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Cabinet okays amendment to Copyright Act

UNB, Dhaka

The cabinet yesterday approved amendment to the Copyright Act 2000 aiming to preserve national interest in international trade in the perspective of globalisation as well as attract adequate foreign investment in the country.

The approval was given at the weekly cabinet meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair at her office.

Also approved at the meeting was the draft of the State Acquisition and Tenancy (Amendment) Act 2004 providing for the formation of special tribunals to settle land record and survey-related cases.

Cabinet members and state ministers in charge of different ministries attended the meeting. Cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the PM and other secretaries concerned were present.

Judicial service commission drafted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After dragging its feet for four years on the judicial service commission, the body to be mandated to recruit judges for lower courts, the government has finalised a draft of the body.

The government move to form the commission picked up pace after the Appellate Division last week foiled the government bid to appoint judges through the Public Service Commission in a parody of the 12-point Supreme Court directive on separation of the judiciary.

A stall in the appointment of judges since the directive in 1999 has plunged the lower courts with acute crisis of judges.

"The Appellate Division decision has forced the government to go for the commission to break the deadlock," a law ministry official said.

The draft will be submitted to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in a couple of days and President Iajuddin Ahmed will promulgate rules to form the commission after her approval.

Seven members -- an Appellate

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Perc slams Airport Road facelift

Points finger at Nazmul Huda, suggests punishment to those responsible for the waste

REJAUJ KARIM BYRON

The Public Expenditure Review Commission (Perc) in its final report recommended punishment to the persons responsible for wasting state funds in the name of a 'beautification and development' project on Dhaka Airport Road.

"It will never be possible to stop

waste of government funds without punishing them," Perc said in its 340-page report, submitted to Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman on Sunday.

The government-appointed body blamed the waste of the prime minister's relief fund on lack of transparency and said a hefty sum was drained, as it was used politi-

cally and given to false recipients, allowing the same person to get cheques under the names of different organisations.

Perc, formed to suggest measures to streamline public expenditure, underscored a guideline to have proper accounting of the spending.

During Ramadan, the holy

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Hostile politics taints Dhaka's image abroad

German businessman tells BGCCI luncheon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A leading German businessman yesterday said hostile behaviour of politicians toward each other is tarnishing Bangladesh's image.

Peter Clasen, chairman of OAV-German Asia-Pacific Business Association, told a luncheon of Bangladesh-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BGCCI) at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel ruling and opposition politicians appear "unaware of the harm they do to the image of Bangladesh abroad by the

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WB recommends staff wage hike

Asks govt to stamp out NBR corruption

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) has recommended recruitment of more skilled staff, including experts, and a rise in wages at the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to enhance efficiency and cut corruption in the organisation.

The WB also suggested continuation of pre-shipment inspection

(PSI) system until the National Board of Revenue database was strengthened in the report sent to the government earlier this month.

A five-member WB operation advisory team under David Hughton held a series of talks with the NBR last week before sitting with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday to discuss the report, Bangladesh Modernisation of Revenue

Administration: Key Elements of Modernisation Strategy and Options for World Bank Support.

The report said because of a freeze on recruitment, the NBR was forced to promote unqualified staff.

"The recruitment freeze needs to be lifted so that the NBR can fill critical professional positions with properly qualified staff and prepare

