

17000 more phone lines to be installed in Ctg by month-end

ABDULLAH-AL MAHMUD, Ctg

Installation of around 17,000 more telephone lines in Chittagong will begin by the end of the month and connections are likely to be given in January.

Alongside, the few existing analogue telephone lines will be made digital.

The telephone and telegraph (T&T) department stated bringing equipment for the project from Dhaka on Saturday.

Of the lines, 7750 will be installed by setting up three new exchanges at a cost of Tk six crore (1.18 million dollars) and 9200 will be added to the existing seven exchanges by increasing their capacity with new equipment, T&T sources here said.

Installation of the new lines is part of a project under which one lakh 16 thousand telephones are

being installed in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet at a cost of 15.54 million dollars.

A Turkish firm -- NETES -- and a Turkey-based Canadian firm -- Nortel -- are jointly doing the installation work in Chittagong on behalf of the T&T department. The Canadian firm is supplying the equipment.

Of the 7750 new lines in Chittagong, 7000 will be installed at Agrabad exchange, 500 at Chittagong EPZ exchange and 250 at Anowara upazila to provide telephone connections to industrial units in the proposed Korean EPZ on the other bank of Karnaphuli river, the sources said.

After installation of the new lines at Agrabad exchange, the existing 1250 analogue lines there will be made digital on priority basis without

any conversion fee, T&T general manager for Chittagong region Moniruzzaman Khan told this correspondent. With this, Chittagong will be a 'city of digital telephone', he said.

A French firm --Alcatel -- which installed the digital exchanges nine years back, will start installing the 9200 lines in the seven existing exchanges by December, the sources said.

The demand for new telephones in the city is around 50,000. Around 25,000 applications are pending and demand notes have been issued to 2300 applicants.

In May last year, 9133 telephone connections were added to the seven exchanges. Before that no new telephone connection was given in the city since 1996, the sources said.



Japanese Ambassador to Dhaka Jiro Kobayashi meets Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday to apprise her of the ongoing "Japan Month" celebrations marking three decades of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Japan.

Coercion runs high

FROM PAGE 1
To begin with, the new government barred the main opposition from holding rallies and staging hunger strikes, kept the AL central office under virtual siege during hartal hours, arrested many AL workers and leaders under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and implicated many of them in false cases.

Besides, many AL leaders had to stay out due to overnight police raids without warrant on their houses and business establishments.

Arrests of former minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, AL President Sheikh Hasina's aide Bahauddin Nasim, and ten Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leaders and reported torture on them antagonised the AL.

The president and the general secretary of the BCL, the AL's student front, were given bails by the court several times, but each time they were shown arrested in new cases in which none of them was listed accused. However, the BCL leaders were released last month after a prolonged legal battle.

On September 6, the Amnesty International, the international human-rights watchdog, called on the government of Bangladesh to stop the opportunistic use of criminal charges to detain political opponents.

Opposition members are detained under legislation which allows arrest without warrant and are taken to police custody where they are often subjected to torture, including beating and sleep deprivation," the Amnesty International said.

The only way they can obtain bails is through the lengthy process

of appealing to the High Court, but the government does not normally respect such court orders, the organisation added.

After alleged implication of some opposition leaders in a M16 rifle case, AL leaders Kamal Majumdar and Ashim Kumar Ukil were arrested under Section 54 of the CrPC this August despite anticipatory bails by the court.

Sohel Taj, AL lawmaker and son of late national leader Tajuddin Ahmed, was severely injured in March when police clubbed an AL rally in Dhaka.

Police also bundled AL leaders Motia Chowdhury, Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Asaduzzaman Noor, MP into a police van and confined them to the Ramna Police Station for several hours, as they wanted to join an AL-called hunger strike at the Osmani Udyan.

Freedom of movement and basic human rights of the opposition leaders have been denied by frequent overnight raids on their residences and businesses establishments.

AL leaders -- Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, Motia Chowdhury, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Mohammad Hanif, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Obaidul Kader, Sahara Khatun, Abdul Mannan Mukul Bose, Haji Mohammad Selim and Habibur Rahman Mollah -- are among those whose houses were raided.

Law enforcers also vandalised the houses and misbehaved with family members and security guards of the opposition leaders during raids.

Besides, police raided the houses of many grassroots-level leaders and workers of the AL

across the country.

Now, wary of the government's hostility, the AL started organisational activities to launch a 'vigorous' movement against the government.

Haji Selim granted anticipatory bail

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted a three-month anticipatory bail to former MP and Awami League leader Haji Selim in a criminal case.

The court issued rule asking the government to show cause within two weeks why the petitioner (Haji Selim) should not be granted permanent bail.

A division bench comprising Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury and Justice Faroque Ahmed passed the order upon hearing the petition.

A criminal case was filed against Haji Selim on September 27 with Ramna Thana for his alleged involvement in a bomb attack on a procession of the then opposition party BNP during hartal on January 26, 1999.

Dr Zahir moved the petition on behalf of the petitioner while Deputy Attorney General Golam Mohammad Chowdhury and Assistant Attorneys General Snigdha Haque and Shamima Haque stood for the state.

Differences on arsenic

FROM PAGE 12
Washington DC has already been notified and the agreement will be signed once it gives the go-ahead, sources in the bank said.

"The minister has expressed his willingness to continue the project using the Bank's fund and in this regard he has assured us of his cooperation," said a WB official.

After the meeting, Mannan Bhuiyan told journalists he had assured the WB of the government's all-support towards expeditious implementation of the arsenic mitigation project.

A number of 'flaws' in the project was identified, he said. "Some of these have already been redressed and others would be taken care of soon."

Mannan Bhuiyan defended the government decision to change the BAMWSP project director. "The government has brought

some major changes in the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE). There were allegations of corruption against some officials while promotions for some others were outstanding."

The LGRD minister insisted that there was nothing to read in the changes made. "The changes are part of a routine government work and it has no connection with the project implementation."

He also told journalists that his ministry and the WB are considering more such projects to address groundwater arsenic contamination after the BAMWSP.

Jeffrey Racki, sector manager, South Asia Environment and Social Unit, Paul Martin, senior environment specialist and KM Minnatah, team leader of the Water and Sanitation Programme, South Asia, represented the WB at the meeting.

Special force to prevent use of polybags

UNB, Dhaka

The government has decided to form a 'strike force' which will work round-the-clock to prevent illegal use of polythene shopping bags.

The special force will be stationed at the police control room of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), and conduct drives at any place of the city to seize and confiscate polybags and take legal actions.

If necessary, members of the Bangladesh Rifles may be called to assist the force in conducting big operations.

The decisions were taken yesterday at an inter-ministerial meeting at the Environment Ministry conference room with Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj in the chair.

Speaking at the meeting, Siraj expressed his dissatisfaction over the massive use of new types of polythene shopping bags following the ban imposed on it.

Gibbs' near miss

FROM PAGE 12
and the scores were level.

Two balls later Gibbs hit powerfully to long on but the ball was cut off and the single run ended the match.

Gibbs' chances of setting the record seemed slight after Bangladesh struggled to a modest 154 for nine off 50 overs.

But he played a series of outrageous shots, charging down the pitch to attack the Bangladesh new ball bowlers and hitting the ball to all parts of the ground as he thrashed 19 boundaries.

The South African opening batsman described the closing moments: "He saw me coming (down the pitch) and pushed it down the leg side - it was just one of those things."

Asked when he had starting thinking of his fourth successive century he replied: "Last night".

He said of going out to bat chasing a low target: "There was nothing to lose. The first 70 or 80

came quicker than I thought but it was not to be."

Gibbs shares the world record of three hundreds in a row with Zaheer Abbas and Saeed Anwar of Pakistan. During his innings he became the first batsman in the world to score 1000 runs in limited overs internationals this year.

Bangladesh needed a recovery by their tailenders after another failure by their top order batsmen to make 154 for nine after being sent in to bat.

Tapash Baisya, batting at number nine, made an unbeaten 35 off 46 balls as Bangladesh fought back from 57 for five and 117 for eight.

Baisya and Monjurul Islam put on 37 for the ninth wicket in the best partnership of the innings.

Bangladesh, who were beaten by 168 runs when the three-game series started in Potchefstroom Thursday, seemed set for another humiliation when they crashed to 57 for five against South Africa's fast bowlers.

