

Go-slow BTRC study spells long wait for pvt operators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Private operators will now have to wait at least a year before they get the licence to launch new mobile and fixed phone services in the country.

The Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) "will not be able to invite any company... as the study on spectrum management is yet to be complete," BTRC chairman Syed Marghub Morshed told a discussion meeting yesterday.

Murshed said the study should be complete by September next year without elaborating.

Earlier at a press conference in August, the telecom regulator had made it known that government would invite expression of interest for operating cellular mobile phone networks in November and fixed-line telephones in April 2003 to award licenses for those services.

The BTRC chairman was addressing a roundtable titled "Impact of Telecom Deregulation on

National Economy", organised by The Financial Mirror, a news weekly.

Managing directors of different cellular mobile phone companies and several telecom experts attended the roundtable at a local hotel.

M Masud Isa, managing director of Grameen Telecom, presented the keynote on the subject. Quazi Jahangir Alam, editor of the magazine, moderated the discussion.

The BTRC Chairman, who attended the roundtable as a special guest, said the commission was working to rationalise the tariff structure of the telecom sector.

"Under the plan, prices of all kinds of telecom services, including fixed and mobile phones, would be rationalised," Morshed said.

The BTRC Chairman observed that the prices of telecom services were higher in the country compared to that of the neighbouring countries.

In his keynote, Isa urged the BTRC to play a more pro-active role for development of the country's telecom sector.

Isa stressed the need for reforms in the sector, which, he said, has a great potential to grow. He recommended that a level playing ground for both private and public operators be ensured.

Representatives of private sector mobile operators said BTB should not subsidise its mobile venture for maintaining a level playing ground with the private operators.

Dato' Ezanee Ab Azi, Managing Director of Telecom Malaysia International Bangladesh (TMIB), service provider of AKTel mobile, Jefri Ahmad Tambi, Managing Director of Sheba Telecom, Mehboob Chowdhury, Director, sales and marketing of Grameen Phone, Eng. Anwar Hossain, Managing Director of Sony Ericsson mobile phones, Faisal Alim, Managing Director of Wintel Limited, distributor of Vtech mobile phone, officials of Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited (PBT), service provider of CityCell mobile, and other private operators attended the function.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia poses for photographs with businessmen who contributed to zakat funds at the Prodhannontri Bhaban yesterday.

Two dacoities in Bogra

A CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Two robberies including one on the highway were committed at Bogra on Sunday night in spite of the special security measures by army and police in the district.

Robbers looted cash, gold and valuables worth over Tk 3 lakh at gunpoint.

Sources said a night coach of the SR Paribahan (Dhaka-Metro-Ba-11-0005) left Dhaka for Naogaon at about 11:30pm. When the bus left the 'Food Village' under Sherpur upazila of Bogra district at around 3:00am, a group of about six armed robbers who were travelling in the bus disguised as passengers took over the vehicle after overpowering the driver.

The robbers beat up some of the passengers and looted cash, gold ornaments and other valuables worth about 2 lakh before leaving the vehicle with their booties at Dashmile under Bogra Sadar upazila.

Earlier at 12:30am, another dacoity was committed in a house at Dharampur Purba Para on the outskirts of Bogra.

Tailor dies

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duty doctors declared him dead.

One source, however, claimed that the army men in plain clothes had actually caught Zahurul as he tried to escape and given him a beating.

According to local people, the joint forces raided the area for the last few days as they tried desperately to arrest Zahurul.

Several servicemen in plainclothes were stationed in the area in a bid to nab him.

Away in Chittagong, the army arrested a transport leader, Haji Mohammad Yakub from the port area yesterday afternoon.

In Khulna, the joint forces arrested three listed criminals from different parts of the division yesterday, according to our correspondent.

Dhurai Ali, Nazrul Islam and Sirajul Islam are all members of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP).

Our Magura correspondent reports the army arrested four people including a union parishad chairman and vice-president of the Shalikhtha thana unit of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) from his residence yesterday. They also recovered a pipe gun from a pond near his house.

Our Rajshahi correspondent writes that the army arrested three people from different parts of the city yesterday.

