

# Nationwide calls may become 50pc cheaper

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications is reviewing a proposal by Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) to reduce nationwide dialing (NWD) charges by about 53 per cent, official sources said.

The proposal includes lowering the current per minute rates under all three categories -- from Tk 3 down to Tk 1.50 (for up to 50-mile air distance), from Tk 6 down to Tk 3 (for up to 100 miles) and from Tk 10 down to Tk 4.50 (above 100 miles).

After scrutiny, the ministry will

send the proposal to the finance ministry for approval.

Earlier, the BTTB fixed call charges to the USA, Canada, Australia, Malaysia and UK at a reduced rate of Tk 7.5 per minute for NWD subscribers in 14 districts. Pirojpur and Feni were added to the list just yesterday and other districts will be included gradually, sources said.

More international destinations including Germany, France, Italy, Hong Kong and Singapore will be brought under the reduced rate scheme by next week.

The special rate can be availed

by dialing access code 012. However, calls to mobile phones in the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Australia will be Tk 18 per minute.

Private cell phone operators has asked the BTTB, the state monopoly in fixed line telephone, to allow mobile phone subscribers access to the new calling code. Currently, there are some 2 lakh cell phone subscribers with ISD (International Subscribers Dialing) facilities.

The BTTB has about seven lakh subscribers while some 18.5 lakh people have subscribed to mobile phone services provided by four cell phone operators.



Visiting US Congressman Joseph Crowley exchanges views with media editors at Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

# 50,000 'fake' FFs axed from list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 50,000 names enlisted as freedom fighters have been dropped from a new list due to fake identity, according to a national committee.

The liberation war affairs ministry's committee on freedom fighters is currently preparing the new list of those who fought in 1971 for independence.

It was disclosed at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry yesterday.

The ministry in its report said a list of 1,86,790 freedom fighters was published in the Muktibarta during the immediate past government. Another prepared list of 13,432 freedom fighters could not

be published in the gazette.

But the national committee after reviewing the previous lists and applications from across the country found about one lakh freedom fighters real and observed that a minimum number might be added to the new list.

The report also explained the reason behind the drop of over 1,000 war-affected freedom fighters. "They are not at all war-affected," the report said, quoting the orthopaedics committee's examination.

"We found irregularities in the earlier enlistment process. The Awami League put scores of non-freedom fighters on the list," Salah Uddin Ahmed, chairman of the

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## VVIP security to go up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is to beef up security for president, prime minister, ministers and visiting state leaders.

The ministers for local government and rural development (LGRD) and home affairs held a meeting with chiefs of intelligence agencies yesterday to work out ways to bolster security measures for the state's bigwigs.

Coming out of the meeting at the Secretariat, LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said the government has taken initiatives to

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# Ban on foreign docs stayed

UNB, Dhaka

Specialised foreign doctors can now continue practice in the private medical colleges and hospitals after the High Court stayed a government restriction.

The court yesterday stayed the government notification upon a writ filed by Z H Sikder Women's Medical College & Hospital challenging the restriction on foreign doctors.

Sikder hospital, a private insti-

tution in the capital, has seven specialised doctors--six from India and one from Malaysia.

The court also issued a rule upon the government to show cause in eight weeks why its notification cancelling the temporary permission and refusing registration to foreign doctors should not be declared mala fide and illegal.

It directed Bangladesh Medical & Dental Council (BMDC) for an

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## Severed head of abducted trader found in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police yesterday recovered the severed head of a trader from a drain near Local Government Engineering Department office in the town, three days after his abduction.

The 26-year-old wood trader, Saidur Rahman, son of Abdus Sattar of Niyamatbari under Kumarkhali upazila, was brutally killed as his

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# Suicide bomber kills two in Iraq

## US troops kill 8 Iraqi attackers, arrest relatives of key fugitive

AFP/ BBC, Baquba

A suicide car bombing yesterday outside a police station in the violence-hit Iraqi town of Baquba killed at least two people as well as the bomber and injured 29, just days after an attack on a nearby mosque that left five dead.

At Samarra, US forces killed eight suspected insurgents after a drive-by attack in central Iraq and detained four relatives of the most wanted member of Saddam Hussein's regime still at large, Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri.

The former vice-president, one of Saddam Hussein's right-hand men, is believed by the Americans to be directing much of the resistance to US-led occupying forces in central Iraq.

Baquba's general hospital surgeon said, "Two people were killed and 29 were injured includ-

ing 14 police officers."

It was chaos on the streets of Baquba as residents rushed to the town's main hospital to check if their loved ones were caught in the attack. Police were seen holding them back at the hospital's gates.

The attack occurred at about 8:30 am (0530 GMT) when a green Toyota forced its way into a guarded street where the civil emergency police unit and municipal government offices are located, policeman Haidar Ismail told AFP.

"The guards tried, without success, to stop the car from entering the area, and the driver was able to drive up to the police unit before the blast went off," he said.

"I saw the remains of the car driver all over the place and the building was severely damaged."

Both Samarra and Baquba are in an area of Iraq known as the Sunni

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# Stop grants to land tax defaulting instts

Suggests Revenue Reform Commission

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Revenue Reform Commission (RRC) has recommended for postponing grants and other supports to educational, governmental and semi-governmental institutions that fail to pay land development tax.

The report observes that these establishments are very irregular in paying their dues to utility service providers and default in paying land development tax as well. "It is high time that some stringent measures like postponing government grants and other supports [were] adopted to correct the behaviour of these institutions," it concludes.

Failure on the part of such institutions has brought down the overall rate of land development tax collection to less than 20 per cent of the due amount of Tk 806 crores. That amount to 2.44 per cent of the total revenue collected in fiscal year 2002-03, the commission says in its report submitted Tuesday.

The RRC observes that while individual holding-owners pay taxes satisfactorily, these institutions don't.

It also suggests hiking the land development tax through introduction of new categories.

Presently, an owner of up to 8.25 acres of agricultural land does not have to pay taxes. The RRC maintains that given the scarcity of land this tax waiver should be offered to owners of 2.5 acres of agricultural land or less.

The commission proposes to charge Tk 0.50 as tax for a decimal for agricultural holdings of over 2.5 acres up to 5.5 acres, Tk 1 for those over 5.5 acres up to 8.25 acres and Tk 1.5 for those over 8.25 acres.

"In a land-scarce country like Bangladesh, where land is a source of wealth and power in rural areas, there are good reasons for making land development tax progressive," the RRC reasons.

It proposes to raise the tax per decimal on commercial and industrial holdings in Dhaka,

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## Asian Art Exhibition begins today

UNB, Dhaka

The 11th Biennial Asian Art Exhibition begins in the capital today with 44 countries from Asia, Africa and the Pacific region participating in it.

## Confusion over sarbahara surrender

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Barisal police yesterday renamed the programme for controversial surrender of 80 underground operatives without illegal firearms as a special meeting on law and

Prayer Timings		
January 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-38	5-44
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation