

Involve private operators to meet demand for fixed phones: Experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a workshop yesterday stressed the need for involving private operators in fixed phone operation immediately to meet the huge demand pending with Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB).

The workshop on 'PSTN (public switching telephone network) Licensing in the private sector' was organised jointly by Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC) at a city hotel.

The workshop was organised as a follow-up of BTRC's move to seek views on licensing new fixed line telecom operators from subscribers, stakeholders, experts, potential investors, development partners, interested research and dialogue institutions and the press.

Total registered demand for fixed line phones till July 2002 was over 255,000 while BTTB added 162,000, said Ray Yam, a consultant of Canada-Bangladesh Infrastructure Consultants (CBIC).

The estimated unmet demands in 2002 were in the range of one million, he added.

Other experts stressed the need for keeping the PSTN licensing fee as low as possible so that customers could be benefited.

SM Iqbal of Integrated Services Limited (ISN) said both entry fee

Three JCD men

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Siraj, who had been expelled from the Jahangirnagar University Journalists' Association for his involvement in forging hall coupons, occupied the Association office after assaulting its president on July 7. But no action has been taken against him.

Two other JCD activists - Delwar of Geography department and Imran of History department - had also been served showcase notices on August 5 for not paying their canteen bills.

"The JCD activists, who were expelled for violating hall rules are threatening me over telephone. Earlier I gave them a five-day ultimatum to pay the outstanding bills. But they didn't pay heed," said hall Provost Prof AKM Shahnewaz.

Raju and Dalmi however said they were unaware of the allegations and that the expulsion letter was served without any warning. "The expulsion was intended to tarnish our image on the campus," they said.

Mother chopped

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Hosne Ara's son Masud, 14, woke up hearing the scream of his mother and saw the killer inside their room but he did not speak out of fear.

Some others at the house also woke up but did not dare to resist the armed men.

The gang took away a brief case containing about Tk 2.5 lakh before leaving the house, family members said.

Autopsy of the bodies was done at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

The retired bavilder is an outspoken person and he used to attend village 'salish' to resolve disputes. He is an associate of BNP lawmaker Ilyas Ali, neighbours said.

A police camp headed by an assistant superintendent of police has been set up in the village following the incident.

Rumi hecklers still at large

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The two brothers who harried Nazirhat college student Umme Habiba Rumi to suicide are at large eight days after the incident. Mohammad Azam and Mohammad Nazim of Roshangiri in Fatikchhari are learnt to be planning to leave the country, alleged a relative of Rumi yesterday.

"Police action so far is utterly sluggish and lacks sincerity," he said. "Some policemen are helping the brothers to escape arrest," he further alleged.

The officer-in-charge (OC) of the Hathazari Police Station brushed aside lack of sincerity on the part of police adding that they could not pay enough attention to the case as most cops of the police station were engaged in the joint drive to rescue businessman Jamal Uddin Chowdhury.

Meanwhile, students of Nazirhat college yesterday boycotted classes protesting police failure to nab the criminals.

Rumi, daughter of Abul Kalam, took her life at her house by hanging from the ceiling on August 1 following continued teasing.

Body of beheaded man found in Mohammadpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Decapitated body of a young garment worker was recovered from Babor Road in Mohammadpur Friday.

The victim, Abul Kalam, 18, an employee of AKM Garments, Kalyanpur, was missing since he came out from his workplace Wednesday night.

Police recovered the body with his head missing and hands tied up in the back from Balur Math at Babor Road at 6:30pm. Kamal's name was inscribed in his hands and his identity card was found in his pocket.

Later, his elder brother Shah Alam identified him at Mohammadpur Police Station.

Kamal, son of one Ashraf Ali of 51, North Adabar in Shyamoli, might have been murdered due to an altercation with Parvez, another employee of the garment house, Shah Alam said.

He filed a case with Mohammadpur Police Station yesterday, but police could not arrest anyone till last evening.

Indigenous people

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Known as Santu Larma. He asked Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and the leader of opposition Sheikh Hasina to facilitate the situation to meet their demands.

Dr Sadeq Halim inaugurated the programme while the Sanjeeb Drong conducted it. Besides, Professor Mesbah Uddin Khan, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Promod Mankin, Rashed Khan Menon, Chitali Tripura, Pandit Rabi, Bubli Tripura, Ramendu Majumdar, Mamunur Rashid, Abdul Maksud also addressed the rally.

