

New perk for ISPs

Bandwidth rate, renewal fees drastically cut

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has reduced the tariff of different segments of the Internet service providers (ISPs).

The move is aimed at allowing more access to Internet and foster the growth of the information communication technology (ICT).

"The BTRC has taken these measures to encourage people to use Internet, a key to development of information technology," BTRC Chairman Syed Marghub Morshed told reporters at a press conference at the conference room of the BTRC while announcing the tariff rationalisation.

He said the tariff rationalisation

was done according to the recommendations made at a meeting of the ICT taskforce, where noted economist and Managing Director of Grameen Bank Prof. Mohammad Yunus proposed reduction of the ISP license and renewal fees.

In a move to further rationalise tariff, the BTRC has categorised ISPs in four segments with those in Dhaka, Chittagong or Sylhet cities, where there is concentration of ISPs, coming under category "A". ISPs in the district level fall into category "B" and those in upazila level go under category "C". Category "D" is for ISPs that want to use one license for covering the whole country.

The BTRC has halved the renewal fee to Tk 1 lakh from 2 lakh

for category "A" ISPs. The fee for application form has been reduced to Tk 500 from Tk 5,000 and annual bandwidth fee from 128kbps (kilobytes per second) to more than 512kbps has been fixed between Tk 15,000 and Tk 100,000. Previously, it was between Tk 30,000 and Tk 400,000 for 64kbps up to 2mbps (megabyte per second).

Annual renewal of bandwidth fee has been refixed at Tk 1,000 for more than 512kbps and Tk 400,000 for 2mbps.

The fee for change in the name and location of ISPs each has been fixed at Tk 15,000 from the previous Tk 60,000.

Cyber café license fee has been fixed at Tk 1,000. "This nominal charge has been fixed to encourage

cyber café, which make Internet available to general masses. It will also help the BTRC to have an account of cyber cafes, which is a tool for education and development of the ICT sector," Morshed said.

License fee for category "B" ISPs located at district level has been fixed at Tk 1 lakh, which previously was Tk 2 lakh. And their annual bandwidth fees have been refixed at the range between Tk 15,000 and Tk 50,000 against Tk 30,000 and Tk 400,000.

License and renewal fees for category "C" ISPs have been fixed at Tk 1,000 each against Tk 200,000 previously. The bandwidth renewal fee for district level ISPs has been waived.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Tapan re-elected MCCI president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tapan Chowdhury was yesterday re-elected president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

According to a press release, the annual general meeting (AGM) of the chamber was unanimous in its decision to elect Tapan for another term.

Tapan is managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals Limited, Square Textiles Limited and several other companies in the Square Group.

Abdul Hafiz Choudhury was also re-elected to the MCCI vice-presidency.

The members of the committee are Syed Anwarul Azim, Amjad Khan Chowdhury, David JH Griffiths, Md. Nurul Islam, AKM Rafiqul Islam, Mahub Jamil, Masih UI Karim, AK Shamsuddin Khan, Feroz Rahim, Rokia A Rahman and Shahab Sattar.

CK Hyder will continue as the secretary-general and chief executive officer of the MCCI.

Shahriar not produced before court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Writer-columnist Shahriar Kabir, accused in a seditious case, was not produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka yesterday despite the court's order on December 12.

Magistrate Khondakar Atiar Rahman had ordered Shahriar's presence in the court for hearing of a remand prayer by the CID.

The magistrate fixed January 3 for the hearing and ordered the jail authorities again to produce Shahriar in the court on that date.

Shahriar is still in jail although the High Court on December 18 granted him ad interim bail in two cases and also stayed the remand prayer.

His lawyers furnished the bailbond to the District Magistrate's court, Dhaka and produced the certified copies of the HC bail order to the CMM court yesterday.

The defence lawyers in the peti

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Reuters stringer relieved of Sec 54 charges

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Reuters stringer Enamul Haque Chowdhury has been relieved of the charges brought against him under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Metropolitan Magistrate Mamun Al-Rashid issued the order on Sunday when the case was placed before him.

In its order, the court said Enamul was relieved of the charges in this case as he was earlier shown arrested in the Mymensingh blast case.