Makhaya Ntini, who finished with three for 28, took two wickets in the 12th over, having opening batsman Hannan Sarkar caught behind, then bowling Al Sahariar. Sarkar and Omar had put on 26 for the first wicket.

Javed Omar made 24 off 65 balls before playing a loose drive to be caught behind off Klusener as he tried to lift his scoring rate.

Tushar Imran made 23 off 31 deliveries and hit five boundaries in the brightest innings of the morning. Imran earned the cheers of several hundred flag-waving Bangladesh supporters when he hit Allan Donald for two successive boundaries.

Attacking shots were rare, however, as the pace of the South African bowlers and the bounce of the Willowmoore Park pitch ensured that the Bangladeshis were unable to do much more than play for survival until Baisya's flurry in the closing overs.

2 killed as steamer rams into anchored cargo vessel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least two persons died and 15 others were injured as a passenger steamer collided with an anchored cargo vessel in the middle of the Meghna in the early hours yesterday.

One of the dead has been identified as Rokeya, 45, while the identity of the other, an adolescent boy, could not be known.

Sources said, the incident took place at Hijla channel of Meghna in between Kaliganj and Mollikipur area at 1.30am yesterday.

The Khulna-bound Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) rocket steamer, PS Masud, carrying 500 passengers, left Dhaka Sadarghat at Saturday evening and reached Hijla at 1.30am. The right side of PS Masud was fully damaged when it collided with 'Banglar Jamuna', a cargo ship anchored there.

Rokeya (45) and the boy, standing at the gangway, died immediately and 15 others were injured.

Three others, two women and a

teenage girl, are missing. Two of those missing are Jahanara (25) and Tahmina (13). The identity of other woman could not be known.

Among the critically injured are Ali Akbar (52), Shahdat (20) and Hasmat (43). They have been admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

The damaged passenger steamer reached Barisal at dawn yesterday. Its Khulna trip has been cancelled and it was kept at Barisal till the filing of this report last night.

Second master of the passenger ship Mostafa Ahmed has filed a case with the Kotwali Police Station against the owner of the cargo ship, Jamuna River Transport, alleging that the cargo ship fell on the passenger steamer. BIWTC officials also corroborated the statement.

Manager of BIWTC Barisal office Hasibur Rahman said that a two-member probe committee comprising deputy general manager (Commerce) and deputy general manager (Marine) has been formed to look into the incident.

Police club jute mills workers during hartal in Khulna: 10 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

At least ten people were injured in police action during a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the city yesterday.

Khulna Zonal Unit of Jute Mills Action Committee enforced the shutdown to protest government decision to privatise four jute mills and Khulna Newsprint Mills and Hardboard Mills.

The clash erupted at when industrial workers attacked Shimanta Express train at Daulatpur at around 7:45 am. Police rushed to the spot and clubbed the agitating workers, leaving ten of them injured.

The pickets also damaged a passenger bus and a truck during hartal hours.

Vehicles were off the roads and business establishments and educational institutions remained closed during the hartal hours.

Production remained suspended in all jute mills of Khulna-Jessore industrial belt, Khulna Newsprint and Hardboard Mills. Workers of these mills brought out a procession at Khalishpur protesting the move to sell out state-owned jute and other mills to private sector.

Meanwhile, Jatiyatobadi Sramik Dal has announced a 17-day programme protesting government move to sell out the jute mills.

Housewife shot dead by dacoits in Raozan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A housewife was shot dead by a gang of dacoits in Raozan upazila of the district in the early hours of yesterday.

The victim was identified as Lucky Pal, 40, wife of Arabinda Pal of village south Dabua in Raozan.

Sources said, a gang of 25 dacoits entered the house of Arabinda at around 2.30 am and looted goods worth about Tk 1.5 lakh at gunpoint.

When the inmates tried to resist the dacoits, they opened fire on them, killing Lucky Pal on the spot. A case was filed with Raozan thana.

Businessman shot, robbed of Tk 1.38 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A businessman was shot and robbed of Tk 1.38 lakh at Adarsha Nagar in the city's Badda area yesterday afternoon.

KM Masudur Rahman, owner of a travel agency, was on his way to Banani office from a Motijheel bank in an auto-rickshaw when some muggers stopped him at about 2:30pm.