Among the arrested are Jatiya Party activist Bashiruzzaman Heera, who is accused in the Selim murder case, and the president of the Godagari College unit of the Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

Our Bogra Correspondent reports that the army arrested at least six

people including two BNP and JCD activists yesterday.

The arrested are Rafiqul Islam Shahin, former general secretary of the BNP Dhunat unit, and Rezaul Islam, a JCD activist of the same area.

Meanwhile, the army-led joint forces arrested a total of 159 people, including 25 listed criminals, during the last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

During the drive, they also seized 39 firearms. The firearms include seven pistols, three revolvers, 16 shotguns, five pipe guns, eight other weapons along with 769 rounds of bullet were recovered.

The police headquarters, in a press release yesterday, said police arrested 1,568 people including 18 listed criminals from across the country in the last 24 hours. They also seized 11 firearms.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), in a press release, said that police in a special drive arrested 335 people in the city and recovered a one-shooter.

Munshiganj

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The feuding groups fired shots and blasted crackers during the clash. Police fired five blank shots to disperse the clashing groups.

They also rounded up five people from the spot.

The injured people were secretly taking treatment at private clinics to avoid arrest.

A tense situation was prevailing in the area.

Indian firms

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potential buyers in India and expression of interest was received for 3.5 BCFD.

Industry sources here say that despite the Reliance striking it rich in the gas reserve in deep waters off Andhra Pradesh, there will still be a shortfall in demand for gas in India.

India's present demand for natural gas constitutes eight per cent of its total energy consumption and is officially projected to reach up to 20 per cent in the next two decades or so.

The Reliance discovery will no doubt reduce the dependence on imported gas either through cross-border pipeline or by importing it by transforming the gas to liquefied petroleum gas (LNG).

But the demand will still be on the rise because of the plan to extend use of compressed natural gas (CNG) as auto fuel in eight more Indian cities, energy officials say. At present, the CNG is used in public transport vehicles in New Delhi and Mumbai.

As economic growth in India pushes up, it will boost per capita energy consumption, and growing environmental concerns will enhance the prominence of gas in different fields, says GAIL Chairman P Banerjee.

He says the recent discovery of gas in India, including by Cairn Energy of Britain, may prompt a review of some of the dozen LNG import projects. It is premature to come to the conclusion that the LNG or cross-border pipeline projects would suffer a setback, he adds.

India can never be declared a Hindu state: Advani

'Muslims who stayed back in India are sons of Mother India'

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani has said India can never be declared a Hindu "rashtra" (state) because the country's secularism derives its strength from its cultural ethos and age-old civilisation.

Responding to a six-hour debate in the lower house of Indian parliament, whose winter session began on Monday, Advani said "India can never be declared a Hindu state...people will never condone communal violence nor will they accept pseudo-secularism."

He said India chose to remain secular at the time of independence when Pakistan became an Islamic state and "Muslims who remained in India are the sons of Mother India."

Advani said the killing of 58 people in an attack on a train in the Gujarat town of Godhra on February 27 this year, which set off months of communal violence in the state, should never become an issue in next month's election for a new legislative assembly in Gujarat.

His remarks came close on the heels of similar utterances by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee last week that the Godhra attack and the subsequent violence should not be made an election issue in Gujarat

which goes to poll on December 12.

Vajpayee had asked the political parties to instead conduct the Gujarat poll campaign on the issues of development.

Vajpayee's appeal and Advani's remarks during the parliamentary debate were seen as a clear message to headline outfits like Vishwa Hindu Parishad not to harp on the theme of communal violence in Gujarat.

Advani's reply came to the debate in Lok Sabha, lower house of parliament, where the opposition CPI (M) had sponsored an adjournment motion on the government's "failure" to curb communal violence especially in Gujarat.

The motion was defeated by voice vote as the opposition did not press for a division in a house where BJP and its allies have majority.

All through the debate, opposition leaders attacked VHP leaders Praveen Togadia and Acharya Dharmendra accusing them of inciting communal passions and demanded their arrest under Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The opposition leaders also attacked VHP leaders for their intemperate verbal attacks on Leader of the Opposition Sonia Gandhi and the Chief Election Commissioner J M Lyngdoh.

