

Stay on Teletalk refused

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday refused a plea to stay the operation of Teletalk Bangladesh Limited, the first mobile phone service in the public sector.

The court, however, issued a rule upon the government to show cause why its action approving change of name of cellular mobile phone operator licensee from Bangladesh Telegraph & Telephone Board (BTTB) to Teletalk Bangladesh Limited (TBL) should not be declared unlawful.

It also asked the government to explain why its order transferring the licence from BTTB to TBL and allowing it to use radio frequency allotted to BTTB should not be declared to have been made without lawful authority.

The rule, returnable in two weeks, came upon a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by two citizens challenging the government action for violating the Bangladesh Telecommunications Act 2001.

The petitioner submitted that the

government's orders have been issued under undue pressure and influence and also for collateral benefits as the Act barred to transfer a licence by deleting the name of one licence and inserting the name of another entity instead. The government has also violated the terms and conditions of issuing licence for any mobile phone company, the petitioner added.

On April 2, the state-owned Teletalk authorities had suspended distribution of subscription forms for its newly launched mobile phone due to inadequate capacity of handle the high rush and demand of aspirant subscribers.

Barrister Roknuddin Mahmud appeared for the petitioners while Additional Attorney General AJ Mohammad Alisudin for the government.



Jatiya Oikya Mancha President Dr Kamal Hossain speaks at a roundtable on the caretaker government system, organised by the Samaj Ekush Shata, a social organisation, at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Reform call came after AL's 'trump card' failed: PM

BSS, Bagerhat

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged people to take part in the next general elections in a big way and vote for the BNP-led alliance.

"The next polls will be held in due time under the existing provisions of the constitution," she reiterated while addressing a public meeting at Khan Jahan Ali College ground here in the afternoon.

Khaleda, also chairperson of the ruling BNP, said the main opposition Awami League (AL) is opposing its once-favourite caretaker government concept and demanding reforms in the Election Commission (EC) after all its efforts to consolidate a movement against the government have failed.

"The people are living in peace. They did not respond to their (opposition's) call. Even their politics of 'trump card' has failed. They have no issue in hand," she added.

The prime minister reminded all that the BNP-led alliance came to power through 2001 polls when the president, the chief of caretaker government and the chief election commissioner were all appointed by the Awami League under the existing rules.

"Even they appointed those who joined the Janata Mancha as election commissioners defying our protests," she said, adding the people, however, voted the BNP-led alliance to power as they wanted to get rid of AL's misrule.

Referring to the production of shrimp in the region and the need to maintain quality of the export-earning item, the prime minister announced that a shrimp research centre would be set up in Bagerhat.

Chaired by local MP MA Selim, the rally was addressed, among others, by Health and Family Welfare Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Jatiya Sangsad Whip M Ashraf Hossain, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, Khulna Mayor Sheikh Tabayur Rahman, Bagerhat district BNP General Secretary Shamsul Alam Talukder and district Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Maulana Moshiur Rahman.

The prime minister inaugurated the Tk 5.8-crore Bagerhat town protection embankment on the bank of the river Bhairab, Tk 19.40-crore Bagerhat Police Lines on 10 acres at Shingrai and the 50-bed Kachua Upazila Health Complex.

Khaleda also laid the foundation

of the annex building of Bagerhat Press Club. She visited the shrine of Khan Jahan Ali and offered fateha there. She prayed for peace and prosperity of the country.

The prime minister said her government has improved law and order and retrieved the sinking economy it inherited from the past Awami League regime.

She said a congenial atmosphere is prevailing in the country and investors from different parts of the world, including the USA, Middle East, India, Singapore and Malaysia are showing interest to come to Bangladesh.

Toll-taking cops sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected the bail petition of three policemen arrested on Tuesday on charges of collecting tolls, ordering them to be sent to the Dhaka Central Jail.

Metropolitan Magistrate MA Salam issued the order when the three - Nayek Nuruddin, 30, and constables Rafiqul Islam, 28, and Motiur Rahman, 28, - were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court at 2:00pm.

In the forward report, Shyampur police said the three went to collect an illegal toll from the three-wheeler garage of Billal Hossain at Rayerbagh in the capital at about 6:45pm on April 9. There they demanded Tk 4,000 in tolls, telling Billal to drop the money at the Janatabagi Police Box on April 10, as he could not collect the money on that day, police said.

