

SUB-MARINE LINK-UP
Country still unready to take full ICT benefits

Alcatel executive tells seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is not yet ready to derive maximum benefits from the information and communications technology (ICT) opportunities though it is hooking up to the global information superhighway through a submarine cable link by September.

A key official of an international telecoms equipment manufacturer made the observation at a seminar yesterday.

"It is about high time Bangladesh got prepared for the stakes in the global market before the country is connected with the SEA-ME-WE4 network," said Christian Looten, country senior officer of Alcatel.

He said Bangladesh should take necessary preparations for optimum utilisation of the SEA-ME-WE4 undersea cable link that will bring higher speed for data transfer and facilitate various value-added services like video conferencing, GPRS (general packet radio switching) enabling high-speed mobile internet.

"The voice quality will enhance and data communication speed will also increase by several times after the undersea connectivity," Looten said.

He said the cost for overseas communications is expected to come down by at least eight times.

Looten was speaking at the seminar titled, "Broadband Everywhere" organised by the Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB) in co-operation with the Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology at Maulana Bhasani Novo Theatre on the occasion of the Internet Fair 2003.

State-owned telecoms operator

Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) along with a consortium of 13 other countries has joined a pact styled 'SEA-ME-WE4' to hook up its telecommunication network to the transoceanic submarine cable system by September 2005.

Bangladesh is sitting on the threshold of growth and it has every potential to do better in software, Looten said.

He said expansion of broadband could be a solution to the lack of connectivity. Broadband will also provide voice, data, cable television and Internet facilities through one connection.

Referring to the expertise of Alcatel in DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) and ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line), he said the company produces ten DSL and ADSL ports every second.

With its technology and experience, can Alcatel help Bangladesh in this regard. "Bangladesh should move faster and roll out broadband network," suggested Looten, an engineer who has vast experience in telecommunications.

Referring to the contribution of telecommunications to GDP, he said it contributes six times more to GDP than any other sector does. Bangladesh eyes fetching \$2 billion from software exports by 2006.

The export earnings from software increased by over 74 percent in the fiscal year 2003-04 to Tk 42.33 crore, according to statistics of the Export Promotion Bureau. The figure was Tk 28.31 crore in 2002-03 financial year.



PHOTO: STAR

Jatiya Oikya Mancha President Dr Kamal Hossain speaks at a discussion on the occasion of the 43rd death anniversary of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque at the National Press Club yesterday. Jatiya Party (Manju) organised the event.

Samad Azad's death condoled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations yesterday condoled the death of Abdus Samad Azad, former foreign minister and Awami League (AL) president member.

Bangladesh Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Bimol Biswas said Samad Azad was an uncompromising leader whom the nation will remember with deep gratitude. His death is a great loss for the nation, they added.

Bangladesh Awami Jubo League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanok and General Secretary Mirza Azam MP have prayed for the salvation of the departed soul, and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Jatiya Party Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju and Secretary General Shaikh Shaidul Islam said Samad Azad was a symbol of dedication and sacrifice.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leaders said Samad Azad played an active role in our language, independent and democratic movements. Sylhet Division Development Action Council said Samad Azad would be remembered for his contribution to the country's liberation war.

Jalalabad Association Dhaka said the country has lost a prudent politician, and the people of greater Sylhet one of their best sons.

Bangladesh Krishak League, Bangladesh Awami Swachhchasebok League, Swadhinata Chikitsok Parishad, Bangladesh Jubo Maitri, Bangladesh Chhatra Maitri, Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra, Bangladesh Muktiyuddha Smriti Sangrakhan Sangsad, Sramik Karmochari Oikya Parishad and Bangladesh Sanjukt Sramik Federation also expressed their profound their shock at the death of Abdus Samad Azad.

Politicians now depend on black money

Dr Kamal says at discussion on Sher-e-Bangla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain said the present politicians are not following the ideals of Haque, Bhashani, Suhrawardy and Bangabandhu. They are doing politics depending on their black money.

This money-based politics, ignoring the rights of the people, is the politics of the defeated forces who have made the politics sick, he added.

Dr Kamal, who is also the president of Jatiya Oikya Mancha, said majority people are still out of the influence of this sick politics, and "We should go to them."

He said the politics of Sher-e-Bangla was to establish the right of the people and we have to bring back that politics to change the fate of the teeming millions.

Awami League Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed said the present politics has been deviated from the politics of our national leaders by neglecting the welfare of the common people.

The present unstable political situation requires unity of all democratic parties to save the country from the verge of destruction, he added.

Tofail said they have raised the demand for reforming the caretaker government system as with the existing system the government has made a blue print to win the election.

Presided over by Jatiya Party Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju, the discussion was also addressed by Noor-e-Alam Siddique, and JP Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam.