Political analysts attach considerable significance to the remarks made by Vajpayee and Advani that communal violence should not be made a poll issue in Gujarat.

This is in view of the prevalent impression that BJP in Gujarat is trying to bank on perceived polarisation of the electorate in the state following the communal violence to retain power in the state.

Analysts say there are two different schools of thought in BJP whether the party should peg its election campaign in Gujarat on the kind of aggressive brand of Hindutva ideology for which state chief minister Narendra Modi has become a mascot.

In fact, Vajpayee's appeal not to make communal violence an election had come under sharp attack from VHP.

The question remains: Will Modi and BJP leadership in Gujarat choose to exercise a larger degree of autonomy and ignore Vajpayee's suggestion to stick to development issues in electioneering?

What could make Modi and BJP hardliners not to pay heed to the Prime Minister's advice is two separate opinion polls conducted by popular television news channels which favoured BJP to retain power in Gujarat, analysts say.

Hasina blames

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portrait of the father of the nation. It's a shame that the government does not want to protect the Bangal's glorious victory against Pakistan," she said, demanding immediate restoration of the paintings.

With Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar asking her to finish, Hasina then spoke about the charges against her of killing Joyanal and Zafar who died in police firing in the anti-autocracy agitation in February 1984.

Hasina, also the chief of the main opposition Awami League (AL) told the House that she and 40 other leaders of the then 15-party alliance were arrested in Dr Kamal Hossain's residence for anti-martial law movement during the Ershad regime.

"How could such a case be filed against me? It is me who had protested these killings and launched the anti-autocracy movement," she noted.

Recalling the changeover of power from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party government of President Abdus Sattar to the General Ershad regime, Hasina alleged that the BNP government had handed over power to Ershad as part of a blueprint.

She also recalled a statement of ruling BNP leader Nazmul Huda that they had supplied arms to activists of the Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal at that time and said the BNP would have to take responsibility for the killings.

Senior AL lawyer Abdus Samad Azad earlier asked for a statement by the prime minister about the removal of the portrait. He asked her to let the House know who had removed it and why.

"This move will only divide the nation," Azad commented.

Hasina spoke for seven minutes amid repeated warnings by the Chair to finish. While giving the first warning after five minutes, the Speaker said:

"It is nearly 25 minutes. Please, finish your speech."

The prime minister, however, did not respond to any of the points the opposition raised.

But, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda alleged that the Awami League itself removed the portrait of its leader Sheikh Mujib only to make it an issue and damage the image of the government.

Dacoity at Fatullah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Dacoits looted Tk 70,000 and gold ornaments from a house in village Charnarsingpur under Fatullah thana on Sunday night.

Dacoits numbering about 15 attacked the residence of businessman Hasan at around midnight. They looted Tk 70 thousand and gold ornaments worth Tk one lakh.

As the inmates of the house cried out for help, the locals besieged the house and managed to catch three of the dacoits. Later, army nabbed another dacoit.

The arrested were identified as Atiqul, 28, Ripon, 25, Jahangir, 27 and Alamin, 26.

A case was filed with Fatullah police station in this connection.

Ershad Shikder

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general Helaluddin Molla.

Jainal Khan, a dock worker at Skid ghat and one of the accomplices of Shikder, was gunned down near Railway Colony Primary School on the night of April 22 in 1995. Later at midnight, Jainal Khan's body was dumped in the Bhairab river.

The prosecution case states that Ershad Shikder killed Jainal Khan to falsely implicate Awami League leader Taslimuddin Khan Babul in the murder as Taslimuddin had filed a case with the Khulna thana accusing Shikder and 14 others for murdering labour leader Moslemuddin Khan. Taslimuddin's elder brother, Moslemuddin was Ershad Shikder's arch rival in Skid ghat politics and was shot dead by Shikder himself on February 25 in 1995.

On February 20, 2000, Judge Hasan Imam of the Special Court pronounced the judgement in the Jainal Khan murder case.

Muhuri murder

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Alamgir and Azam were charged/heard in Muhuri murder case on Thursday.

According to the chargesheet, a five-member 'killer group' comprising Gittu Nasir, Taslimuddin Montu, Baitiya Alamgir, Chhotu Saiful and Azam took part in the killing of principal Muhuri at his Jamal Khan residence in the city on November 16, 2001.

