

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 (BTB) to Teletalk Bangladesh Limited (TBL) should not be declared unlawful.

It also asked the government to explain why its order transferring the licence from BTB to TBL and allowing it to use radio frequency allotted to BTB 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 Rokonuddin Mahmud appeared for the petitioners while Additional Attorney General AJ Mohammad Alistood for the government.

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 and a rail link between Agartala, the capital of Tripura, and Akhaura in Bangladesh would be put in place.

"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, Kusthia

A top cadre of outlawed Gono Bahini (GB) was killed in 'crossfire' at Salgharmadua village in Kumarkhali 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 Rabiul Islam while raiding his house at Bhorupara in the upazila on Monday night at about 8:pm. The police added, on interrogation the cadre admitted his involvement with the underground party and his arms caches at various locations through-

out Kusthia.

Kumarkhali police led by officer-in-charge (OC) Nasir Ahmed left for the village at about 3:30am. Attack from the GB cadres prompted police retaliation.

Rabiul received bullet-hits in the 'crossfire' when he attempted to escape, police said. Rabiul was critically wounded. He was taken to the Kusthia Sadar Hospital at about 5:00am where doctors declared him dead.

Art exhibition begins today

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.



PHOTO: STAR

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

20 illegal structures on Katasur canal demolished

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.

Officials claim that the rainwater from city's Tajgaon, Karwan Bazar, New Market and Kalyanpur and Mirpur will be drained out properly if the eviction drive can help clear up the canal.

The eviction team began evicting bamboo-made houses, shops, semi-pucca and pucca buildings from the canal at 11am, amid allegations from some inhabitants that they were not given enough time to shift their valuables.

Countering the allegations, Wasa officials said they have been informing people for the last three days with megaphone messages to move their valuables and houses from the land of the canal.

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

Many tenants may face trouble passing the night until they find another shelter, she added.

Abu Sayeed Bapari, the local ward commissioner of ward No 46, said, "For the last three years I had been asking them to demolish the illegal houses on the canal but they paid no heed."

Wasa started the eviction drive on March 29, removing illegal structures from the branch canals of the Kalyanpur canal as part of the government decision to recover the city's canals, mainly used for flowing drainage water, from illegal encroachment.

Adequate police were deployed to the spot yesterday to avert any untoward situation, while Wasa Managing Director ANH Akhter Hossain also visited the spot.

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 Tias 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

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) will operate three-day "Langalbandh Snan Utsav Special Bus Service" from April 15 to facilitate Hindu devotees to join Langalbandh Maha Ashtomi Snan Utsav.

A fleet of 30 double and single decker buses will operate on Tongi-Langalbandh, Mirpur-Langalbandh, Motijheel-Langalbandh and Narayanganj-Langalbandh 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: Nilufa Sultana, Treasurer: Khaleda Sabat and Joint Treasurer: Motahhara Mannan.

Members are: Hossneara 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

injured, conveyed his sympathies and also prayed for their early recovery. The injured expressed their gratitude to the president for visiting them.

Textiles and Jute Minister Shajahan Siraj and Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf were present.

US assistant secy condoles deaths of garment workers

Christina Rocca, US assistant secretary of state for South Asia, yesterday expressed condolences over the deaths of garment workers in Monday's building collapse at Savar, says a release of the US Embassy.

She telephoned Foreign Minister Morshed Khan to convey her sympathy to the government and the families of the victims.

She also hoped that the survivors trapped under the rubble would be rescued.

ASK demands int'l help to rescue trapped workers

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-story 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 Sultana 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.

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 Janatar 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 MAH Selim, the rally was addressed, among others, by Health and Family Welfare Minister Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Jatiya Sangsad Whip M Ashraf Hossain, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, Khulna Mayor Sheikh Tayabur Rahman, Bagerhat district BNP General Secretary Shamsul Alam Talukder and district Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Maulana Moshur 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 fataha 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 forwarding 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 Janatabagh 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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Boishakhi Mela
The inaugural ceremony of a Boishakhi Mela, organised by the Bengal Foundation, will be held with City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka as chief guest. Venue: Gulshan Park. Time: 5:00pm.

Art Exhibition
An outdoor art exhibition, organised by the British Council to welcome and celebrate the Bangla New Year, will be inaugurated by Dhaka University Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz as chief guest. Venue: British Council premises, Fuller Road. Time: 5:30pm. The exhibition will remain open till April 30 from 10:00am to 7:00pm daily.

Reception
Bangladesh Awami Jubo League will accord a reception to Opposition Leader and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina for being awarded the Congressional Medal of Achievement by the Philippines parliament. Venue: Institution of Engineers' Auditorium, Ramna. Time: 3:30pm.

Fashion Parade
A fashion parade, organised by the Shanto Marium Academy to mark the Bangla New Year, will be inaugurated by State Minister for Education Ehsanul Haq Milon as chief guest. Venue: University campus, Uttara. Time: 6:00pm.

Launching ceremony
The launching ceremony of a CD titled 'Khub Chena Chena' by Salma Sultana will be held. Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. Time: 6:00pm.

Discussion
Bangladesh Jubo Ainjibi Parishad will hold a discussion titled 'Rule of law in establishing a society free from terrorism and corruption'. Venue: Dhaka Bar Association Auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Inauguration
The inaugural ceremony of a VIP Auditorium of Dhaka Reporters Unity will be held with Information Minister M Shamsul Islam as chief guest. Venue: Tophkhana Road. Time: 11:00am.

Ubinig discussion
A discussion on 'Water resources:

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Boishakhi Mela
Privatisation and multinational aggression', organised jointly by Ubinig, Voice and CDP, will be held. Venue: WVA Auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 2:30pm.

Chef competition
The final round of 'Monitor Chef of the Year Competition-2005' will be held with State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin as chief guest. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 7:30pm.

Film show
In celebration of the Bangla New Year, the Centre for Asian Arts and Culture will screen three films titled 'Duratwa' by Moshedul Islam, 'Abar Aronnye' by Goutam Ghosh and 'Chokher Boli' by Writuparna Ghosh. Venue: 62, Science Laboratory Road. Time: 12:00noon, 3:00pm and 6:00pm.

Liberation War Museum programme
Liberation War Museum organises a programme to welcome the Bangla New Year. Venue: Museum premises, Segun Bagicha. Time: 10:00am.

Boishakhi festival
The Women Entrepreneurs Association of Bangladesh organises a Boishakhi festival. Venue: Medion Furniture Show Room, Panthapath. Time: 10:00am to 12:00noon.

Boishakhi Mela
Students of Marie Curie School organises a Boishakhi Mela to welcome the Bangla New Year. Venue: School premises, Dhanmondi. Time: 9:30am to 4:30pm.

Exhibition
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, Dhanmondi. Time: 4:00pm.