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Vodafone vying for 30pc stake in AKTEL

MD HASAN

Vodafone, the world's leading mobile telecom group, is in talks to buy a 30 per cent stake in AKTEL, Bangladesh's third largest mobile network, from the local owner A.K. Khan and Co. in a deal that could be worth more than US\$300m.

Speaking at an open meeting with the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, Gavin Darby, chief executive officer of Vodafone Americas, Africa, China and India said: "I met Mr. Khan (Salahuddin Kasem Khan) chairman of A. K. Khan and Company yesterday (Tuesday). Mr. Khan is considering selling his AKTEL's shares. So in the short time, that is the opportunity that we are looking at in Bangladesh mobile market."

In recent months AKTEL has been struggling to maintain its

position in the extremely competitive Bangladeshi market. In December it lost its position as the country's second largest operator to banglalink, and saw subscriber numbers fall from 6.70 million in September 2007 to 6.40 million in December 2007.

The company is 70 per cent owned by Telekom Malaysia and 30 per cent owned by A.K. Khan and Co.

Yusuf Annuar Yaacob, chief executive officer of Telekom Malaysia International, has previously said his company was keen to work with Vodafone in Bangladesh and valued AKTEL as worth "in excess of US\$1 billion."

Yesterday he stressed that TM had no intention of selling its stake in AKTEL. "However, I am unable to comment on actions or decisions that are made by our other shareholders."

Salahuddin Kashem Khan chairman of A.K. Khan and Co Ltd refused to make any comments on the company's plans for its AKTEL stake. However he said it was very good for Bangladesh that Vodafone came to explore the market. "If Vodafone comes into Bangladesh, it will be good for the country," he said.

With six mobile operators already competing in Bangladesh Vodafone is unlikely to be granted a new licence and yesterday it made clear this was not its preferred way of entering the market.

"Six mobile operators is a very good number in a market like Bangladesh--- it's a large number relative to other markets. In terms of where or what the opportunity is (for us)--- I think therefore we be within one of the existing six," Darby said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Commissioner Shahid acquitted of murder charge

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday acquitted condemned prisoner Shahidur Rahman alias Shahid Commissioner and lifer Tanoy Mollah of murdering BNP leader Advocate Habib Mandol.

Habib Mandol, a city unit BNP leader, was gunned down by unidentified assailants in front of his Banogram residence in Old Dhaka on August 20 in 2000.

Following jail appeals against trial court verdict, a High Court division bench of Justice AKM Fazlur Rahman and Justice Quamrul Islam Siddiqui delivered the judgment, exonerating the two convicts.

The High Court, however, upheld the death sentence of terror kingpin Kala Jahangir and life imprisonment of 12 other convicts.

The lifers are Nurul Huq, Abdul Malek, Chakma Apu, Pichchi Hannan, Kala Sharif, Rahman, Sentu, Akhtar Hossain, Alamgir, Kachi, Biplab and Dakat Shahid.

The rodent threat in the hills

PINAKI ROY and SURANJITH DEARNATH

Family of Sa-Aung Gya along with 15 other families reached Zaitun Para after a four-day walk from their remote village in Raikhong in Rangamati. Fear of starvation forced the exodus as rats infested their crops and left them with no food until next harvesting season.

"We have left our village in the wake of rats' attacks. The pests have destroyed almost all our crops and now we don't have anything to eat for the rest of the year," said Sa-Aung Gya.

Standing on the bank of the Sangu on way to Ruma, he told The Daily Star they were waiting for "Karbari" (chairman or headman) of Zaitun Para to get a permission to live there.

Hundreds of other families

have become victims of rats in Rangamati and Bandarban districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Many of these people have left their village homes in fear, seeing hill bamboos in bloom. According to the folk observation, in every five decades bamboo blooms and fruits, and the rats eat those, resulting in a huge increase in their regeneration.

"So rats increase like anything and swoop on the crops. The situation becomes so serious that they destroy almost every edible thing in the infested localities," said Anil Tripura, former chairman of Galingya Union Parishad in Bandarban.

Anil witnessed the same situation in the CHT during 1960s.

Several hill people say this



An indigenous boy holds dead rats at a paddy field in a remote village in Bandarban where rats have infested croplands.

CTG AIRPORT Biman flight finally departs after 38 hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The 250 Biman passengers stranded in Chittagong finally left for Abu Dhabi yesterday after a 38-hour delay and their flight rescheduled for the fourth time.

Flight BG 027 of Bangladesh Biman took off with the passengers at 9:15am, deviating from its previously announced departure time of 8:15am.

The passengers were stranded for nearly 24 hours at Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport since Monday evening as the Bangladesh Biman authorities failed to confirm their flight schedule.

On Tuesday evening, the Biman authorities had changed the flight schedule for the third time and informed the passengers that the flight would depart at 8:15am on Wednesday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Pakistan captures top militant after shootout

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani police yesterday quizzed a leading al-Qaeda-linked militant who was caught after a bloody shootout, while three suspected rebels and two troops died in other violence, officials said.