Liaquat, Arman

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illegal firearms and the Kolkata police have filed cases against the two under the Arms Act.

The Indian detective department told BBC that action would be taken against the two in line with the Indian law.

Recently, the Bangladesh government has sent the Indian authorities a list of criminals -- seeking cooperation in arrest.

The Telegraph report claimed all the criminals were activists of Al-Qaida and the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). It claimed that they were hatching a 'big act of terrorism' and referred to the recent controversial comment of Indian Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani where he charged Bangladesh with doing very little to contain anti-India activities on its soil.

The Telegraph reports: "Showcasing it as a major breakthrough for the city police, detectives said Liaquat and Arman had more than 40 cases of murder, extortion, and robbery against them in Bangladesh.

Soumen Mitra said policemen had seized counterfeit Indian banknotes and sophisticated firearms from them.

Recently, Liaquat, Arman and the other seven had crossed into India through the porous border in Uttar 24 Parganas and Malda, officials said. Liaquat and Arman told interrogators that one Haris Ahmed of the Mohammadpur Noorjahan Road in Dhaka, an ISI suspect, had helped them obtain passports and cross the border.

All nine criminals changed their names after arriving in the city and used fake identities, officials said.

"Some of them were put up at their local contacts' residences in Garia and in Ripon Street and Collins Lane areas," one of them said.

Liaquat and Arman were staying in a rented apartment at Garia Gardens which a Kolkata contact helped them obtain. Sleuths are now monitoring the movement of the people who provided them with places to stay.

However, intelligence sources in Dhaka told The Daily Star that these criminals never had any link with Al-Qaida or ISI. "They are top criminals and the Indian authorities would go

nowhere linking them with Al-Qaida," said an intelligence official.

Late last year, Dhaka police announced rewards for arrest of the criminals.

Kolkata police told local journalists that they were receiving information on Liaquat and Arman for a few days. The police arrested both at a fruit-juice shop in New Market along with two Italian-made 9mm pistols.

The Kolkata police told Anandabazar Patrika that Liaquat's passport showed that he arrived in Kolkata in September.

Police further said the criminals entered Kolkata through Uttar 24 Parganas, Haridaspur border and rented a house in Garia.

Once a Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader, Liaquat spent the entire period of the Ershad regime in jail. He was freed upon an understanding with the then autocratic government just before its fall. Afterwards, Liaquat joined the Jubo League.

During the Awami League rule, he was arrested four times for criminal activities and was announced an unwanted person in different places including the Prime Minister's Office. Finally, Liaquat was ousted from the Jubo League.

After the BNP came to power last year, the police announced rewards for Liaquat, Arman and 21 other top criminals in December 2001.

A source in Kolkata told The Daily Star that Liaquat's rival group -- the Seven Star group -- led by Subrata Bain had a strong position in Kolkata. Subrata was detained twice in Kolkata and released, said sources in Kolkata.

The sources believe the Subrata-led group might have played a role in the arrest of Liaquat and his aide.

Previously, Dhaka police arrested with the help of Kolkata police notorious criminal Iman in Kolkata.

The source said he was kept in a local prison for a few days and pushed back to Bangladesh.

It was decided that when he would be pushed back, Kolkata police would inform Bangladesh police, but it was not done. Iman has since been absconding.

Seed crisis

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BADC from contract growers marked a significant decline this year.

The growers supplied 7,500 metric tonnes of boro and 12,000MT of wheat and 6,600MT of potato seeds this year, down from 10,000MT, 14,000MT and 7,500MT last year.

On November 14, Agriculture Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami acknowledged that the BADC had failed to meet the 10,000MT target for boro seeds, attributing the shortfall to heavy rain during seed growing season.

Official sources, however, believe that the BADC could have easily met the target, had the government paid out the growers' dues in time.

Available statistics shows that the BADC has so far marketed hardly 8,000MT of boro seeds this year, compared with 10,220MT last year.

Sources in the agriculture ministry says that after this year's dismal experience the government has decided to pay more attention to timely payment of contract growers' bills.

Vegetable prices

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grocer at the New Market said prices of some necessary goods increased with the beginning of the Ramadan.

