

Efforts on to launch T&T mobile phones

Pre-bid confce May 31

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) has launched fresh endeavours to operate countrywide cellular telephone service soon.

BTTB officials told BSS yesterday that the new round of pre-bid conference would be held on May 31 at BTTB's head office and tender would be opened on June 31 to select qualified companies for commissioning two lakh mobile phones.

BTTB floated re-tender on May 9 inviting international manufacturers/suppliers for supply, installation, testing and commissioning of required equipment and accessories for public mobile telephone service of BTTB.

The officials said BTTB's mobile phone project would be implemented at a cost of Tk 900 crore under supplier's credit financing, which will cover the entire country.

BTTB's Deputy Director (Foreign Procurement) Joynal Abedin said a complete set of bidding documents has been available since yesterday which can be purchased on submis-

sion of written application on cash payment of Tk 15,000.

The efforts are underway, he said, but could not specify approximate time for formal commissioning of the much-awaited T&T mobile phone service.

BTTB's mobile service would be the country's fourth GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) mobile operation after Grameen, Airtel and Sheba.

Another company CityCell operates under CDMA system. CDMA system is popular in the USA and Japan while GSM operates in 50 countries around the world.

Officials said that there are around three lakh mobile phones and six lakh fixed phone line in the country.

Meanwhile, BTTB has received allegations that a vested quarter is collecting money from the public in the name of providing mobile phones and selling so-called application forms.

Officials said that BTTB has not started receiving any application to provide mobile phones as the bidding process is going on.

Mamata breaks silence

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wherever they visited. I still cannot fathom how such a disaster could happen."

Mamata, however, did not agree to the idea that the Trinamool lacked proper organisational set-up to tackle the might of the CPI (M). "If the people had been allowed to vote, then the results would have been different. The voters were kept away from the machines."

However, all along she was contradictory. At one point she even became a bit incoherent. One moment, she was saying that she had failed to understand the voters and the next moment she was saying that the electorate had been terrorised.

When asked as to whether in hindsight the decision to break alliance with the BJP had proved costly, Mamata said, "How can you say that. The BJP has not won a single seat in West Bengal. If they had won a seat, then one could have argued on the issue. However, that question should not arise at all."

She also did not agree that her image had suffered against Buddhadev Bhattacharya's. "He is a carbon copy of Hitler. The state will understand this in the next five years."

Meanwhile, along with Mamata, party spokesperson, Pankaj Bandopadhyaya said that the Trinamool Congress had failed to protect the voters from the terri-

rors of the CPI (M). "We failed to provide a safe atmosphere for the voters and that is why we lost. That has been our only failure."

He also said that Mamata's resignation letter has been rejected. "She expressed a desire to quit as the party head. However, keeping the critical situation in view, we have rejected the resignation."

At this point, Mamata offered a faint smile and said, "What have I done for the party?"

There was a flash of anger when one asked what her future plans would be.

"Do you think, I am finished?" she said. "I will always fight for the people of West Bengal. I will continue the crusade against the atrocities of the CPI (M)."

The question is whether she will have many with her. Efforts to bring back Ajit Panja to the party have already underway. A section of leaders are also of the opinion that Mamata should now divide work and supervise. Some Trinamool MPs are thinking about forming a separate forum and working in close association with the BJP.

Meanwhile, it is said that Trinamool may boycott the swearing-in ceremony on Friday. However, when asked, Mamata said that the party's policymaking body would make the final decision in this regard.

Jayalalitha to form govt

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sworn in as chief minister later yesterday.

However, whether Jayalalitha can actually take her place as the head of the state permanently is still unclear.

Jayalalitha filed her candidacy for the May 10 polls in four separate constituencies, all of which were rejected under regulations preventing people with criminal convictions contesting elections.

The former actress was convicted on corruption charges relating to her 1991-1996 tenure as Tamil Nadu chief minister. In February 2000, she was sentenced to one year's hard labour but only served two months in jail.

A defiant AIADMK, however,

continued its poll campaign with Jayalalitha as the party's chief ministerial candidate.

And as the results came in on Sunday Jayalalitha made no secret of her ambitions. She also lost no time in meeting the governor Biwi on Monday to stake her claim to form the government.

Jayaram Jayalalitha was sworn in late yesterday as chief minister of Tamil Nadu.

Political analysts said that even if Jayalalitha became the chief minister she would still have to be voted to a state constituency within six months.

No formal discussion

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Jatiya Party (Matin-Nazir) would start bargaining with BNP for 50 seats each to contest the parliamentary polls. But Islami Oikya Jote is yet to make any demand.

