



Telenor CEO arrives today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jon Fredrik Baksaas, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of Telenor ASA, the major shareholder of Bangladesh's leading cellphone operator GrameenPhone, arrives in Dhaka today on a two-day-visit.

Accompanied by Arve Johansen, CEO of Telenor Mobile, and other senior officials of the company, Baksaas will inaugurate GrameenPhone's new sales centre in Gulshan.

The Telenor team will hold a meeting with the GrameenPhone management and informal talks with employees.

The delegates will attend a reception for business leaders and GrameenPhone corporate clients

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Prayer Timings		
January 12		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-36	5-41
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

JS body for speedy trial of land grabbers

10 developers named as encroachers, more to follow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday recommended to the government for taking tougher steps including speedy trial of land grabbers and using the Special Powers Act to recover public land from encroachers across the country.

The parliamentary standing committee on the land ministry at its meeting yesterday also disclosed the names of 10 real estate developers that were found to have occupied public lands. The companies are -- Amin Mohammad Foundation, Jamuna Builders, Metro Makers and Developers Ltd.,

Eastern Housing, Samatat Housing, Sharif Housing, East-West Property Developers Ltd., Chand Mia Housing, Ferkon Real Estate and Mohammadia Housing Society.

The developers will be asked to vacate the grabbed lands. "If they don't respond, the ministry will take stern actions, after conducting a survey to pinpoint the grabbed lands and illegal establishments," Mahbubur Rahman, chairman of the committee, told newsmen at a press briefing at his office after the meeting.

He said the number of such

developers was expected to increase, as the process of identifying the landgrabbers was on.

The deputy collector of Dhaka, in his report at the meeting, said encroachers occupied over 10,000 acres of land in the district.

The meeting asked the deputy collectors (DCs) of 61 districts, excepting the three in the hill region, to submit reports furnishing lists specifying state land, vested property and abandoned property in their respective districts within the next two months.

The committee also formed a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

CONGRESSMEN MEET KHALEDA PM seeks free RMG access to US market

BSS, Dhaka

The US Congress delegation, on a four-day visit here, yesterday assured Bangladesh of all cooperation in its socio-economic development and efforts to explore potentials in the international arena.

Visiting US Congress representatives Joseph Crowley, current co-chairperson of Congressional Caucus on Bangladesh, and Gregory W Meeks called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office

and conveyed the US assurance.

Referring to the large-scale women employment in the garment sector, Khaleda sought cooperation of the US government for quota-free greater access of Bangladeshi garment to the US market and more US investment in Bangladesh.

She also urged the US parliamentary team to help enhance trade and commerce between the two countries and protection of Bangladeshi expatriates in the US.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

5 more districts get cheap int'l call facility

UNB, Dhaka

Subscribers of five more districts can make call to Australia, Canada, Malaysia and the USA from today at the reduced rate introduced by the state-owned Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB).

Callers from Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Sunamganj, Natore and Naogaon will enjoy the call rate cut from today. Land-phone owners of Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Khulna, Noakhali and Bogra, apart from Dhaka multi-exchange area, got the facility to call America and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Concrete slabs along the flood protection embankment on the banks of the Buriganga river lie in disrepair at Rasulpur in Lalbagh. The embankment will become vulnerable in the coming monsoon if left in such a state.

Sustainable high cropping main challenge

Int'l wheat expert tellsThe Daily Star

REAZ AHMAD

Bangladesh faces the hard challenge of increasing crop production in a sustainable way to take the load off the ever squeezing farm land.

Director General of International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) Dr Masa Iwanaga made the observation in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star in Dhaka.

Iwanaga said, "Bangladesh has got more acute problem of agricultural sustainability than any other countries. You have to intensify the production by reaping more from per unit of fast-depleting land resources but again, without compromising the soil fertility, which means long-term sustainability."

He warned that over-exploitation of soil fertility might poses a serious

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Dr Masa Iwanaga

AL to join JS if 15-pt met

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) will join the House if the government meets its 15-point charter of demands, announced by the party chief Sheikh Hasina from Saturday's rally, said Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid yesterday.

Hamid's statement to newsmen came ahead of the next session of the Jatiya Sangsad, beginning on January 18.

Hamid referred to AL's still-unmet three-point demand earlier put forward to the government as a precondition for its comeback to the Jatiya Sangsad that the party has been boycotting since the budget session in July 2003.

However, the frontline AL leader hinted at a hard line the AL may take in future and said: "The situation has changed for the worse with the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

US introduces finger scan for visitors

PRESS RELEASE, Dhaka

The United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) programme has been launched on January 5, 2004, at all 115 US international commercial airports and 14 major seaports served by cruise liners.

The goals of the US-VISIT are to enhance the security of US citizens and visitors, facilitate legitimate travel and trade, ensure the integrity of the US immigration system and safeguard the personal privacy of foreign visitors, said a US Embassy press release yesterday.

MORE ON PAGE 10