Abuyer, Anwar Hossain, was found bargaining hard to buy a piece of pumpkin for which the seller was charging Tk 40.

"This is the situation as regards prices of essentials," said a frustrated Anwar. He offered Tk 15 for the pumpkin but the seller ignored it.

"It is now impossible for the lower middle class to buy such essentials," he said while going away.

Similarly, aubergine now sells at Tk 20-24 a kg as against Tk 10-12 before the Ramadan and tomato at Tk 38-40 a kg, up from Tk 36-37. Prices of cauliflower, cabbage, kohlrabi and gourd has increased by Tk 2 to 5 each while prices of vegetables including basil and celery has remained stable.

Prices of radish, carrot, bean, and some other items dropped by Tk 1 to 2 per kg.

The items with stable prices are sugar, muri, masur dal (lentil), mug dal (green-gram) chola (gram) cucumber, ginger, garlic and spices.

Prices of fishes and beef are normal but the price of hilsa fish has increased due to supply shortage.

Baitul Aman

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Osman Ali's son AKM Shamsuzzoha was a lawmaker in Pakistan period and his grand sons AKM Nasim Osman and AKM Shamim Osman are former members of the Jatiya Sangsad.

When contacted, Osman Ali's daughter-in-law Aleya Sarwar said, as Bulbul Sarwar the present owner and one of the sons of Osman Ali, produced the title deed of the house to Magistrate Mohd Ali, he tore the deed and said, "It's on order by prime minister."

Osman Ali's grandson Anu asked the magistrate to show any notice but the magistrate ordered police to beat him. Police started beating him. As the women inmates came to his help, police also batoned them. Police dragged out all the inmates onto the road, she alleged. An army team was at the spot during the incidents, she said.

The demolition continued till 12:30pm. The magistrate then told police to leave, saying, "The rest half of the building will be demolished tomorrow."

When contacted later over telephone, Magistrate Mohd Ali said, "The land of the house was acquired by Roads & Highways in 1967. So it is obviously an illegal construction since 1967. The R&H has 78 feet land inside the house."

On the other hand, R&H Executive Engineer (N'ganj zone) Nazmul Huq said, the building has been demolished partially as a part of the regular drive to demolish illegal constructions. To another question, he said, it (R&H) was scheduled to give an announcement over mike but he is not sure whether this was done. Several notices were given to the owners of the building, he said.

Osman Ali's son Bulbul Sarwar, daughters Shahina Mahfuz and Selina Khan, daughter-in-law famous actress Kobori Sarwar and other family members were present at the press conference.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: Demolition of Baitul Aman has been suspended, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda informed the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday evening when senior AL leader and opposition lawmaker Abdus Samad Azad raised the issue in the House.

The ministry has ordered suspension of demolition of the building, he said.

Earlier, rising on a point of order,

Samad Azad drew the attention of the House that Baitul Aman, a historic building that witnessed many events including the Language Movement, was being demolished. He demanded immediate stoppage of the demolition.

In response, the communications minister informed the House that he had already ordered suspension of the demolition, which was being carried out under a programme to evict illegal encroachers from lands of the Roads and Highways Department.

"This morning (Tuesday), Barrister Amirul Islam telephoned me. Baitul Aman is his in-law's house. His daughter Tania Amir and film actress Kobori also telephoned me regarding demolition of a portion of Baitul Aman. Later I talked to the Narayanganj DC (deputy commissioner)," said Nazmul Huda.

The minister also said if it is found that the building encroached government land, the authorities concerned would take steps as per law. No structure will be demolished unlawfully, he said.

'Kala' Faruq's

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When reached, Kamal Uddin Ahmed told The Daily Star that the report would be submitted "in a few days".

Haji Abdur Rashid alias 'Kala' Faruq was arrested from the Zia International Airport (ZIA) minutes before he was to leave for Sweden with a fake passport on November 4. He died in police custody within 14 hours of his arrest.

Now Moina

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made entreaties to 'save her'.

Jahangir Alam, Moina's father, was killed at around 9:00pm by the hecklers when he protested their pelting stones at his house premises at Khondakia village of Chikondandi union under Hathazari thana.