AK Faizul Haque, son of Sher-e-Bangla, also attended the discussion.

The punishment of the fugitives will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender, the judge said.

2 DIGs sent on forced retirement

BSS, Dhaka

The government yesterday ordered forced retirement for deputy inspector generals (DIGs) of police Mohammad Abdul Mannan and Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman on completion of their 25 years of service.

They were sent on forced retirement "in public interest" under the Public Employees Retirement Act of 1974, an official handout said.

The two officials, however, will be entitled to retirement facilities as per rules, it added.

SAVAR BUILDING COLLAPSE

Rajuk probe identifies faulty design, poor construction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The five-member Rajuk probe committee in its report held poor construction quality, faulty design, bad workmanship, overloading and foundation failure responsible for the April 11 collapse of the nine-storey Spectrum Sweaters Industries Ltd. building at Savar.

The report, submitted two days ago, is now being reviewed by the chairman, who will finalise it before sending a copy to the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, sources said.

Two full time engineers, Mohammad Samiul Islam and Sharnil Islam, assisted by a junior engineer Lutfur Rahman Liton, were in charge of the construction of the nine-storey building, a member of the committee said.

"So far we do not know whether there was an architect involved in designing the building, which was built without any approval," said an official, adding, "The construction material was also of very bad quality and the workmanship was highly questionable."

In 2003, a floor was added to the four-storey building and in 2004 the Spectrum building stood nine storeys high.

All this happened without any approval and the laboratory tests being conducted now will reveal more about the building, Rajuk sources said.

AL-BNP GUNFIGHT Munshiganj street vendor dies at DMCH

DMCH CORRESPONDENT

A street vendor, who was shot in the head during a gunfight between Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Awami League (AL) activists in Munshiganj on Sunday, succumbed to his injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on Tuesday.

The gunfight erupted near Muktarpur Bscic in Munshiganj when Anisur Rahman, 28, was returning to home, victim's relatives said.

He was admitted to the DMCH at 8:00pm on Sunday.

CCC ELECTION Party high-ups to seek votes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

As Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) election is drawing nearer, supporters of the main two mayoral candidates are holding rallies here with their respective party high-ups.

Local Awami League (AL) will hold four huge rallies to be addressed by party chief Sheikh Hasina on the May Day to seek support for AL-backed Nagorik Committee candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

The rallies will be held at KEPZ intersection, Olanker crossing, Old Railway Station premises and Bahodderhat.

The ruling BNP-led four-party alliance is planning to hold a huge rally at Laldighi Maidan on May 7 to drum support for its candidate Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin.

The alliance is organising a huge gathering at the local Stadium Gymnasium premises today to seek support of around three lakh voters hailing from greater Noakhali with Law Minister Moudud Ahmed as chief guest.

The alliance also plans to hold another gathering of the voters hailing from greater Comilla at the same venue on May 3.

Death anniversary

Today is the first death anniversary of Mustafa Sarwar, a language movement veteran and organiser of the liberation war, says a press release.

A founding member of the Awami League, Sarwar was also a columnist and founder of Daudkandi Ahsania School.

A milad mahfil will be held at his home at Ekushey Bhaban, 53 Gulshan Avenue after Asr prayers.

The Nagorik Committee and the Amra Suryamukhi will hold a discussion in his memory at the Liberation War Museum at 5.00pm on May 5.

Fanaticism, corruption major obstacles to dev

Joy tells roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sajib Wazed Joy, son of opposition leader Sheikh Hasina, yesterday said fanaticism, violence and corruption are major obstacles to development and the country needs a bold and honest leadership to fight against these ills.

"Bangladesh is passing through a difficult situation due to the growing link between religious fundamentalism and terrorism in recent years," he said and urged all to wage a war against the fundamentalists.

Joy was speaking at a roundtable titled "Challenge of the new millennium and development thoughts of Bangladesh" as a main speaker at the National Press Club.

Eminent economists, political scientists and legal experts took part in the discussion organised by Awami Jubo League, youth front of the main opposition Awami League.

"We have to look forward if we want to develop our country," Joy said, adding, "We should not waste time making debate on the past incidents. Previous happenings should not be the main focus of our discussion. We will only learn from our previous experiences."

He said the law and order situation has deteriorated alarmingly in the last three years with the emergence of extremist outfits in the country.

The religion-based political parties are easily recruiting the poor people in their parties by taking advantage of their poverty and unemployment, he said.

Joy also said, "We must free politics from the grips of criminals and a strong commitment is needed in this regard."

He is optimistic that Bangladesh can achieve economic growth like Thailand and Malaysia within the next five to ten years if well-planned policies are adopted.