Following the discussion, traditional musical instruments were played, Garo, Oraon and Khasi dances were performed and a colourful display of people in traditional dresses was organised.

An afternoon seminar was also arranged at the TSC auditorium. Attorney General Hasan Arif attended as a chief guest. Deputy Minister of Chittagong Hill Track ministry Mani Swapan Dewan, Jorgen Lissner, resident coordinator of UNDP, Ton Hansen, Charge d' Affairs, Danish Embassy, Advocate Sigma Huda, Sultana Kamal and Anan Mirji addressed the seminar.

The seminar was followed by a cultural show.

DAP projects

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late that any contract signed by a government must be honoured by the subsequent ones.

"We will negotiate with the lenders to ease the terms," he said. "We need DAP in future."

In approving the projects, the cabinet committee yesterday said DAP is suitable for the country's soil and about 1.09 lakh tonnes of the fertiliser are imported a year. The two projects are expected to produce 5.28 lakh tonnes.

But the production cost of each tonne of fertiliser would be Tk 12,374 at DAP-1. For DAP-2, the cost would be Tk 12,228 while the import price of the same is Tk 10,440 per tonne.

When the government decided to cancel the project last year, Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Jiro Kobayashi wrote to Saifai that it would constrain business relations between the two countries.

"The Government of Japan is concerned that the cancellation of the project will affect adversely to business relations between Japan and Bangladesh," the Japanese envoy wrote.

In the first week of January 2002, the industries ministry proposed cancellation of the project. But a certain quarter actively lobbied to reinitiate the costly projects, sources said.

Earlier, Saifai said the government has not approved the two DAP fertiliser projects as "we thought it might create a situation like KAFCO's and create a huge burden on the country".

Another group of experts from the Hydrocarbon Cell of the energy ministry will make a presentation on the gas

Money testers

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nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) and 1,308 branches of five specialised banks have any fake note detectors while a selection of the 1412 branches of 30 private commercial banks (PCBs) are using such equipment.

On the other hand, almost all of the 31 branches of 10 foreign commercial banks (FCBs) have detectors to identify counterfeits.

High-tech money testers costing around Tk 2 lakh apiece are available in the market but smaller and less sophisticated units are also available for Tk 800 only, a central bank official said.

"But most banks do not have such machines although the central bank had instructed them to procure the equipment long time ago," Md Abdul Matin, general manager of the Bangladesh Bank, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The central bank has purchased portable fake money detectors and

supplied them to its vault, currency checking points and balance collection booths.

Matin Uddin Ahmed, managing director of the Shahjalal Bank Limited, said use of money testers should be made mandatory for all banks to combat the threat from counterfeits that are flooding the money market.

He said all 10 branches of his bank use such machines and have identified several cases of forgery. "The fake notes thus detected were punched to prevent their further use," he added.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Bank has reportedly tightened its security measures after a bundle of 100 forged notes of Tk 500 denomination was discovered from its own vault on Wednesday.

Guards of the vault have been transferred and officials and employees were frisked, sources said.

26 hurt as JCD men swoop on PSTU students

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least 26 students were injured as Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal (CD) cadres allegedly swooped on them during the home minister's visit to Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) on Friday.

Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury came to visit the PSTU to attend a meeting with the teachers.

First-year students of the university formed a human chain demanding end to their problems.

The minister gave an assurance that he would talk to them after his meeting with the teachers. At around 4:00pm, the minister attempted to leave the campus ignoring students' appeal.

The agitating students tried to bring out a procession to protest the minister's attitude. At this JCD cadres reportedly attacked them several times leaving 26 including eight female students injured.

Maniruzzaman Hiron, Mahibur Rahman Biplob, Rohena Hossain, Munna, Rumki, Ripon, Arzun, Alamgir and others were injured in the assault.

Students called indefinite strike demanding resignation of Vice Chancellor (VC) Dr Hannan Bhuiyan.

However, the VC was not available for his comment.

JCD cadres and police cordoned the campus and a tense situation was prevailing.

901 more Gram Sarkar units formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Formation of Gram Sarkar (GS) gained pace as 901 units were formed in 37 districts yesterday, the highest number in a day since the process started August 2.

The GS units formed yesterday are 258 in Dhaka, 543 in Chittagong, 41 in Rajshahi, 17 in Khulna, 22 in Barisal and 20 in Sylhet.

With yesterday's formation, the total of GS units stands at 2,290.

Officials are hopeful to constitute all the 40,392 units in as many wards under 4,488 union parishads within the 45-day time limit.

2 killed in Ctg mishaps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two persons were killed in separate incidents here in the city yesterday.

Police and witnesses said a dock labourer, identified as Abul Hossain, son of Magsud Ali, was fatally hurt while working inside the Sadarghat Jetty under Kotwali Police Station in the morning. Later, he succumbed to his injury at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

In the other incident, Jobaerul Islam, 16, a student of Bandartila Katakhal School, was killed in a road mishap in front of Bandartila City Corporation Market. A container mover ran over the victim at around 11.30am.

The driver of the container mover was captured. A case was filed with Bandar Police Station.

Netrokona polls

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The CEC presided over the meeting held at the Election Commission conference room. Election Commissioner Sufiur Rahman, Md Munsef Ali, A K Mohammad Ali and senior officials of home ministry, armed forces division, police and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) were present at the meeting.

BJP plans

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"The rule is obviously not being followed and MPs who should have been under automatic suspension for the rest of the session continue to draw the daily allowance (Rs 500) for attending Parliament," he said.

"Two constitutional amendments were passed within an hour, without any discussion at all. It's a shame."

The no work, no pay rule is usually resorted to as stringent action against those who strike work in industrial units. Accusing the opposition MPs of stalling proceedings without provocation day after day, the BJP feels the rule is apt to be enforced in Parliament and has even suggested it to the speaker.

The party has reportedly sought a meeting of all parties with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to discuss the nagging problem and ways of solving it.

Each hour of Parliament costs Rs 800,000.

If repeated adjournments were not enough, MPs across party lines united to get the speaker to call off proceedings for next Monday, the only working day between Sunday and Tuesday, when it is a holiday for the Raksha Bandhan festival symbolising the brother-sister bond.

After that, only Wednesday and Thursday will be working days before the August 15 Independence Day, which comes ahead of a weekend.

The country consumes over 1,250 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmcf/d) while demands have shot to 1,290 mmcf/d. Its proven reserve is estimated at 11 trillion cubic feet (tcf).

Hostage at home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The indigenous people are living in daily fear of losing their heritage as well as wealth.

These people, estimated to be 2.5 million, face an increasing aggression towards their land and culture.

The indigenous people belonged to the subcontinent long before the Aryans invaded more than 3,000 years ago.

They now live primarily in the rugged east of Bangladesh, bordering Myanmar and India. Some have also settled in the northern and southern coastal areas.

"People are illegally taking away our lands in the name of development and this must stop," Larma told the rally.

Besides, indigenous women are also becoming prime targets of the Bangalees.

According to an AFP report, 68 tribal women were raped between 1991 and 1995 in the southern CHT when troops fought tribal people in the area.

Outages to go on

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work and we don't have the expertise to handle the problem," the official said.

There might be delay in fixing the line if the experts failed to arrive on schedule, sources said.

Meanwhile, the power distribution problem coupled with generation shortfall plunged many parts of the city including Paribagh, Karwan Bazar, Ramna and Kakrail into brownouts yesterday.

"There are thousands of metres of underground power lines in Daka. Many of them were installed during the Pakistan rule. If careless digging did not damage the lines, we would have needed not to worry about their longevity," the engineer said.

Asked to comment on the issue, the chief engineer of Wasa suggested to The Daily Star to contact the managing director, who was busy with family commitments.

DU reopens

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The DU authority cancelled almost 40 examinations of various departments.

Meanwhile, the DU authority rehabilitated most of the BCL leaders and activists who were ousted on July 31 night by Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal.

US base attacked

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"A British truck passed by at 9:15 am local time in front of a gas station where a man hurled a grenade and the vehicle was set on fire. The soldiers rushed out and fled in a taxi," said Ali Hussein, a taxi driver who had been filling up his car with fuel at the time of the attack.

Four British armoured vehicles and three jeeps came to seal off the area, while a crowd lobbed rocks at them. The soldiers fired shots in