Local people could get hold of one of the miscreants identified as Bokhtiar, 17, while army nabbed another, Md. Hossain, 17, from his relative's house on the same night.

The other three, Jony, 17, Rifar, 17 and Sirajuddoula, 16, are absconding.

Meanwhile, the captured miscreants were placed on a three-day remand each.

2 Bills passed

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criticised enhancement of power tariffs twice in last one year of the alliance government.

State Minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud rejected the opposition contentions and said that the previous government had allowed private sector in production of electricity but purchased power at a higher rate from them through PDB, causing huge loss to the exchequer.

The Bill was passed by voice vote.

The House also passed the Depository (Amendment) Bill 2002 piloted by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman granting extension of the time from 2 years to 5 years for completing conversion of the existing paper certificate system to the depository system in stock trading.

For transformation from the out-moded cry-out system to "scrip-less trading" in stocks on the share market, the Depository Act was framed in 1999 and given effect on August 1, 2000.

The transformation aimed at creating confidence of investors in the capital market, abolishing illegal korb market and stopping forgery of share certificates.

The effectiveness of section 23 of the Depository Act expired on July 31 this year. But it needs the application of section 23 to incorporate the paper certificate system in the depository system.

Opposition members, including Vice-Principal Abdus Shaheed, Suranjit Sengupta, Shajahan Khan, Advocate Rahmat Ali, Atiqur Rahman Atiq, Shamsur Rahman Sharif, Mahbubur Rahman, Col (Retd) Sawkat Ali, Mohammad Nasim and G M Qader, demanded that public opinion be elicited before the passage of the Bill. But their proposals and amendments were rejected by voice vote.

Girl rescued

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himself to be a staff of a hotel in Mohakhali in Dhaka. He told police that his sister Pakhi and brother-in-law Khokon helped him in the kidnapping.

Masum identified himself as a staff of Barrister Rafiqul Huq of High Court and a distant relative of Salamattullah. He hails from Comilla.

Nasir and Hannan hail from Mirzaganj in Patuakhali and Shohag from Bhandaria in Pirojpur district, police said.

A case has been lodged with Barisal Kotwali police.

One gets 10-year RI for rape in B'baria

UNB, Brahmanbaria

A court here on Sunday sentenced a man to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment in a rape case.

The court also fined the convict, Moteleb alias Jasimuddin, Tk 10,000 in default to suffer six months more imprisonment.

The case proceeding in brief is that Moteleb picked up a 12-year-old girl from her house on August 17, 1999 and took her to a desolate place where he raped her.

A case was filed against three people in this connection.

Judge Rashidul Hasan Patwari of the Woman and Child Repression Prevention Court pronounced the verdict after examining the records and witnesses.

Two other accused, Samad alias Duail Mia and Abdul Manaf, were acquitted as they were not proved guilty.

Vendors lay control

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nesses quite smoothly."

A middle-aged man, selling shoes, told this correspondent that he faced difficulties in conducting his business in the past. "So far I have faced no such problem, as nobody comes to collect money every afternoon," he said adding that the ongoing anti-crime drive changed things for the better.

"The 'linemen' move around us and try to realise money but they don't dare to ask for it, but I am sure they are closely watching us and waiting for the right moment," said a shirt seller near Purana Paltan crossing.

A blanket seller at the Dainik Bangla crossing, however, said that some members of the police are still trying to collect money from the hawkers. "They come to us at about 4pm and demand money. Fearing eviction, some vendors pay taka 20 to 40, while others do not".

A section of the illegal vendors,

who have long maintained an unholy nexus with the police, are still loyal to their mentors. For instance, vendors at Baitul Mukarram, Gulistan foot-paths, Farmgate and New Market, who had set up their shops years ago, are still making regular payments to the police. The only respite they have had is that the petty hoodlums, who used to come every day demanding taka 100 to 200, are not there at the moment.

In the past, they had to bow to the illegal pressure, but the criminals have disappeared altogether with the launching of the joint operation.

Some of the vendors even appeared to be convinced that the police were taking their due share of the money.

"The police are always on-duty at these busy places and they provide us security around the year. Why should we deprive them of their share during Eid? They deserve it," said a vendor at Gausia Market area.