When a number of discussants urged him to join politics, Joy did not make any positive response but hinted that he may join the AL in future.

"I will work for the Awami League



PHOTO: STAR

Sajib Wazed Joy speaks at a roundtable on "Challenge of new millennium and development thoughts of Bangladesh" at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

and also for Bangladesh," he said, adding that he had no intention to join politics.

At the roundtable, other participants expressed grave concern over the emergence of extremist groups and said all progressive and pro-liberation political parties should unite to fight against the fundamentalists.

Prof Shamsul Huda Harun, Prof Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir, Justice KM Sobhan, Barrister Amir-Ul Islam, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud, Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Dr Ali Asgar, Prof Giasuddin Ahmed, Prof M Mostafa Chowdhury, Prof Abdus Salam, Dr Giasuddin Mollah, Prof Hossain Mansur, Dr Jamaluddin Ahmed, Editor of The Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Dr Akhteruzzaman, Dr Saiful Haq, Dr Asharafuddin Chowdhury, Supreme Court Bar Association President Mahbubey Alam, Shirin Akhter of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and Jubo League general secretary Mirza Azam MP spoke at the programme.

Professor Harun-ur-Rashid of Dhaka University moderated the roundtable presided over by Jubo League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanok.

DIARRHOEA SITUATION DETERIORATES Two more die, 2502 fall sick

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the diarrhoea situation deteriorates, two more people died and 2,502 others fell sick across the country as of yesterday evening.

According to official report, one died in Panchagar and the other in Noakhali.

With these, the total number of deaths from the water-borne disease rises to 31 in last one month.

During the period 68,212 people were attacked by diarrhoea, health directorate sources said.

A total of 81 people died and 25,958 others fell sick from the disease across the country last year, the sources added.

Experts warned of an early attack of the disease this year and said the situation would worsen

with the onset of heat wave. Doctors had attributed the cause of deaths to late arrival of the patients at health centres.

"Deaths from diarrhoea are mostly due to insufficient intake of fluid to replace body fluid loss during loose motion. No one should expire from only diarrhoeal attack as long as the patient takes sufficient fluid after every loose motion," said an expert at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B).

A total of 445 diarrhoea patients were admitted to the centre yesterday, and the rush of patients continues to increase, centre officials said.

Ershad outlines electoral reform

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad said the provision of appointing the immediate retired Chief Justice (CJ) as the head of the caretaker government should be changed.

Necessary reforms should also be introduced for an independent election commission, with some executive power to hold free, fair and transparent elections at all levels, he said while presenting his proposal on reform of the electoral system yesterday at a press briefing.

"More reform in the caretaker government will not bring any positive result until the existing electoral system is changed," Ershad said, adding that the appointment of a chief advisor and other advisors to the caretaker government should be appointed on the basis of consensus of all political parties representing the parliament.

There is no scope of taking a justice as neutral, so appointment of other advisors should not be left only to the CJ, he argued.

Presenting an outline for proportionate representation by the political parties, Ershad proposed that an interim government could be framed by appointing advisors in proportion to the parliamentary seats of the political parties.

In his proposal Ershad said the general elections could be held on party basis, meaning voters will cast their votes in favour of a party instead of an individual candidate. The party that bags the most votes will have most of the seats in the parliament, and if any party gets 50 percent of the votes, it will have 150 members in the parliament, according to his proposal.

The proposal also pointed out that a by-election in a vacant seat is not required if the EC is reformed in this way. Because the party that earlier represented the constituency

will still be the representative after the seat fell vacant, only through another person, since people voted for the party, not an individual.

Ershad suggested that the list of the candidates of a party would be prepared on a quota basis, preserving 50% for general, 30% for women, 10% for minorities and 10% for professional groups.

The JP chairman informed that he had already sent his proposal on electoral reform to the heads of the other political parties, including the ruling BNP and the main opposition Awami League.

Asked whether he would contest the next general elections if elective reforms were not introduced, Ershad said, "It is difficult for me to answer in this regard right now. The decision will be taken after consultation with party members."

JP Presidium Member Qazi Zafar Ahmed, Rowshan Ershad, Quazi Feroz Rashid and other senior leaders attended the press conference.

9 HC judges take oath

UNB, Dhaka

Nine additional judges of the High Court were sworn in as judges yesterday.

Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain administered the oath of office to them at the judges' lounge at a simple ceremony.

The judges took oath as Justice Afzal Hossain Ahmed, Justice AFM Ali Asgar, Justice Farid Ahmed, Justice Shamim Hasnain, Justice AFM Abdur Rahman, Justice Mohammad Abu Tariq, Justice Zinat Ara, Justice Muhammad Abdul Hafiz and Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed.