In the current context, the party needs to contest in at least 250 seats to ensure a single majority, said a top BNP leader adding that the BNP is capable of nominating more than one candidate in all the 300 parliamentary constituencies.

BNP sources said BNP would possibly start bargaining with its partners, offering 40 seats and finally settling for maximum 50 seats. Leaders said none of its alliance partners has made any 'ambitious demand' and hoped that

the issue of seat sharing would be resolved peacefully and BNP might satisfy its allies.

The BNP will also set aside a few seats for eminent personalities and politicians of the smaller parties, if they agree to contest the polls with BNP's election symbol 'sheaf of paddy'.

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BSF cordoned off

FROM PAGE 1

The worst affected of these villagers out of their houses," Md Zafar Ali of the same area said.

According to Mainul Haq, a Lalmonirhat-based journalist, the BSF stopped movement of all Bangladeshis living in the enclaves from mainland India.

Due to the distance between the enclaves and nearest land of Bangladesh, people there usually depend on India for essential commodities," he said.

People, living in the enclaves, go to retail stores in India, their children study in Indian schools and for medication, they have little option but to go to nearby health centres inside the Indian territory.

"Since the Roumari incident, none are being allowed to step outside the demarcated pillars that separate the enclaves from India," Mainul said.

enclaves Jagatbari having 30.66 acres of land, Dhabalshuti-Mirzapur (173.88 acres), Chitanbari (108.59 acres), Kuchlibari (1.83 acres) and Falnapur (506.56 acres).

Some people fled their homes at the dead of night and took shelter in Dahgram, which has a corridor with Bangladesh.

Residents of the enclaves say that they have always been subjected to BSF highhandedness and its intensity only heightened after the Roumari clashes.

One senior official of the Lalmonirhat district administration said that the enclave people were in the middle of nowhere. "They are like orphans. Neither the Bangladeshi government nor the BDR can do anything about their ordeal."

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We are ready to resist any attack on our sovereignty

PM tells expatriates in London

UNB, London

"We want peace, we want peaceful solution to all problems," she said.

But she regretted that even during such a national crisis, the opposition did not extend help, rather the opposition parties tried to gain some political interest from the crisis.

Criticising the opposition, Hasina said: "They don't believe in independence, they've no contribution towards our independence. They only like to satisfy their masters, the defeated forces. They want conflict and confrontation."

She said: "We want peaceful solution to all problems. We've restored democracy ... established the base for economic development."

Hasina recalled the contribution of the expatriate Bangladeshis living in London during the Liberation War and in every crisis of the nation.

She also recalled how she had

started her political career in London by staging a demonstration in 1980 against the killing of Bangabandhu.

The Prime Minister said she and her party has requested the Election Commission to consider the issue of enabling expatriate citizens to vote. She suggested that they become voters whenever they visit the country.

She said the government is trying to solve other problems of the expatriate citizens, including the restoration of Sonali Bank operations.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abu Hasan Chowdhury, British MPs Baroness Paula Uddin, Frank Dobson and Karen Bach, member of the European Parliament Mary Hanifal, and UK Awami League general secretary Prof Abul Hasem also addressed the meeting.

During the period, authorised dealer banks opened import LCs worth Tk 36,428 crore. Of that, machineries account for Tk 2,483 crore, textile fabrics and accessories for RMG inputs Tk 9,023 crore, raw cotton and synthetic fibre Tk 1,561 crore and yarn Tk 787 crore.

"We must use all means at our command to prevent such convicted criminals from seeking refuge by crossing political boundaries," she told the world leaders, who converged here from both hemispheres of the globe poor and rich.

Hasina said although these challenges faced by the LDCs are formidable, they are not insurmountable. Given firm determination, an enabling environment and sufficient political will at the national and global levels, LDCs should be able to make headway in the near future.

She stressed human and institutional capacity building of the under developed countries with increased investment in social sector. "We believe that while challenges are immense, opportunities do exist for the LDCs," she said.

The prime minister apprised the UN conference on the least developed countries that the LDCs are now in a struggle to combat poverty and marginalization, but poverty eradication and social and economic development remained as elusive as ever.

Drawing the attention to the house to new problems facing the underprivileged countries she said LDCs now face menacing problems like HIV or AIDS and arsenic poisoning of drinking water. Advanced science and technology must be used to combat these maladies to ensure a better life for all.

The prime minister said international crimes, terrorism and cross-border movement of drugs also posed challenges to the poor countries. In this context, she cited the

black tragedy of August 15, 1975 and said some of the killers who have been convicted of killing Bangladesh's independence leader are seeking refuge abroad.

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