The muggers asked Rahman to hand over his valuables. When he refused they shot him in the abdomen and in his left hand, and took away the bag containing the money.

Rahman was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Commissioners

FROM PAGE 12

tion calls for it'.

Meanwhile, former inspector general of police ASM Shahjan told BBC last night that police protection for the commissioners could be a temporary solution, not permanent, the police are short of personnel.

The government would do better if it concentrated on improving the overall public security.

Dr Aftab murder case transferred to DB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The sensational Dr. Aftab murder case has been transferred to the Detective Branch (DB) after police failed to find the killers even three weeks after the murder of the popular physician of the Golapganj upazila.

Dr Aftab Hossain, who was the assistant director of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, was taken away from his private clinic at Dhaka Dakshin Bazaar under the pretext of visiting a patient in a remote area. He was brutally murdered the same night at the remote Ghoshgaon village where his body was left in a bush.

Police took several persons into custody and one of the arrested men reportedly confessed his involvement with the kidnapping and murder of the doctor.

There has been public outrage over the failure of Golapganj police to nab the killers. Also, there have even been allegations of police helping the killers get away.

Under the circumstances, the case has been transferred to the DB for investigation as has been demanded by many forums.

Tribal abducted in Bandarban murdered

A CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

One of the three tribals abducted on Friday from a village under Thanchi Upazila of Bandarban was killed yesterday. He was identified as Ani Mong, 55.

Some armed criminals abducted the three from Ong Thoai Karbari village at gunpoint after the villagers refused to pay their tolls on Friday. The three tribals are Karbari Ong Thoai Pru, 58, his brother Ani Mong, 55, and his son Ba Thoai Pru, 30.

The abductors released Ong Thoai Pru and Ba Thoai Pru on condition that they would pay Tk 1 lakh as ransom, but they kept Ani Mong confined, police sources said. Ani was killed as his relatives failed to pay the ransom, local people said.

Police found the body of Ani yesterday beside the local Padark lake.

Saddam

FROM PAGE 12

even just bow out.

Never mind that the Iraqi leader, at the helm since 1979, is preparing to "win" another seven-year term in an October 15 referendum. His exiled opponents are busy figuring out what he will do when his hour comes, presumably at the hands of his nemesis, US President George W. Bush.

But the dissidents sounded out by AFP agree on at least one thing: the Iraqi strongman with an insatiable lust for power will only give up if defeat stares him in the face.

"The moment he realises his time is up, Saddam will choose to fall in American hands rather than be finished off by Iraqis as the country plunges into chaos," said Al-Shareef Ali bin al-Hussein, who heads the Movement for Constitutional Monarchy.

"Saddam Hussein is not someone to accept defeat. He will opt to commit suicide rather than go into exile," said Tewfik al-Yassiri, a former army officer now based in London.

"When the Shah of Iran fled in 1979, Saddam wondered why a man carries a gun if not to use it at the right time. He said that the Shah should have committed suicide rather than leave his country," said Yassiri, who himself went into exile in the wake of Kurdish and Shiite rebellions in northern and southern Iraq following the 1991 Gulf War.

Hasina slates armed attack on Hamid in Bhola

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday condemned the armed attacks on Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid and obstructing him from holding a party rally in Bhola on Saturday.

In a statement Sheikh Hasina alleged that armed cadres belonging to ruling BNP and Jatiya Party hurled bombs and fired on Hamid's car to kill him.

She demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the attackers. Otherwise, the government would be responsible for any situation arising out of it, she warned.

The AL chief called upon the people to unite to resist the 'fascist' government to protect democracy, human rights and to ensure rule of the law, security of people's life and property and dignity of women and children.

She also alleged that the BNP-led four-party alliance government, after coming to power through a 'rigged' election, is launching 'planned attacks' on AL leaders and workers across the country.

Instead of taking action against those identified criminals, the government is sheltering them and giving them arms, the former prime minister alleged.

The attacks on Abdul Hamid in Barishal and Bhola and earlier attacks on her motorcade at Kolaroa

and on former home minister and AL leader Mohammad Nasim made it clear that the alliance is implementing a 'blue print to destroy Awami League', she alleged.

Such planned attacks one after another can not take place without prior approval of the prime minister, she alleged.

