath Hall Repression Day', commemorating the attack on students of the Dhaka University Hall by law enforcers during the BNP regime, concluded yesterday.

A photo exhibition and a discussion meeting were held in the afternoon as part of the programme, organised by some student organisations.

Besides, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) brought out a procession and held a rally at the Apurbo Barilla on the campus, while 'Chhatra Jubo Oikya Parishad' (CJOP) brought out a silent procession from Jagannath Hall condemning the heinous attack.

Suspect charged for raping Miss World

TEL AVIV, Jan 31: Prosecutors charged a suspect Sunday in the rape of an 18-year-old Israeli who won the Miss World beauty contest, reports AP.

Uri Shlomo, an Israeli citizen who immigrated to Israel from Egypt in the 1970s and also goes by the name Noor Shlomo, has said he is innocent.

Lior Abirgil has said Shlomo raped her in Milan October 6, two months before she was crowned Miss World in December.

Abirgil was in Milan auditioning for modeling jobs when she asked Shlomo, who operates a travel agency there, to arrange for a flight back to Israel.

After Shlomo told her there were no flights from Milan to Israel, he offered to drive her to Rome to catch another flight, Abirgil said her statement to police.

Abirgil said shortly after the two were outside Milan, Shlomo pulled off the highway and raped her at knife-point.

Abirgil said she went public with details of the assault days after Shlomo was arrested in early January in order to encourage other rape victims to come forward.

Justice Ministry spokeswoman Orli Shemesh said the indictment filed with Tel Aviv's District Court Sunday charges Shlomo with rape and kidnapping.

Pilgrim dies at Biswa Ijtima

GAZIPUR, Jan 31: Zakir Hussain, 33, a pilgrim, died of illness at the Biswa Ijtima venue this evening, reports BSS.

Police sources said Zakir, son of Bahar Uddin of Arkandi village of Baliakandi thana under Rajbari district, suddenly fell sick in the afternoon and died after the Magreb prayers at the Ijtima premises.

Ustad Ali Akbar Khan honoured

NEW DELHI, Jan 31: Swaralaya, an association devoted to music, has decided to confer the prestigious 'Swaralaya Puraskaram 1998' on sarod maestro Ustad Ali Akbar Khan for his contribution to Indian music, reports PTI.

The award, comprising Rs one lakh, a citation and a statuette, will be presented to Khan at a function here on February 5 by deputy chairperson of Rajya Sabha, Dr Najma Heptulla.

Swaralaya Puraskaram for the year 1997 was conferred upon Bharat Ratna Dr M S Subbulakshmi.

Obituary

Asgar Hossain, a valiant freedom fighter, politician and social worker of Comilla, died of brain hemorrhage at a city hospital yesterday. He was 85, reports APB.

He left behind his wife, six sons, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers.

His second son, Iftekar Hossain is a Senior Deputy Principal Information Officer of Press Information Department (PID).

Asgar's namaj-e-janaza was held at Jigatola Baitus Salam Jame Mosque after Asr prayers. He will be buried at his family graveyard at Wahidpur village in Devidwar thana of Comilla district.

Hossain, who was also an educationist, had been one of the organisers of the War of Liberation and had fought in Sector 2.

Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru has expressed his deep shock at the death of Asgar Hossain.

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed yesterday condoned the death of noted educationist and social worker Asgar Hossain.

BCS Information Society also conveyed deep sorrow at the death of Asgar Hossain.



Nasima's solo painting show held

By Staff Correspondent
Nasima Khan, an architect by profession, and residing in Maryland, USA, had her second solo exhibition of 100 paintings and sketches at the DRIK Picture Library yesterday.

The vast empty spaces that surround her paintings appear to protect and cherish them. Her works are going down memory lane as she vividly recalls the places in Bangladesh that she has visited with her father and husband. Her earthy browns went well with the ultramarine blues and her skill as an architect helped her build this idyllic and nostalgic images of Bangladesh.

She says, "I am telling as much as possible with as little as I can. I am inspired by Tagore songs and the writings of Jibonanda Das. In my paintings, I want to reduce the subjects to two or three elements and let their power play on the viewer. I am also greatly influenced by Japanese art which I feel is unusually aesthetic." She is also greatly affected by Mustafa Manwar's work.

Iron lady Thatcher thinks Tony Blair is too bossy!

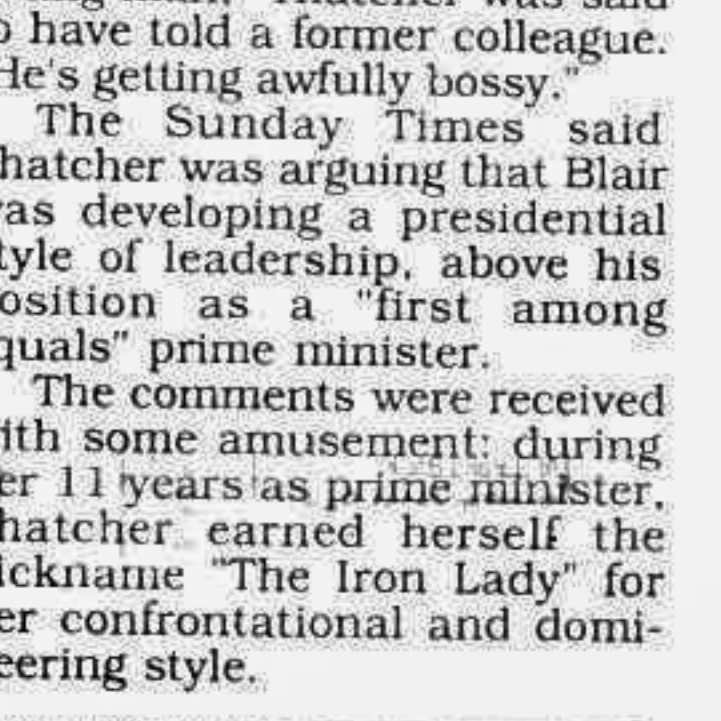
LONDON, Jan 31: Former British premier Margaret Thatcher thinks Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair is too "bossy", according to a report today, says AFP.

The Sunday Times reported comments allegedly made by the conservative ex-prime minister, at a Buckingham Palace banquet when Thatcher sat opposite Blair and Queen Elizabeth II.

"I'm worried about that young man," Thatcher was said to have told a former colleague. "He's getting awfully bossy."

The Sunday Times said Thatcher was arguing that Blair was developing a presidential style of leadership, above his position as a "first among equals" prime minister.

The comments were received with some amusement: during her 11 years as prime minister, Thatcher earned herself the nickname "The Iron Lady" for her confrontational and domineering style.



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