

## 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), Aktel and Banglalink. Further investigations are going on against other phone companies.

The government has already filed cases against the GP, Aktel 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)

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

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## 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 Fakhruddin Ahmed 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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## Next polls will not be ordinary

Asserts Mainul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The people's representatives elected in the next parliamentary election will not be able to plunder the country for their personal gains, said Mainul Hossain, adviser for Information, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs yesterday.

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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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.

The two played intelligently to put on 68 runs for the fifth wicket to see their side to 152-4 at the end of 36 overs.

Both the strokemakers batted with plenty of responsibility, picking the singles while consigning the bad balls to the boundary.

Aftab was batting on 29 after just having hit Justin Kemp for two sixes off the seamer's first over. Ashraful also notched up a rapid 32 off 45 balls with four hits across the fence.

Earlier, Graeme Smith won the toss and decided to allow his bowlers first use of the pitch in overcast conditions, expecting the ball to move around a bit.

Smith's prediction proved true

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, Nell 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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## 100 injured as storm lashes 2 districts

500 houses damaged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Nor'wester lashed five villages in Dhanbari upazila of Tangail district on Friday night.

Upazila administration sources said the storm hit the villages at around 11:00pm and lasted for half an hour, injuring at least 100 people and damaging over 500 houses

The affected villages are Baoijan, Gangabar, Teriata, Saidarpara, and Sonamui Baduria.

Besides, electric poles were uprooted by the storm, snapping power supply in the storm-hit villages.

Immediately after the storm, members of the joint forces and upazila officials went to the villages, rescued the injured and sent them to Dhanbari Hospital, Madhupur Upazila Health Complex, Jamalpur General Hospital and Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH).

Tangail Deputy Commissioner (DC) visited the storm-hit villages yesterday morning and distributed Tk 30,000 in cash, 'sarees' and 'lungis' among the affected people.

In Jamalpur, nor'wester swept over Sarishabari upazila the same night, damaging at least 200 houses and injuring five people, according to the UNB.

The storm-hit areas are Bausi

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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 Nagorik 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

the political parties, said Prof M Moniruzzaman Miah, former vice-chancellor (VC) of Dhaka University (DU).

Getting involved in any organisation is one's basic right but students' and teachers' direct link

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

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

## 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.

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.

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## Banned Islamist outfit active in different name

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Tanjime Tamiruddin, listed by the government as a suspected militant outfit, has been renamed Hijbe Abu Omar so it could be run unhindered in the face of the clampdown on Islamic militancy.

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



Moulana Abdur Rouf

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

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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 holding 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.

The AL chief accused the Fakhruddin Ahmed-led government of depriving the people of their right to elect their own government. She then sought to remind them that 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

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## Disqualified bidder bags Sylhet gas deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Sylhet Gas Field Company Ltd (SGFL) today gives go 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 "Kailastila 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 Sahco 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 con-

tract 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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