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6000-line Babubazar digital telephone exchange opens

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally inaugurated the newly built 6,000-line digital telephone exchange at Babubazar in the old part of Dhaka city yesterday talking with Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim, over the phone, reports UNB.

The digital exchange, with 3,400 old analogue and 2,600 new digital lines, was constructed under the Greater Dhaka Telecommunications Network Improvement Project.

Many areas in the city along with Savar, Narayanganj, Zinjira and Lablagh have already been provided with digital telephone facilities through the project, financed by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

Talking to the Minister over telephone, the Prime Minister said Babubazar, a business centre.

See page 11 col 4

Khaleda extends visit to flood-hit areas by a day

BENAPOLE, Oct 4: Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia has extended her visit to flood-affected Southwest front districts by a day, reports UNB.

The BNP chairperson will visit flood-hit Benapole land port and bordering Sarsha upazila tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to visit the Benapole land port on Friday.

Khaleda Zia flew in Jessore on Tuesday from Dhaka to visit the flood-affected areas of Jheridaha, Chuadanga and Jessore districts.

Humayun Zahir murder Argument in case on

By Court Correspondent

The hearing of argument in the Humayun Zahir Murder Case continued for the 13th day yesterday in the 8th Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka.

Judge Mir Mohammad Awlad Hossain adjourned the proceedings of the case till October 9 after hearing from the defence side.

Advocate Mahubub Ahmed, lawyer for Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, submitted many important points derived from deposition of the prosecution witnesses and sought acquittal of Babu.

See page 11 col 6

Arms factory unearthed

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 4: CID police this morning unearthed an illegal arms factory in the deep forest of Hukumyachhara under Patiya in the district and recovered huge spare parts of weapons and equipment needed for making arms.

Acting on a tip-off, a team led by ASP Kader Khan raided the forest area and unearthed the factory. They also recovered the arms and spare parts during the raid.

Installation of 5 digital exchanges BTiB's 'fastest' pre-bid meet

By Mustak Hossain

Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTiB) is taking about three years to complete the bidding procedure for installation of five digital telephone exchanges with a total of 50,000 lines, but it took only 10 minutes to conclude a pre-bid meeting, sources concerned said.

The bidders were asked at the 10-minute meeting on Tuesday to submit their queries regarding tender documents to the BTiB by October 10.

The exchanges would be installed in the capital, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet.

The three-year project would be further delayed due to technical discrepancies in tender documents and interference from the higher authorities, one source said.

Earlier, the pre-bid meeting was scheduled for September 25 but the meeting was postponed at the last moment due to 'some reasons'. The meeting was to be attended by the eight pre-selected bidders Alcatel, NEC, Siemens, AT&T, Lucent technology, Italtel, Motorola and Netas.

Bidders who went to attend the meeting 'reacted sharply for discrepancies' in the bid documents and a section of BTiB officials avoided meeting them because they (officials) 'manipulated' the documents, the source said.

An official seeking anonymity said, "BTiB was too embarrassed on the issue. Earlier, the Director of Procurement and the Deputy Director of Foreign Procurement were transferred hurriedly in this connection."

BTiB had first invited bids for the project, the last segment of its 200,000-line digital telephone project. French company Alcatel installed 150,000 lines in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Khulna in 1996 and 1997. Then BTiB decided to install another 50,000 lines with the 'surplus funds for this turnkey project,' he said.

The Ministry of Post and Telecommunication asked BTiB to invite fresh bids for this, rather than continuing with Alcatel. Then bids were invited again in June this year.

Seized liquors, drugs destroyed Survey on gas reserve to be completed by Dec: Humphrey

By Staff Correspondent

Huge quantities of narcotics and illegal drugs including phensidyl, local and foreign liquors, beers, cigarettes, heroin and hashish recovered by Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) were destroyed by bulldozer in presence of the home minister at the DMP control room premises at Shahbagh in the city yesterday.

During the last three months from July 1 to September 30, police and detectives of DMP seized 58,522 bottles of phensidyl, 145 bottles of foreign wine, 482 bottles of local liquor, 3934 cans of beer, 337 cartons of cigarettes, 33,488 kilogrammes of hashish, 2,333 kilogrammes of heroin, 5636 ampoules and 1400 tablets of other contraband drugs from different areas of the city.

During the same period, a rifle, ...

US Energy official Calvin Humphrey has said the joint survey assessing the reserve of natural gas in Bangladesh will be complete by December, allowing the government to decide whether to export it or not, reports UNB.

"We've not said that Bangladesh has to export gas... Our position is that all options, including export, should be considered. It is the government to take decision for the interest of the Bangladesh people," he told newsmen after talks with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury at the Foreign Office yesterday.

He said the findings of the joint survey being conducted by US Geological Survey (USGS) and Petrobangla will be released at a seminar in Dhaka.

