

Illegal VoIP denies country Tk 6,000 crore a year

Govt mulls financial penalties against operators; cell phone companies blame authorities for suspiciously delaying licensing process

SHARIER KHAN

The government is likely to impose financial penalties and regulatory punishment on mobile phone companies for their involvement in illegal VoIP operation which has deprived the nation of huge tax and revenue for several years, telecoms ministry sources said.

Beginning from January, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) has busted several dozen illegal VoIP

operations and some of these surprisingly lead directly or indirectly to GrameenPhone (GP), Airtel and Banglalink. Further investigations are going on against other phone companies.

The government has already filed cases against the GP, Airtel and Banglalink for illegal VoIP operation.

These operations have deprived the national exchequer of an estimated annual overseas call revenue and tax amounting to over Tk

6,000 crore. Sources in mobile phone companies however said not that payment of all this money was evaded as they paid taxes for all the calls.

Sources in the companies also blame Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC) for its deliberate delay in issuing VoIP licences and Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) for not installing adequate International Trunk Exchange (ITX) facilities pushed

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to handle growing foreign calls over the years.

They point out that while phone companies were indeed involved in the illegal operation, the fact is there had been huge unmet overseas call demand that needed to be addressed on the one hand, and on the other, the authorities' suspicious dilly-dallying with VoIP licensing or ITX facilities pushed

Advisers okay amendment to emergency power rules

UNB, Dhaka

The council of advisers yesterday approved the amended Emergency Powers Ordinance 2007 and the Law and Order Disrupting Crime Speedy Trial (amendment) Act 2002.

The approval was given in a regular meeting of the council of advisers with Chief Adviser Fakhrul Islam in the chair.

The meeting also endorsed in principle the Anti-Corruption Commission Ordinance 2007, arming the anti-graft watchdog with powers to arrest corruption suspects and formulate necessary rules for its effective functioning.

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PHOTO: AFP

Exciting opener Tamim Iqbal hits one to the fence during Bangladesh's World Cup Super Eight match against South Africa at the Guyana National Stadium yesterday.

Ashraful, Aftab steady Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraful and Aftab Ahmed rescued Bangladesh from a precarious position with a half-century partnership after recalled South Africa paceman Andrew Nel had struck thrice in quick succession in their Super Eights encounter at the Guyana National Stadium on Saturday.

He said the present caretaker government is working together with the armed forces for establishing a justice-based government through election after rooting out the ingrained corruption in the

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and the Proteas had the Tigers opener chasing shadows with a fine display of swing bowling from Shaun Pollock and Makhaya Ntini.

But to their credit both Javed Omar and young Tamim Iqbal braved the onslaught to put on 42 in 13 overs before Nel struck a swift triple blow.

Coming into the side in place of Andrew Hall, Nel had Omar play his favoured cut shot straight into the waiting hands of the Proteas captain at point to be out for a

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Call to outlaw party politics on campus

But noted academics speak against any interference in autonomy of universities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said students and teachers should not have direct involvement with the political parties.

At the open discussion titled "UGC's 20-year plan on higher

education" that was organised by Nagrik Sanghati at the National Press Club, they expressed their opinion against interference with the autonomy of the universities under the University Order 1973.

University teachers and students should not be directly involved with

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Fisheries and Livestock Adviser CS Karim visits bird flu affected poultry farms in Narayanganj yesterday.

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Bird flu detected in another Savar farm

2,000 chickens culled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The avian influenza virus was detected yesterday at another poultry farm in Savar. Chickens were being culled at the farm last night.

Laboratory tests confirmed infection of the virus at Laura Poultry Farm at Aukpara in Savar yesterday evening. A total of 2,000 chickens were culled as of 10:00pm yesterday.

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All the chickens at the infected farm will be culled, Livestock Department Director Abdul Motaleb told reporters last night.

The army and police cordoned off the infected farm.

Suspicion arose that the farm was infected with avian influenza-bird flu--after a considerable number of chickens died there on Friday, sources in the Savar Upazila Livestock Office said.

Its founder Moulana Abdur Rouf, who is now behind bars, had ordered his disciples sometime last year to operate under the new name.

An Afghan War veteran, he is a

former leader of Harkatul Jihad Al-Islami (HuJI) Bangladesh that was banned by the government in 2005.

Despite his absence, the organisation continued to thrive with several hundred cadres active across the country. It is working to send its activists abroad to fight the 'enemies of Islam' in places across the globe, said intelligence sources.

Recently, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) has arrested seven members of the militant outfit. In



Moulana Abdur Rouf

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Hasina hits out at EC over polls delay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina who is now on a personal visit to the United States yesterday lambasted the Election Commission (EC) for delaying the next general election.

Public patience would wear thin if the elections are delayed for such a long time, she said referring to the 18-month time frame announced by the commission last week.

Hasina also came down heavily on the caretaker government, terming it 'undemocratic and unconstitutional'.

She made the observations in an interview with BBC radio yesterday morning.

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The AL chief accused the Fakhrul Islam-led government of depriving the people of their right to elect their own government. She then sought to remind them that no undemocratic government could last long.

The former prime minister slammed Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda for his remarks that the commission would take at least 18 months before announcing the election schedule. He said the time is needed to prepare a flawless voter roll with photographs.

Hasina said she wonders why should it take one and half years to make a voter roll and they have not

Disqualified bidder bags Sylhet gas deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Sylhet Gas Field Company Ltd (SGFL) today goes ahead to a highly technical Tk 113 crore gas processing plant installation deal with a disqualified Chinese company ignoring the project consultant's strong reservations.

A well-placed source quoting the project consultant's views said Chinese company Sinopec that was awarded the installation of 'Kailashila Molecular Sieve Turbo Expander Processing Plant' does not even have the basic understanding about how to install a gas-to-natural gas liquids processing plant.

Represented by Saha International, Sinopec was awarded the project under political pressure last year in connivance with some high officials in the SGFL and Petrobangla, the sources said.

A source said that the SGFL at this point cannot stop this project and go for a re-tender as the

contract has already been awarded to Sinopec by the past-management.

"The Sinopec was asked to furnish its performance guarantee in March and it did so. Now we have to reciprocate," said the source adding that the SGFL board will okay the Sinopec deal today.

The project's European consultant in its tender evaluation report warned that accepting the Chinese plant would be a 'total disaster' as Sinopec would not be able to deliver the end-product from their offered plant because its designs are grossly flawed.

The consultant had determined at least 50 major deviations in Sinopec's technical proposal to set up the plant and sought 160 clarifications. The consultant observed that the Chinese bid grossly deviated from the tender specifications that cannot be corrected by mere clarifications.

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