

# 32 firms to get IP telephony

BTRC boss tells the launch of new Warid logo



Rajiuddin Ahmed Raju, post and telecommunications minister, Zia Ahmed, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, and Muneer Farooqui, chief executive officer of Warid Telecom, attend a programme to relaunch Warid with a new logo in Dhaka yesterday.

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

As many as 32 local internet service providers will be awarded IP telephony licences, opening up voice calls through internet protocol (VoIP), usage of which prohibited in Bangladesh just a few days back.

"We have issued 32 IP telephony licences, which will come into operation soon," said Zia Ahmed, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), at the launch of new brand identity of a private mobile phone operator in Dhaka yesterday.

More IP telephony licences soon, the telecom watchdog chief told journalists at the function.

IP telephony is a general term used to describe the technology that uses the internet protocol's packet-switched connection to exchange voice, fax and other forms of information services.

The Warid Telecom's re-launch came with a changed logo and new brand promises reflecting and sym-

bolising the strategic transformation of the company to become a telecom customer-centric organisation in the country.

The new logo reiterates the values Warid is known for: Simplicity, Honesty, Innovation, Quality, Dynamic and Friendly.

Speaking on the occasion, Post and Telecommunications Minister Rajiuddin Ahmed Raju praised the Warid network expansion plan.

He said, "This kind of step by Warid will accelerate the process of implementing a Digital Bangladesh."

Warid CEO Muneer Farooqui said, "The new brand and logo, being the symbol of recognition, will portray a uniform brand image and identity of Warid Group."

Launched in May 2007, Warid has more than 2.5 million active subscribers. The company has so far invested around \$600 million on network and infrastructures, paid Tk 650 crore to the government exche-

quer in the form of taxes and took part in various social initiatives as part of its corporate social responsibility.

Talking to the Daily Star yesterday M A Salam, owner of Agni Systems, a IP licensee, said the introduction of IP telephony will provide cost effective voice facilities along with other unique features that are comparatively expensive to provide by mobile or landline operators.

Compared to other countries, Bangladesh is a late entrant to the world of IP telephony. Worldwide traditional phone technologies are being replaced with IP-based operations.

Salam said in the subcontinent, except Pakistan, all other nations are enjoying IP telephony facilities. "The main advantage of IP phone is that it offers low-cost phone service," he said.

The IP telephony market will be competitive, as customers have to pay a nominal charge to enjoy voice call services, Salam said.

He said the additional charge for use of the IP telephony would not matter as internet users are used to paying charges on a monthly basis.

In Bangladesh, around 10 lakh people are connected to the internet through members of the ISP association.

Licence owners will also be able to provide PC (personal computer) to phone, phone to PC, phone to phone or any other use to subscribers, based on the IP telephony voice service.

From a technical point of view, experts said, the VoIP is going to be partially open as IP and VoIP technologies have nearly same features.

By issuing IP licences, transmitting voice through the internet protocol will be allowed but the use of VSAT for routing voice for commercial use will still be treated as illegal.

According to the BTRC, a total of 200 ISP licences have so far been issued, whereas only 70 operators are providing services. Around a million people have internet access.

## Indo-Bangla trade thru' Benapole resumes

UNB, Benapole

Import and export activities between India and Bangladesh resumed through Benapole land port yesterday after a one-day suspension.

Thirty trucks laden with perishable goods such as onion and fish were imported from India till filing of this report, while goods in 20 trucks were exported to India.

Indian port sources said Indian truck workers laid siege to Petrapole port road since Tuesday afternoon as Indian government imposed restriction on movement of old trucks, suspending the import and export activities.

The workers called off their programme following fruitful discussion between administration, businessmen and workers, which paved the way for resumption of export and import activities.

## Summit Power's new director



### STAR BUSINESS DESK

Dr Salahuddin Ahmed Khan, former chief executive officer of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) Ltd, has joined the Board of Directors of Summit Power Ltd, says a press release.

Khan started his career as a lecturer at Dhaka University's finance and banking department in 1986. He was promoted as an assistant professor in 1989 and later served as an associate professor till August 2003. He served as the chief executive officer of DSE from September 2003 to December 2008.

After his term in DSE, he returned to his teaching career as a professor of finance at Dhaka University.

He has authored several research papers on market and security returns, mutual funds and IPO floatation method.

## Dhaka team meets Mahathir in Malaysia

### STAR BUSINESS DESK

Malaysian leader Dr Mahathir Mohamad stressed a greater economic co-operation among Islamic states.

He said this at a meeting with a 4-member delegation from Bangladesh Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, led by its President Salahuddin Kasem Khan, in Kuala Lumpur recently, according to a press statement.

The former Malaysian prime minister advocated preferential treatment to Bangladeshi products like readymade garments, halal foods, jute, pharmaceuticals and other non-traditional items to ease access to Malaysian market.

Holding of the first-ever Showcase Bangladesh 2010 in Kuala Lumpur from January 8-10 also came up for discussion in the meeting.

## China power output rises

AFP, Beijing

China's electricity output rose for the second consecutive month in July after slumping for eight months since October, in a possible sign the economy is starting to recover, state media reported.