Humphrey, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs in the US Department of Energy, would not comment on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's precise stand that Bangladesh will only consider gas export.

See page 11 col 6



Tip of an iceberg
Foreign liquor, heroin and cigarettes seized by police and DB over the last three months in the city came under the bulldozer yesterday on the police control room premises. -Star photo

Survey on gas reserve to be completed by Dec: Humphrey

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See page 11 col 6

Odhikar survey 49 killed in jail, custody or army camp in last 9 months

By Staff Correspondent

Forty-nine people were killed in jail, court hajat, police and army camps while 147 suffered acid burns across the country during the last nine months till September 30 this year, a survey report conducted by Odhikar said.

A total of 108 people were killed while 2,896 were injured and 1,065 people were arrested in different political incidents during the first five months across the country.

See page 11 col 4

Garments factory manager mugged in city

By Staff Correspondent

A gang stabbed a garments factory manager and snatched about Tk 1.44 lakh from him at Bakshibazar in the city yesterday.

Three muggers stopped the manager, Habibur Rahman, on his way to a market in a rickshaw to purchase garments accessories. As he cried for help, the gang stabbed him in his belly, took away the money and started to flee. Pedestrians chased the muggers, caught one of them and handed him over to police.

Lalabagh police said Tk 1.8 lakh was recovered from the arrested person.

2 minor girls raped

By Staff Correspondent

Two minor girls were raped -- one in the city and one in Narayanganj -- police and hospital sources said yesterday.

Two unidentified young men raped an eleven-year old girl at a slum in the city's Shyamoli area on Tuesday night.

The gang took away the girl from a garage where she was sitting at about 8 pm, raped her and then left her at the garage at about 4:30 am.

The victim's father took the injured girl to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

In Narayanganj, a nine-year old girl was raped by two young men at Talla yesterday noon.

When the girl was returning home from a neighbour's house, the young men Badsha and Mizan -- took her to a lonely place and raped her.

The badly injured girl was rushed to Narayanganj General Hospital and then shifted to the DMCH yesterday evening.

Body of Pir Chisty handed over to nephew

By Staff Correspondent

The body of the pir Mujibur Rahman Chisty was handed over to his nephew from Dhaka Medical College Hospital mortuary yesterday.

Golam Mostafa, nephew of the pir, received the body in the morning and sent to their village home at Char Barkat in Joypurhat.

Chisty, 55, was killed at his Mohammadpur residence in the city on Thursday night.

Police arrested Alamgir, caretaker of the house, and sent him to Dhaka Central Jail after two days police remand.

But police failed to arrest the two young men who were staying at the house when the gruesome killing took place.

Police could not make any headway to the mystery of the killing other than arresting the caretaker and forcing him to make a confessional statement.

The pir was said to be under surveillance. It has been reported that he had made several trips to Israel and had international connections.



Sri Lankan batsman Mahela Jayawardena pulls during his knock of 72 against West Indies in Nairobi yesterday. (Story on page 13). -AFP photo

Delhi, Moscow sign five defence agreements

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: India and Russia today signed five defence agreements under which New Delhi will acquire 300 T-90 tanks, license for the production of 150 multi-role fighter aircraft Sukhoi-30 MKI and the aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov from Russia, reports BSS.

The single largest defence pact, estimated to be to the tune of three billion dollars, will enhance India's defense capabilities and meet its long-term requirements, and expected to give a new impetus to the bilateral and military and technical cooperation between the two countries.

The agreements signaled a new era in Indo-Russian defense relation that will focus on joint defense production, shifting away from the buyer-seller relationship.

Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes and Russian Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov signed the umbrella agreement for the constitution of an intra-governmental commission on military technical cooperation. Until now the defense cooperation between the two countries was at the level of joint working group. The commission will be chaired by Fernandes and Klebanov. Of the five agreements, Klebanov and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and national security advisor Brajesh Bishra signed the one for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The licensed production of the fighter plane in India marks the new thrust in Indo-Russian defense cooperation.

Fernandes and Klebanov, who signed the su-30 licensed production deal, also initiated the agreement on Admiral Gorshkov, the 45,000-tonne vessel which was withdrawn from the Russian fleet in 1955 and is being given as a 'gift' to India. Besides, India will have to buy warplanes and helicopters that it intends to keep on the aircraft carrier, two squadrons of Mig-29K and six Kamov-31 helicopters.

Another report says Putin today called for putting in collective endeavour to fight the source of terrorism that foments violence in both Kashmir and the northern parts of his country.

Addressing a joint session of the two houses of India parliament the Russian leader said the extremist forces which were creating troubles in Kashmir were behind the problems in Chechnya and other northern areas of Russia.

Putin suggested that India and Russia should jointly fight militancy.

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