

Telecom regulatory body functions from Jan 31

ABU SAEED KHAN

The long-awaited Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the country's first telecom watchdog, will start functioning on January 31.

President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury approved the appointment of the BTRC officials yesterday. The commission has been formed under the Bangladesh Telecommunications Act, 2001 passed by the Jatiya Sangsad. The President gave his assent to the act on April 16, 2001.

On July 8, 2001 the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications made the commission effective through gazette notification. It also revoked the ministerial power to issue any telecom-operating license as the BTRC is solely entrusted with that authority.

But just after four days, the ministry itself issued a license to Dhaka Bar polls February 27, 28

BSS, Dhaka

Election of the Dhaka Bar Association for the year 2002-2003 will be held on February 27 and 28.

Advocate Fazlur Rahman Khan and Advocate Sana Ullah Mia will contest the election for the posts of president and general secretary respectively as the four-party alliance candidates. Jatiyabadi Ainjibi Forum sources said.

Advocate S M Altaf Hossain will contest for the post of president and Advocate Matir Rahman for general secretary from the other panel supported by Awami League and its allies, Awami Ainjibi Parishad said.

WorldTel for operating 300,000 fixed phone lines in Dhaka, flouting the newly enacted law.

The ministry, however, retreated later by amending the SRO on August 9, 2001 and put on hold the functioning of BTRC till January 31, 2002.

Meanwhile, the government has nominated Syed Margub Morshed, secretary of the information ministry, as the Chairman of the BTRC. The government has also appointed four other top officials of the BTRC through formal interview.

FQM Farook, ex-chairman of BTTB, will be the vice-chairman of the commission while AFMNH Chowdhury, the immediate-past chairman of BTTB, Rezaul Haque, a retired member of the BTTB, and Abu Bakar, ex-additional secretary of the ministry of law, will act as the commissioners.

The President approved the appointments for a three-year term. They would resume all regulatory tasks from Thursday.

But not all the appointments are consistent with the telecom act. Clause C of subsection 10 of this act mandates the appointment of a commissioner with a minimum of 15-year practical experience in business or industry or finance or economics or protection of consumer interest or management or administration.

French navy ship leaves Ctg

The French Navy Ship, Commandant Ducuing left Chittagong yesterday ending its three-day goodwill visit to Bangladesh, says a press release.

It is alleged that political pressure to accommodate a retired BTTB official precluded the mandatory appointment of the Commissioner with business or finance background. Sources said such deviation is detrimental to BTRC's independence.

The Bangladesh Telecommunications Act, 2001 would supplement the Telegraph Act of 1885 and Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1933. It empowers the BTRC with the exclusive authority of issuance, renewal, amendment and cancellation of all licenses.

The commission will also allocate the radio frequency for commercial or personal use. But sources are sceptic about BTRC's institutional capability of conducting such a complex task.

The World Bank pledged 10 million US dollars for the radio spectrum management capacity build-up project of the BTRC. But the donor withdrew its assistance when the government revoked the commission's administrative and financial independence before the telecom act was passed in April, 2001.

The government is yet to find any alternative source of fund in this regard.

Rly to sell tickets in advance

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Railway will sell tickets of inter-city trains in advance from February 9 to 15 from Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet stations on the occasion of holy Eid-ul-Azha.

The railway authorities will sell the tickets of Shovan and Sulov class of inter-city train services from 8 am to 4 pm every day during the period, said a press release.

The tickets of February 16 will be available on February 9, February 17 on February 10, February 18 on February 11, February 19 on February 12, February 20 on February 13, February 21 on February 14 and February 22 on February 15.

The selling of current tickets will continue normally along with the sale of advance tickets. The tickets of air-conditioned and first class will be available as per normal course, the press release added.

Meanwhile, the inter-city Parabat Express, running between the capital city and Sylhet, will stop at Maizgaon for two minutes from February 1 on an experimental basis.



Commerce Minister of Pakistan Abdul Razak Dawood called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office in the city yesterday.

Transport policy soon

UNB, Dhaka

In a bid to build up a safe, appropriate and disciplined road management, the government will announce the National Transport Policy very soon.

"The government has already completed the draft policy and will make it public soon," Communications Minister Barister Nazmul Huda disclosed this while addressing a seminar on "effective road, highways and bridge management" at the Sarak Bhaban here yesterday.

Roads and Highways Department (RHD) organised the seminar to formulate specific policy and planning aimed at strengthening future road, national highways, regional highways and

bridge networks of the country.

The government has also decided to upgrade 5,000 kilometers of feeder road, out of 16,000 kilometers under the Roads and Highways Department, into national and regional highways to strengthen the communication network between different parts of the country, the Communications Minister added.