Qasim Toori, a member of the banned extremist group Jundullah (Army of God), was hit in the foot and arrested after a gun battle in the southern city of Karachi late Tuesday, Sindh province home minister Akhtar Zamin said.

Toori was one of Pakistan's most wanted men because of his involvement in two bombings in 2004, one targeting the top army general in Karachi and the other aimed at an American cultural centre, officials said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Freedom fighter sues Shah A Hannan for defamation

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court ordered former Islami Bank chairman Shah Mohammad Hannan and two others to appear before the court on April 30 in connection with a defamation case filed by a freedom fighter yesterday.

Meanwhile, another Dhaka court directed Keraniganj police to submit the probe report of the murder case against Jamaat Ameer Matu Rahman Nizami and 11 others by February 27.

DEFAMATION CASE

The other two accused are Dr ABM Mahabubul Islam, dean of Law Faculty of Bangladesh Islami University and Advocate Mohammad Moshui Alam.

Mohammad Abu Shahid Billah of Mohammadpur in the capital filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court against them for making defamatory statements about the Liberation War.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

BALI CONFCE Nations urged to fight systemic corruption

REZAUL KARIM, from Bali, Indonesia

Governments of the countries grappling with corruption must take initiatives to change institutional culture and work with domestic and international allies to fight systemic corruption, said an internationally renowned expert on global corruption and reform.

"If we want to reduce systemic corruption, we need to change the corrupt institutional culture," said Prof Robert Klitgaard, the expert, at the 5-day anti-corruption conference sponsored by the UN at Bali International Convention Centre in Nusa Dua yesterday.

While delivering a lecture on 'Holistic Approach to Eradicating Corruption', he said leaders of the countries struggling with corruption should try to mobilise domestic and international allies as well as resources to fight it.

"We have to adopt a holistic approach and think in terms of corrupt systems instead of corrupt individuals," he said.

The culture of corruption sees 'big fish swims freely' and the powerful enjoys impunity.

BNP rebels want reforms, unification

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the pro-Saifur faction of BNP yesterday in a meeting decided to bring reforms in the constitution of the party before unifying the party.

However, Maj (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, acting secretary general of the faction, during a press briefing following the closed-door meeting at his Banani residence, said, "We want the implementation of reforms and the unification simultaneously." A united BNP will participate in the next election, Hafiz added.

The faction leaders attending the meeting expressed their resentment over the pro-Khaleda faction

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Tea and cigarette vendors set up makeshift stalls under a tree in Suhrawardi Udyan in the capital, marring the beauty of the park, with the security guards lenient with them.

5YR OLD ACCUSED Bandarban ASI suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police headquarters yesterday suspended an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of Bandarban who pressed charges against a five-year-old boy, accusing him of threatening rubber garden staff with death and destroying property.

ASI M Salahuddin of Baishari Investigation Centre under Naikhangchhari Police Station was closed to Bandarban Police Lines, said a press release from the police headquarters.

Salahuddin, investigation officer (IO) of general diary (GD) filed by a few rubber garden owners last August, submitted the charge sheet to Bandarban District

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Hillary beats Obama in Florida primary

AFP, Miami

Democratic hopeful Hillary Clinton coasted to victory over Barack Obama in Florida in a largely symbolic win Tuesday which gave a vital boost to her White House bid, US media said.

With 47 per cent of precincts reporting, Hillary was leading Obama by 51 per cent to 31 per cent in the vote, US media said. Former senator John Edwards was trailing in third place with 15 per cent.

But Florida has been stripped of its delegates to the Democratic Party's nominating convention

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Prayer Timing

January 31

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:35	6:10
Zohr	12:30	1:15
Asr	4:15	4:30
Maghrib	5:46	5:50
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

2nd Death Anniversary of Ranon

Abbu You left us on this day but you are always in our mind & prayer.

Brig Gen Abid (Retd) Reeta & Faiguni



Awami League leaders and workers stage demonstration showing black flags during the trial of party chief Sheikh Hasina at a court set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex yesterday.

২৮তম বিসিএস পরীক্ষার্থীদের জন্য একমাত্র পূর্ণাঙ্গ বিসিএস গাইড

কারণ, এতে আছে:

- বিসিএস প্রিলিমিনারি টেস্টের অধ্যয়নাত্মক প্রশ্নোত্তর
- পিসিএসি কর্তৃক গৃহীত অন্যান্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পরীক্ষালমুহুরে প্রশ্নোত্তর
- সর্বোচ্চ সংখ্যক নৈর্ব্যক্তিক প্রশ্নোত্তর ও তথ্যকপিকা
- জটিল ও অস্পষ্ট প্রশ্নের Notes সংযোজন
- সাম্প্রতিক ঘটনাবলির আলোকে পৃথক অধ্যায়
- সর্বাধিক কমানের নিত্যতা

এখন বাজার

পাঞ্জেরী পাবলিকেশন্স লি.