On December 23, the court had directed the Dhaka Central Jail authorities to produce the journalist before it yesterday during the hearing of his bail prayer.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Businessman held for alleged rape of minor girls

BSS, Khagrachhari

A businessman of Babuchhara Bazar under Dighinala upazila, was taken on a five-day police remand yesterday for allegedly raping two minor girls.

Police produced the accused, Habibur Rahman, arrested on December 29, before the district magistrate here yesterday with a prayer for a 10-day remand, but the court granted remand for five days.

Police said the two victims, who worked as domestic help at Habibur Rahman's residence, alleged that Rahman raped them several times in last one week after confining them in the house.

"I was brought here from Hasnabad village in Fatikchhari to work as a domestic help a few days ago. But after coming here, the landlord raped me several times," one of the victims, an eight-year old girl, told newsmen as tears rolled down her cheeks.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Dighinala police raided the house of accused Habibur Rahman and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

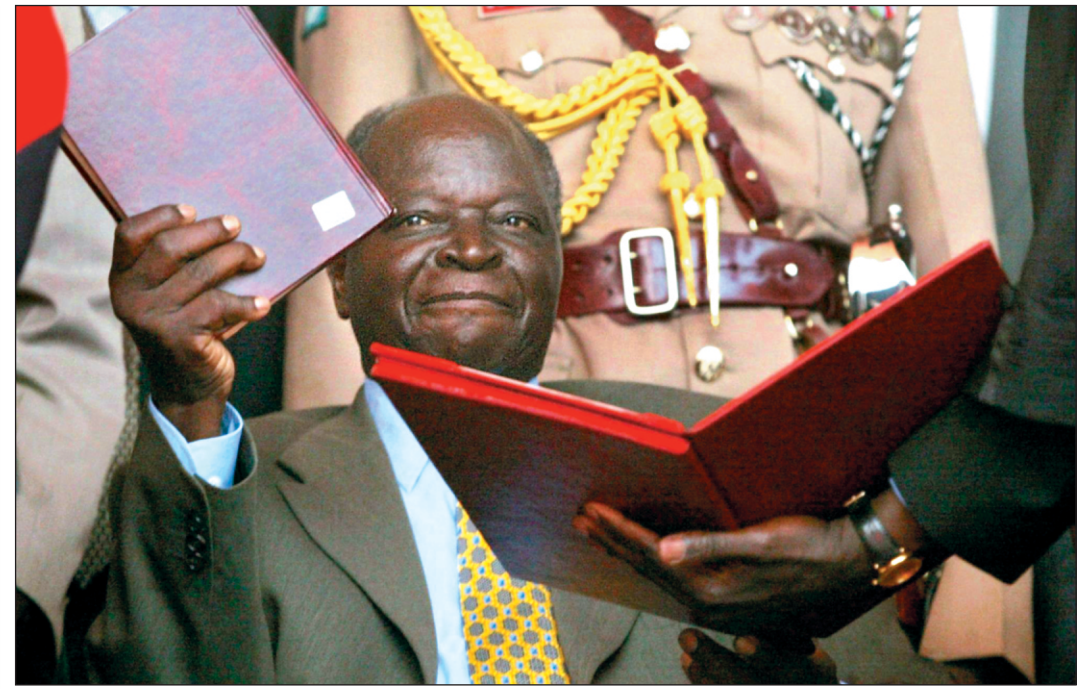


PHOTO: AFP

Newly elected Kenyan president, Mwai Kibaki, holds a Bible as he is sworn in as president in Nairobi. Kibaki was sworn into office yesterday as Kenya's third president, ending almost four decades of rule under the party of outgoing leader Daniel arap Moi.

Kibaki sworn in as new Kenyan president

AFP, Nairobi

In front of one million people, opposition leader Mwai Kibaki was sworn yesterday as Kenya's president and vowed not to unleash a witch-hunt on his political enemies as the east African country heralded the dawn of a new era.

Police said more than one million people - one of the largest crowds the country has ever seen - thronged Nairobi's Uhuru Park to witness power passing into the hands of the opposition for the first time since Kenya shook off British colonial rule in 1963.

Kibaki, who won nearly 70 per cent of the vote in Friday's elections, succeeds Daniel arap Moi, who ruled the country at the helm of the Kenya National African Union (KANU) since 1978.

Moi was the first to congratulate Kibaki on his victory, which saw Moi's handpicked successor, Uhuru

Kenyatta, son of the country's first president Jomo Kenyatta, win only about 24 per cent of the vote.