Hasina said law and order deteriorated following some 'provocative statements' by the prime minister accusing Awami League for creating chaos and violence.

The AL chief in a separate statement protested what she called harassment of former AL MP Haji Mohammad Selim through filing cases against him one after another. Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman in a statement also condemned the attacks on Abdul Hamid in Barishal and Bhola.

None is safe under this 'fascist and anti-people' government led by BNP and Jammata-e-Islami, he said.

Leaders of Awami Sechhasebak League in a separate statement expressed anguish and grave concern over the armed attacks on Abdul Hamid.

Protesting the attacks, acting president of Awami Olama League Moulana Mohammad Ismail Hossain in a statement said the people are passing days amid insecurity and with great agony due to violence, killing, rape and extortion done by 'goons' belonging to the alliance.

BAC begins probe into alleged corruption by CHT minister

UNB, Rangamati

Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) began investigation into the much-talked about allegations of irregularities and corruption by deputy minister for CHT Affairs Moni Swapan Dewan.

Official sources requesting anonymity told UNB yesterday that Dewan has been unofficially removed from his post. Activities of the CHT Affairs Ministry are now being carried out under the prime minister's directive.

Dewan's possible replacement is being discussed in office corridors across the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Some of the ruling 4-party alliance leaders have already gone to the capital to lobby for the post.

Informed sources said Chairman of CHT Regional Parishad Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Lama alias Santu Lama is also strongly lobbying for the post of Minister of CHT Affairs, mobilising support of local leaders and different sections of the people.

Local leaders of the 4-party alliance and non-tribal people have expressed concern at the move of Santu Lama, leader of the now defunct Shanti Bahini that had waged insurgency in CHT. They said they have informed the central leaders that unrest might flare up in Chittagong Hill Tracts if Lama is inducted in the cabinet.

Moni Swapan Dewan MP, elected from Rangamati on BNP ticket, was appointed as deputy minister-in-charge of CHT Affairs. There are also allegations that he

violated party discipline and acted in favour of a particular section of the people.

Officials said Dewan committed irregularities in distributing more than 10,000 metric tons of wheat worth Tk 15 crore through mostly fake projects.

They said Dewan misappropriated the lion share of the wheat by showing allocation among named and unnamed clubs and individuals. Non-existent projects against which allocation was made included 50 metric tons of wheat for bamboo grove, 15 metric tons for victims of Langadu massacre, 20 metric tons for victims of the Maini Bazar fire incident, 20 metric tons for construction of Balukhali-Jhagrabil road, 40 metric tons for Mubachhari pisciculture and 40 metric tons for excavation of Baraitali pond.

Rickshawpuller

FROM PAGE 12

While waiting at the rail gate, he saw a cartridge near his feet, Shahin claimed. According to him, he picked it up and shook his gun to check whether it dropped from it. But with the jerk, the gun accidentally went off and killed the rickshawpuller, the policeman claimed.

Another rickshawpuller, Rafiq, who was on a rickshaw next to Momin's, said he heard a gunshot and saw the victim in a pool of blood. He did not know where the bullet came from.

ICT policy soon

FROM PAGE 12

government organisations will be encouraged for capacity building in this area.

All BITs (Bangladesh Institute of Technology), public universities and colleges will be provided with facilities and four-year courses on Computer Science or Engineering will be introduced to produce IT graduates.

Out of the twelve science and technology universities proposed in the Fifth Five-Year Plan, two will be made 'centers of excellence in IT' and necessary resources will be provided.

The policy suggests setting up of 'multimedia institutes' to produce skilled manpower to utilise the opportunity offered by the growing multimedia market.

The policy suggests "little or no customs duties" on import of equipment for construction of the infrastructure within the least possible time.

In case of joint ventures, lead firms in all software projects must be Bangladeshi companies to ensure technology transfer.

A target of two billion US dollars export earnings from software, data entry and IT-enabled services will be set for the year 2006. It will be revised periodically with the growth of the market.

To promote e-commerce, steps will be taken to make secure the businesses of public and private sectors made through electronic transactions. New laws will be framed for this.

The government will use IT system in public administration to improve efficiency, reduce wastage of resources, improve planning and improve services.

The IT infrastructure will be developed in such a way that any citizen can have access to government databases and administrative departments so that public services can be extended to the remotest corner.