PHOTO: PID

Nine newly appointed High Court judges pose for photograph with Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain at the Supreme Court Judges' Lounge in the city yesterday.

Work on Dhaka-Ctg highway to begin soon

BSS, Dhaka

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said the expansion work of Dhaka-Chittagong highway will start soon to improve its traffic movement capacity.

He said the work on Chittagong-Sitakunda section may start in June. "The Dhaka-Chittagong highway will be a four-lane highway with divider for two-way traffic movement," he said adding that work on the expanded highway is expected to be completed in two years.

The project will cost about Tk 1,600 crore. The Finance Minister said the government will provide the fund from own sources if any suitable fund giver is not found for the project. "The Prime Minister has already given her consent to start the work forthwith," he said.

Saifur said this while he was addressing a meeting of the

Chittagong, Noakhali-Comilla-Sylhet (CNCS) Forum for Development at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on Tuesday.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Khandker Mosharrar Hossain, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Communication Minister Nazmul Huda, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al-Noman, Mayor Sadeq Hossain Khoka, former Deputy Prime Minister Jamaluddin Ahmed, former Minister Gulam Mostafa and Mosharrar Hossain MP were present.

Leaders of the regional associations representing greater Chittagong, Noakhali, Comilla and Sylhet districts were also present. CNCS Convenor Monirul Haque Chowdhury MP presided.

Saifur said the government is also implementing several bypass projects to reduce traffic congestion at the city's entry points on its east-

ern end for the vehicles coming from Chittagong, Noakhali, Comilla and Sylhet regions.

Saifur said the government is planning construction of another flyover at Tongi next year to reduce the traffic congestion.

He said the work of the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover will be inaugurated soon with completion of some ground breaking formalities.

He also said that the work on the Karnaphuli Bridge will also start soon as the Kuwait Fund has already approved the funding programme and the tender processing on this project will start immediately.

The implementation of South Comilla and North Noakhali development projects will also be implemented without delay to exploit the farming potentials of the regions, he said.

WEATHER TODAY Thundershowers likely UNB, Dhaka Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at few places over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Sylhet and at one or two places over Khulna and Barisal divisions till 6.00pm today. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said. Highest temperature 40.7 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chuadanga and lowest 20.0 degree yesterday at Rangamati. The sun sets in the capital at 6:26pm today and rises at 5:26am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were: City/Town Temperature in Celsius Humidity in percentage Morning Evening Dhaka 35.5 21.6 73 50 Chittagong 27.8 26.0 76 75 Rajshahi 38.6 24.6 75 39 Khulna 38.5 26.4 79 39 Barisal 36.5 26.0 81 58 Sylhet 28.6 23.0 82 66 Cox's Bazar 34.0 27.0 77 73

DHAKA TODAY Baishakhi fair A nine-day-long Baishakhi fair, organised by Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, will be inaugurated. Venue: International Trade Fair Ground, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Time: 5.00pm. The fair will remain open from 10.00am to 8.00pm daily. Certificate award ceremony The certificate award ceremony of the Independent University, Bangladesh will be held. Venue: University Campus, Baridhara. Time: 4.00pm. DAM meeting Dhaka Ahsania Mission organises a meeting to welcome Water Aid Bangladesh in the Decentralised Total Sanitation Project with LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as chief guest. Venue: DAM Auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 10.00am. Painting exhibition A solo exhibition of paintings by Biren Shome will be inaugurated. Venue: Shilpangon Gallery, Road-5, House-25, Dhanmondi. Time: 5.30pm. The exhibition will remain open till May 12 from 10.00am to 1.00pm and from 5.00pm to 8.00pm daily. Tamaddun Majlis Tamaddun Majlis organises a discussion titled 'Importance of the teachings of the holy Prophet (SAW) in building a great and powerful Bangladesh' to mark the holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi. It will be followed by a musical soiree. Venue: National Press Club Auditorium. Time: 3.30pm. Silver Jubilee Lecture Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad organises a silver jubilee lecture with Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, former chief advisor of the caretaker government, as main speaker. Venue: Cirdap Auditorium, Topkhana Road. Time: 3.30pm. Founding anniversary Autism Welfare Foundation organises a discussion and cultural function to mark its founding anniversary with Education Minister Dr Osman Faruk as chief guest. Venue: Baitul Aman Housing Society, Shyamoli. Time: 4.00pm. Memorial meeting Sandwip Samity, Dhaka organises a meeting in memory of those killed in the severe cyclone and tidal wave in 1991. Venue: Bangladesh Photo Journalists Association Auditorium, Purana Paltan. Time: 4.00pm. Rotary meeting Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Greater Dhaka will be held. Venue: Hotel Eastern Residence, Banani. Time: 6.00pm.