When Billal refused, they went to his garage on Tuesday and attempted to kidnap him. But a mob beat up the three policemen and turned them over to Shyampur police.

Police prayed for confining the three in jail until they complete their investigation, the Investigation Officer added.

Billal Hossain filed a case with the Shyampur Police Station against the three policemen under the Speedy Trial (Law and Disruption) Act.

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India hopeful of Agartala-Akhaura rail link

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India has expressed the hope that a direct bus service between Agartala and Kolkata via Bangladesh is about 350 km, which can be covered in 12 hours while the distance between the two Indian cities via the north-eastern state of Assam is nearly 1700 km and the journey takes about three days.

Under the existing Agartala-Dhaka and Dhaka-Kolkata bus services, it takes about 20 hours to reach Kolkata from Agartala.

Veeva Sikri met Tripura chief secretary RK Mathur, Commissioner for Industries and Commerce Loka Ranjan and Director General of Police GM Srivastava and customs officials to discuss the border trade and bus service issues.

"We are optimistic that Bangladesh will allow Agartala-Kolkata bus service and a rail link between Agartala and Akhaura," Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Veena Sikri told reporters in Agartala after a day-long visit yesterday.

She said the introduction of direct bus service and transportation of goods through Bangladeshi land and waterways have been taken up with Dhaka at the "appropriate" level.

Gono Bahini cadre killed in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A top cadre of outlawed Gono Bahini (GB) was killed in 'crossfire' at Sajalgarh in the upazila in the district in the early hours yesterday.

This casualty raised the number of deaths in a 'crossfire' to 253.

Police said they arrested Rabul Islam while raiding his house at Bhoruapara in the upazila on Monday night at about 8pm. The police added, on interrogation the cadre admitted his involvement with the underground party and his arms caches at various locations through-

BSF kills one

UNB, Thakurgaon

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi youth at Beurjhari frontier in Balaingdi upazila of the district Monday night.

The dead was identified as Anisul Islam, 25, son of Dalmat Miah of Mridhapara village.

Locals said the Indian border guards of Barobillah outpost fired on Anisul while he was trying to cross the border at about 9:30pm. They took away the body.

Anisul's body is expected to be handed over to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) after a flag meeting today.

A local source said Anisul tried to cross the border to collect jute-seeds.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Dhaka Wasa) evicted about 20 illegal structures from the Katasur canal yesterday, in its ongoing drive to protect the capital from unusual waterlogging during the monsoon.

The drive will continue today at the other Ramchandrapur canal in Mohammadpur with the view to bringing back the natural flow of the drainage canals.

The total length of the two canals is about 5.5 kilometers, according to Wasa officials. On one side of the flood protection dam, polythene and solid waste have clogged the drainage channel of the Katasur canal, while on the other side people have constructed semi-pucca and pucca buildings, including an office of a local unit of BNP.

Rabibi, a teenager living along the canal, said, "Actually they publicised the drive with a microphone, but people didn't heed the message."

Work on pre-paid gas meters for domestic users begins in June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited will start work on setting up of pre-paid gas meters for domestic users in Banani from June next as part of its plan to introduce pre-paid billing system in the city.

The Titas Gas Ltd signed a contract with the Hangzhou Beta-Aziz & Co JV at Titas Building in the city yesterday to set up the pre-paid meters.

As per the contract, Hangzhou Beta-Aziz & Co JV will supply and install the pre-paid gas meters along with computers, software and management system.

Initially, the Hangzhou Beta-Aziz & Co JV will install 1,000 pre-paid meters in Banani under a pilot project.

If the project proves successful, the company will be awarded further contract.

Special bus service

BSS, Dhaka

British Council will organise a 17-day outdoor art exhibition from today to welcome and celebrate the Bangla New Year 1412.

Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University SMA Faiz will inaugurate the exhibition at 5:30pm on the British Council premises here as the chief guest.

Professor Mahmudul Haque, Director General of National Museum and eminent artist will attend the inaugural function as special guest.

The works of three artists -- Ferdousi Priyabhashini, Ruhul Amin Kajol and Tayabuzzaman Topu -- will be displayed at the exhibition.

The exhibition will remain open daily from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm from April 13 to 30.

A fleet of 30 double and single decker buses will operate on Tongi-Langalbandhi, Mirpur-Langalbandhi, Motijheel-Langalbandhi and Narayanganj-Langalbandhi routes..