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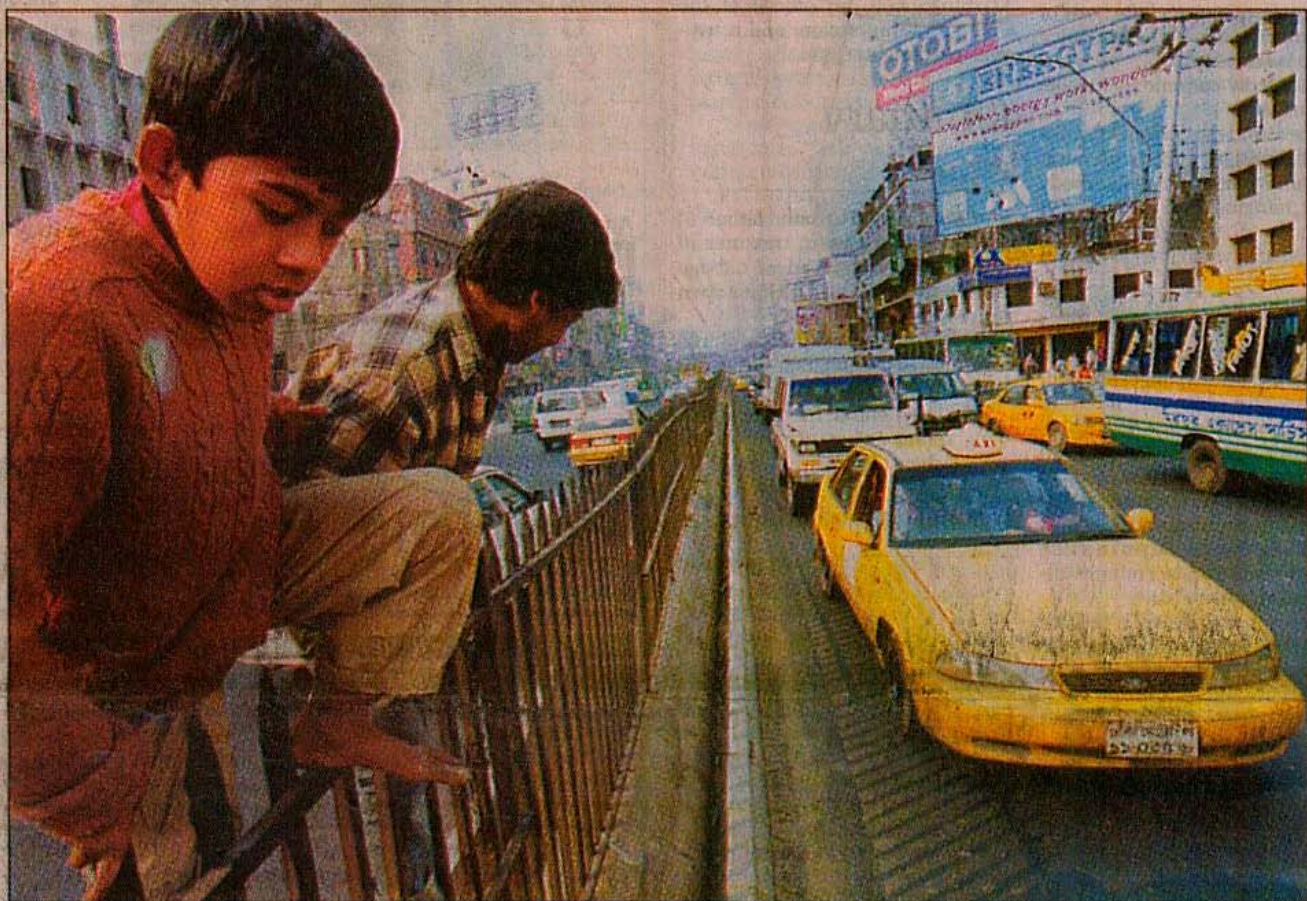


PHOTO: STAR

RUSSIAN ROULETTE: Two people try to cross Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday scaling the sharp railings at the risk of life. The dangerous practice of taking a short cut across the Sonargaon Hotel to Farmgate section of the road goes on despite the putting up of high railings.

60,000 cases pending with PDB courts

General consumers owe Tk 1,064 crore

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The 16-year-old litigation system of the Power Development Board (PDB), introduced to check power theft, resolve billing disputes and ensure order, is now bogged down with over 60,000 pending cases.

Sixteen PDB courts, formed exclusively to deal with cases over outstanding bills filed under the Electricity Act, 1910, have been falling far short of their target and purpose. Under this law, a person found guilty can be sentenced to imprisonment or fined or both.

"We are not getting the desired

results from the PDB courts, as a huge number of cases have piled up," said PDB Secretary SM Faisal Alam, who is also in charge of supervising the courts.

"There should have been fewer number of pending cases. After all, these courts are dealing with just one type of litigation under only one law," Alam observed.

General consumers -- excluding the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa) and other bulk consumers -- now owe the PDB Tk 1,064 crore in bills, which is increasing every year.

Yet, as far back as in 1988, the

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Rejoinder, our reply

The energy ministry has issued a rejoinder to the news headlined "Installation of Gas Pipelines Tk 30 crore being siphoned off by doubling project cost" published in The Daily Star on January 17.

In its rejoinder, the ministry denied the state minister's role in protecting corrupt officials of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd (TGTDL) and said some statements and comments in the report are not factual.

The ministry says two contracts for the two pipeline projects were awarded upon due approval by the TGTDL Board, Petrobangla Board and, finally, Cabinet Committee on Purchase, and upon due approval by the Ecne of the revised Project Proforma as per existing rules and

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Water talks open in Delhi today

Sharing of Teesta waters high on joint experts committee agenda

REAZ AHMAD

Bangladesh and India begin two-day water talks in New Delhi today hoping to make major strides in long-term water sharing arrangements of seven of the 54 rivers that criss-cross the countries.