"This is a historic day in the life of our country," said Moi, who chose to obey the country's constitution and step down after 24 years in power.

Moi's swan-song was marred by heckling from the vast crowd and clumps of mud thrown in his direction as he sang the national anthem.

But Kibaki, still in a wheelchair and with his right leg in plaster after being injured in a serious car accident on December 3, extended an olive branch to the KANU and vowed that his government was not "going to engage in any witch-hunt" even if Kenya had been "ravaged by years of misrule", and again vowed to root out corruption.

But he hinted that those blamed for misrule and cronyism, which has dragged down the country's economy, would not escape scot-free.

KANU had ruled Kenya since

independence from Britain in 1963. But voters, embittered by decades of grinding poverty and rampant corruption, flocked en masse to Kibaki's National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), an unprecedented opposition alliance forged barely two months before polling day.

Kibaki has a weighty task ahead of him, but those in the crowd spoke of a historic day for both the country and Africa, where changes of power have often been turbulent and bloody.

EU observers at the elections said Sunday the European Union was ready to resume aid to Nairobi once the new government is in place.

And former colonial power Britain has already said it looks forward to working closely with Kenya's new leaders, although the British press remained sceptical whether Kibaki would actually usher in an era of change.

Army to be deployed during UP elections

UNB, Dhaka

Army will be deployed to assist the civil administration to ensure peaceful voting during the January 25-March 16 elections to the 4,234 union parishads (UPs).

Army will also be deployed during the Narayanganj pourashava polls scheduled for January 16 and navy and coastguards during Sandwip pourashava voting on January 7.

The decision was taken at a meeting in the Election Commission office with chief Election Commissioner MAsyed in the chair. Election Commissioners, Army Chief of Staff Lt General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, IGP Mudabbir Hossain Chowdhury and other senior officials attended the meeting.

MA Syed told the meeting that EC is committed to holding free and fair polls in the local bodies. He sought cooperation from all concerned, especially the law-enforcers.

He also advised the candidates contesting the elections to strictly follow the code of conduct and warned of punitive measures against violators.

Syed asked law-enforcers to be vigilant so that criminals who still remained at large could not influence the polls.

Road accident kills Bangladeshi student in US

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Son of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) president Tapan Chowdhury died Saturday in a car crash in Los Angeles.

Danny Chowdhury died when his car hit a wall and caught fire. The 21-year-old was studying in the United States.

Tapan, who was yesterday re-elected president of the MCCI, left for the US on Sunday to bring home the body for burial.

Jt forces nab new AL committee member

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces last night arrested Assistant Secretary of the newly formed Awami League sub-committee Ahkamullah in front of the Russian Cultural Centre at Dhanmondi in the city.

He was coming out of the cultural centre after a recitation to raise funds for the Chhayanaut Bhaban. Ahkam was a student leader and a member of the Dhaka University Debating Society.

Also yesterday, an army team raided a house at Farashganj in the city, arrested its owner Shaheb Ali and seized eight firearms, including a shotgun and five pistols, from him.

According to police, Shaheb Ali runs an organised criminal gang that operates on a stretch of the Buriganga.

Elsewhere in the country, troops

arrested 69 people including 14 listed criminals were netted in the last 24 hours till 8:00am.

The joint forces of the army, the BDR and police also recovered 14 firearms including five pistols, three revolvers, three pipe guns, two shotguns and six bullets during the same period.

The latest spate of arrests pushed the number of people rounded up since the start of the Operation Clean Heart, the anti-crime crackdown, on October 17 to 10,469. Of them, 2,297 are listed criminals. The joint forces have so far seized 1,913 firearms and 29,062 rounds of ammunition.

Our Pabna correspondent reports that the joint forces raided the residence of listed criminal Abdul Kuddus at Sathiya and arrested him. Kuddus is accused in several cases including one for

murder. They also arrested one Mohammad Bablu from Kashinath Bus Stand.

In Jhenidah, the joint forces arrested a businessman on charge of smuggling gold, trafficking firearms, money lending and patronising criminals, our correspondent reports. The troops raided Monorana Jewellers owned by Paritosh Chakravarty and arrested him. The court later sent him to the Jhenidah Jail.

Our Mymensingh correspondent reports that the joint forces arrested listed criminal Azhar Uddin alias Pakistani yesterday noon and later turned him over to police. The joint forces along with the Department of Forest personnel also raided different 19 sawmills to protect forest resources.

In Rajshahi division, the joint

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

AL council sets tone for grassroots reforms

REAZ AHMAD

Formation of the new central committee of the Awami League through its recent council marks the start of much-awaited reforms since the electoral debacle in 2001.

Party sources told The Daily Star fusion of the old guard and the new blood in the 73-member new AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) would set the trend for grassroots party units.

The AL on November 11 decided that the long overdue councils at district and thana levels would follow the central council.

Now the newly elected central

leadership would work out plans for immediate holding of party councils at the grassroots, they said.

September 30 was the deadline for completing councils of thana units. It was October 31 for district units.

The sources said the deadline could not be maintained as the party was preparing for holding the central council while fighting legal battles against alleged "political persecution" by the ruling four-party alliance.

They said the party rank and files across the country now hope that induction of new blood in the central committee, together with the experience of the old guard, will have a

"very positive impact" on the party at grassroots levels.

Some young party leaders who have been facing alleged political persecution and are behind the bar now were inducted into the central committee and its different secretarial sub-committees. They include Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Mukul Bose, Shafi Ahmed and Bahauddin Nasim.

The sources claimed that many party leaders and workers across the country are on the run due to "false" cases against them. In the last one year, many dedicated leaders

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

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SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

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SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

BFIDC rubber gardens to slide into pvt hands

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

All the 15 rubber gardens under the Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation (BFIDC) will be privatised soon.

Following a cabinet committee decision in this regard in November, the BFIDC has listed its assets and liabilities in rubber venture, official sources said.

The Privatisation Commission will implement the decision.

The gardens are being sold at a time when the rubber gardens have started getting out of the crisis, said some sources in BFIDC seeking anonymity.

Much of the disarray in BFIDC's rubber plantation has been overcome, they said.

With the rise in price at domestic and international markets, BFIDC is expecting to earn Tk 60 crore from sale of 12,000 tonnes of rubber in the current financial year, one source said. Besides, it earned Tk 20 crore by selling 10 lakh CFT of rubber timber which lost life cycle long ago.

Since start of plantation, faulty planning in preparing gardens, use of low quality seed and plant, undue influence of trade unions and above all, corruption and bureaucratic tangles had thrown the promising industry into uncertainty.

There are four gardens in Sylhet, seven in Chittagong and four in Modhupur regions.

The gardens in Chittagong and in Sylhet region were profit-earning earlier. But due to mismanagement, four out of seven gardens in Chittagong region are "almost closed" for the last three years. Those were also affected by natural calamities.

As per BFIDC's report, the four gardens in Sylhet region incurred a loss of Tk 3.72 crore in the last financial year. These gardens have Tk 15.97 crore dues as unpaid salary of 3,000 employees and labourers and bills for supply of fertilizer, seed, fuel, pesticide etc.

On the other hand, two out of the four gardens in Modhupur region started production two years back.

There are 8500 acres of land in the four gardens in Sylhet, 16,500 acres in seven gardens in Chittagong and 9,000 acres in four gardens in Madhupur in Tangail district.

Rubber plantation began in Chittagong in 1969-70. It began in Sylhet in 1971-72 and in Madhupur in 1999-2000.

More than 50 per cent of the rubber production in the country comes from the gardens in Sylhet region, the sources said.

By-lanes for rickshaws demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Dhaka Mahanagar Rickshaw Malik Oikya Jote yesterday demanded construction of by-lanes for rickshaws.

The demand for by-lanes to all city thoroughfares came at a rally at Muktagong after the government made the Mirpur Road off-limits to rickshaws from December 20.

Mahtab Uddin Mia, convenor of the organisation, Ali Akbar, member secretary, and Mohammad Harun-Rashid, joint convenor, among others, attended the rally.

The joint convenor told The Daily Star yesterday that the government took the decision on ban without 'any discussion' with rickshaw

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Beheaded bodies of 2 young men recovered in Dumuria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Dumuria thana police recovered the beheaded bodies of two unidentified young men at 3:45pm yesterday from Pipramari Beel of Char Mathurabad, one of the strongholds of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) about two kilometres from the Khulna University.

According to the OC of Dumuria thana, the dead bodies were recovered from a fish farm owned by KCC

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6