Federation of University

Women executives

Munira Khan and Umme Habiba Sadeque were elected president and secretary general of Bangladesh Federation of University Women for 2005-2007 at its triennial general meeting on April 8, says a press release.

The meeting was held at the Women's Federation College in the city.

Other office-bearers are vice presidents: Rashida Hossain, Monowara Islam and Zubeida Munawwar, Immediate Past President: Zeenat Ara Bhuiyan, Joint Secretary: Nilufar Sultan, Treasurer: Khaleda Sabet and Joint Treasurer: Motahara Mannan.

Members are: Hosneara Siddique, Shahzadi Begum, Shamim Mansur, Niloufer Mahmood and Mahnur Rahman.

GARMENTS FACTORY COLLAPSE President asks rescue workers to complete operation

UNB, Savar

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday visited the building that collapsed on Monday and asked the rescue workers to complete their painstaking operation as soon as possible.

During his visit, GOC and officials of the 9th division of army apprised him of the incident of garment factory building collapse and the laborious rescue activities over the last two days for retrieving the survivors and the dead from under the ruins.

They told the president that 10 bodies were recovered and 99 workers rescued alive so far from under the concrete structures of the fallen building.

The president praised the rescue workers, including the army, for conducting their operation "without hurting" the victims.

He also visited the injured at the Savar CMH and inquired about their treatment.

Iajuddin talked to some of the

JU Baishakhi programmes begin today

JU CORRESPONDENT

A six-day cultural programme and fair to celebrate Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bengali new year, organised by Jahangirnagar Shankrakrit Jote (JSJ), begins at Jahangirnagar University (JU) today.

The programme will be inaugurated at the central playground at 6:30am today.

Jalshirin, Anandan and Dwipani will jointly present a cultural evening of April 14.

Jahangirnagar Theatre, a leading theatre group of the campus, will stage a street play titled "Timir", directed by Mahfuz Masum, at Muktamanchi in Savar that collapsed on April 11.

Gono Shilpi will perform another street play on April 16 while a seminar titled "Three Decades of Cultural Practice at Jahangirnagar University" will be held at the seminar room of the proposed Zahir Raihan auditorium in the morning of the following day.

Jahangirnagar Students' Film Society, Chalchitra Andolon and Zahir Raihan Chalchitra Sangsod will screen different films in the evening of April 17.

A total of 18 organisations enlisted with the JSJ are expected to participate in the programme that will continue till April 19.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a legal aid organisation, demanded that the government make every possible efforts to rescue the trapped workers under the debris of a nine-storied building of a sweater factory in Savar that collapsed on April 11.

The Ask in a statement yesterday also demanded for taking international help in rescuing them if necessary.

It also demanded that the government provide the families of the wounded and deceased with appropriate compensations and take immediate actions against the responsible persons.

The statement, signed by Ask Executive Director Sultan Kamal, also said it is urgent to take early measures to prevent these kinds of tragedies in future, otherwise the same kind of tragedy would repeat happening.

At least 23 people were killed and some 350 others are trapped, many of them feared buried alive, in the tragic collapse.

A discussion on 'Water resources' is

organised by the Department of Archives and Library

organises a three-day special exhibition of books and documents related to Bangla culture and tradition.

Venue: Office premises, Agargaon. Time: 10:30am.

Lecture

The Iranian Cultural Centre organises a lecture titled 'The role of worldview in our daily life.' Venue: House-54, Road-8/A, Dhamondi. Time: 4:00pm.

KIBRIA KILLING Symbolic 1-hr strike tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family members, relatives and friends of the slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria will hold a symbolic one-hour strike tomorrow

in front of the National Museum at Shahbagh as part of their "Blue for Peace" programme demanding trial of Kibria's killers, says a press release.

The Kibria family requested all citizens to join the one-hour demonstration starting from 8 am.

Following the killing of SAMS Kibria, his family has been observing the "Blue for Peace" programme every Thursday demanding trial of the perpetrators of the January 27 grenade attack on Kibria in Shahbagh.

People from all walks of life have participated in such programmes by wearing blue dress to express their solidarity with the Kibria family.

Baishakhi Package

Elegance, a beauty parlour, offers a 'Baishakhi Package' to its customers to celebrate the Bangla New Year, says a press release.