Water resources secretaries of both Bangladesh and India will lead the meeting of the Indo-Bangla Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) with focus on sharing of the Teesta, Dharla, Dudhkumar, Monu, Muhuri, Khowai and Gumi waters.

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Pvt fixed line phone service in jeopardy

BTRC finalising licensing process, skirting interconnection issue

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

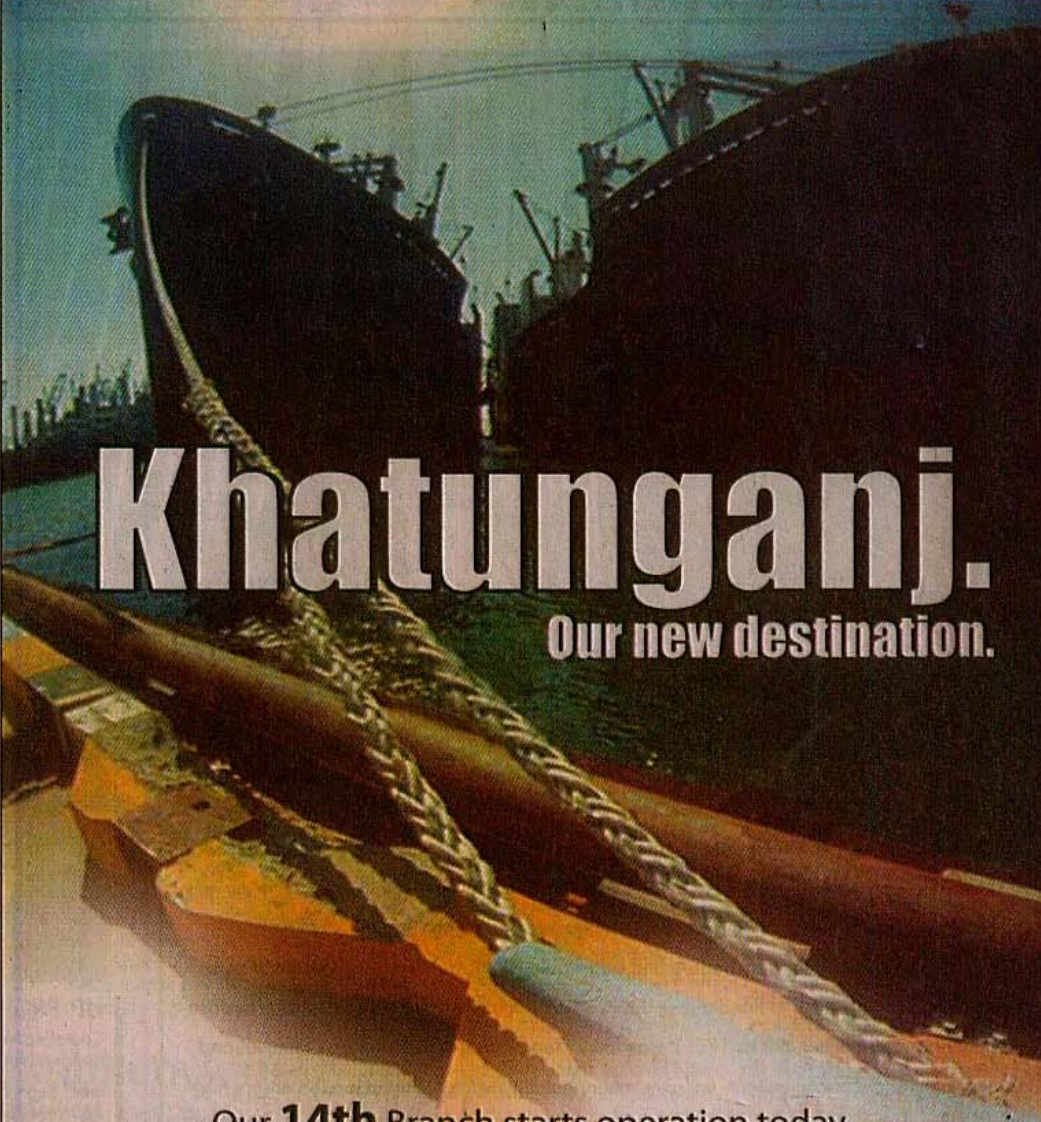
The move to bring private fixed phone operators under an open licensing system without resolving the nagging interconnection issue will jeopardise the whole process, telecoms experts fear.

Bangladesh Telecommunication

Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the telecoms watchdog, has almost finalised the licensing process to allow private operators to offer fixed line phones to subscribers.

Experts say the state monopoly in fixed line telephony, Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board


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