The Communication Minister also underscored the need for safe, effective, comprehensive and strong road management for the growth of national economy.

The speakers at the seminar stressed the need for creating mass awareness and educating the people, conducting huge publicity in mass media, building road safety engineering and strengthening the role of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) to check road accidents and build up a safe road management.

Chief Engineer of the R&HD M Fazlul Haq, IDC-3 Team leader Bill Hozkins and representatives from DFID, World Bank, ADB, European Union, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Planning Commission Finance Ministry and Communication Ministry took part in the seminar as discussants.

Call to make Feb 2 hartal a success

UNB, Dhaka

The left-leaning 11-party alliance in its continued mass contact called upon the people to make a success their countrywide half-day hartal on February 2.

The alliance has called the general strike to protest price hike of oil, gas, water and electricity and government move to export gas to India.

In a statement, the central steering committee of the 11-party also protested "BNP terrorists' attack" on a meeting of the alliance in Jhalokathi.

The leftists observed that public life became miserable due to "anti-people" decisions of the government.

DU History Dept Alumni Assoc reunion Mar 8

The annual reunion of Dhaka University History Department Alumni Association (DUHAAA) will be held on March 8, says a press release.

Interested former students have been requested to contact the office of the Chairman, Department of History, Dhaka University, or call at 9661900-59/4330 between 12 noon and 4.00 pm (except holidays) for further information.

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RDRS gets global recognition

UNB, Dhaka

A Bangladeshi NGO received global recognition for its long service to the disadvantaged population of the northwest of the country.

The non-government organisation RDRS Bangladesh, working in greater Rangpur-Dinajpur region for the past 30 years, was voted runner-up in a competition in the not-for-profit sector for 2001 organised by a leading UK charity, Worldaware.

British Under-Secretary of State for International Development Hilary Benn awarded the prize at a ceremony at the Royal Institution in London on January 22.

For the first time in the scheme's 13-year history, the awards were open to businesses and NGOs from all over the world, said a press release.

The aim of the Awards scheme is to recognise and promote the contribution which commercial activity can make to the sustainable growth in economic, social and environment sectors of developing countries.

Winners in other categories included organisations from Nigeria, India, Zimbabwe, UK, Romania and Cambodia.

Al-Quds meet ends US urged to force Israel to halt aggressive acts

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman returned home yesterday after attending the 19th session of the Al-Quds Committee held in Marrakech, Morocco on January 25.

The session was convened by the King of Morocco, who is the Chairman of the Committee in the backdrop of fast deteriorating situation in the Middle East.

The meeting urged the United States as the sponsor of the Middle East Peace Process to take immediate steps to force Israel to halt aggressive acts.

The meeting was held to express solidarity of the Islamic States and the Ummah to the Pal-

estinian cause in general and to reiterate the urgency to prevent the judaization of Al-Quds Al-Sharif against the backdrop of continued Israeli aggression and its attempts to cripple the Palestinian authority, a foreign ministry press release said.

"Bangladesh along with other participating delegations endorsed the appeal by the King of Morocco to the international community to put an end to the arrogance of Ariel Sharon," the release said.

The meeting reaffirmed that the Muslim Ummah was committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, one that would enable the Palestinian people to recover its legitimate rights and establish its independent state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

It also urged the United Nations to work towards the implementation of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions to preserve the credibility of the Security Council as an important organ of the United Nations and referred to the call of President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

Iraqi envoy calls on Speaker

UNB, Dhaka

Newly appointed Charge d' Affaires of Iraq Mustafa M Taufiq called on Speaker Barister Jamiruddin Sircar at Sangsad Bhaban yesterday and discussed various issues, including joining of the opposition in next parliament session.

During the meeting, they stressed the need for bolstering relations between parliaments of the two countries.

Removal of CU VC demanded

CU CORRESPONDENT

The students of Chittagong University (CU) at a rally yesterday demanded removal of the vice chancellor.

The rally was held under the banner of General Student Oikya Parishad (GSOP) at the administrative building premises.

Meanwhile, the administrative activities of the university were disrupted as Shibir continued its lock up programme. No transaction was held at the bank on the campus.

The employees of the university could not attend the work due to the lock-up programme.

The Shibir activists began the programme on Saturday demanding an end to the stalemate at the university. They also threatened to continue the programme until classes resume.

The school and the college of the university also remained closed.



Drama activist Sara Zaker speaking at a press conference at the Mohila Samity auditorium in the city yesterday on the occasion of National Street Drama Festival, 2002 and National Drama Festival, 2002.

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