Power plants generated 348.5 billion kilowatts of electricity, up 4.2 percent from a year ago, the Xinhua news agency said late Tuesday, citing the State Grid Corporation, China's top power distributor.

## News in Brief



Norio Sasaki, president of Japanese high-tech giant Toshiba, delivers a speech during a press conference in Tokyo yesterday. Toshiba was expected to announce the company's business strategy for 2009.

## Toshiba eyes new businesses for recovery

AFP, Tokyo

Toshiba Corp. said Wednesday it aimed to expand its energy, healthcare and environment-related businesses as it targets a strong recovery in earnings within the next three years.

Under its new leadership, Japan's largest chipmaker signalled an increased focus on nuclear plants, solar energy systems and medical devices to offset the impact of falling semiconductor prices.

Toshiba expects social infrastructure -- which includes nuclear energy systems -- to be its most profitable division by early 2012, president Norio Sasaki told a news conference, outlining his business strategy.

"Expanding into new businesses such as health care, the environment and energy security will provide a basis for strong growth," said Sasaki, an expert in atomic power technology who took the helm of Toshiba in late June.

The group, which owns US nuclear power plant maker Westinghouse, is targeting an operating profit of 350 billion yen (3.7 billion dollars) by the business year ending March 2012, compared with a 343.6-billion-yen loss last year.

The company also plans to cut fixed costs by 330 billion yen in the current business year to March 2010 and reduce capital spending and investment in research and development in a bid to return to the black.

## Dismal first half for Cathay Pacific as global crisis bites

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong carrier Cathay Pacific said Wednesday the global economic crisis had battered its passenger and cargo services in the first half of the year, with revenue plummeting 27.1 percent.

A collapse in business and first class travel was accompanied by a similar plunge in the firm's cargo business, as demand from the United States and Europe for products made in southern China's factory belt disappeared.

Turnover fell to 30.92 billion Hong Kong dollars (3.96 billion US) in the first six months of the year from 42.39 billion in 2008 due to weak demand, the carrier said in a statement.

"The simple truth is that we continue to lose money due to the deep and sustained downturn in our passenger and cargo businesses," chairman Christopher Pratt told reporters.

Pratt said passenger revenue fell 23 percent in the first half compared to the same period in 2008 and that the cargo figures were "even more depressing", down almost 40 percent.

## Unicredit bank says quarterly profit falls 74pc

AFP, Milan

Italian banking giant Unicredit said Tuesday its net profits fell by 74.37 percent in the second quarter to 490 million euros (706 million dollars) due to write-downs and provisions in the economic crisis.

In the equivalent quarter a year ago, net profits were 1.912 billion euros. The second-quarter results nevertheless beat the forecasts of analysts polled by Dow Jones Newswires, who had predicted net profits of 427 million euros.

Unicredit's shares on the Milan stock exchange were up 3.36 percent at 2.2275 euros at 1435 GMT on a stable market.

The bank's write-downs and provisions amounted to 2.43 billion euros, from 634 million euros in the corresponding period of 2008.

Bad debts also rose, by 7.6 percent to 30.9 billion euros by comparison with the first quarter.

## Taiwan's consumer prices down 2.33pc

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan said Wednesday that its consumer price index in July fell 2.33 percent year-on-year, the sixth in a row, on lower food and oil costs.

The drop compared with a 1.98 percent decline in June, said the Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics.

On a monthly basis, July consumer prices were 0.19 percent higher than June due to rising vegetable, cigarette and transport prices, the agency said.

However, the cost of clothes fell, it added. The July core price index, which excludes vegetables, fruit, fish products and energy costs, fell 0.93 percent from a year earlier, while the wholesale price index (WPI) dropped 14.11 percent.

## Call for completing Khulna airport construction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Greater Khulna Development Action Coordination Committee has appealed to the government to reconsider an allocation of fund to complete construction of an airport in the region.

The committee said the airport in Khulna will contribute to economic development of the south-western region of the country.

The foundation stone to construct the airport was laid in 1995 at Failla near the Khulna-Mongla highway of Bagerhat district. However, no fund was allocated in the national budget for the purpose.

Later, construction that began in 1996 was halted by both Awami League and the four-party alliance for non-allocation of funds.

President of the committee Liakat Ali told The Daily Star that the airport would accelerate economic growth as the region boasts of the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, and the country's second sea-

port at Mongla.

The Sundarbans has already been selected for the final round of a race, along with 27 others, to be named one of the new seven wonders of nature.

The airport in the region is indispensable for making the Mongla port more effective and economically viable, Ali said. It will attract greater investment as local and foreign investors consider an airport as the easiest and fastest way for movement and communication, he added.

The committee chief expressed frustration over non-allocation of fund by the present government in the current national budget for the construction of the airport and said it is now a "demand of the time" and not an issue for a political party to win an election.

It is necessary that construction of the airport in Khulna be completed, as the World Bank has expressed desire to provide financial assistance to develop the Mongla seaport and rivers sectors in the region, Ali said.



Grameenphone Ltd hosts its annual Customer Night 2009 at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on Tuesday. At the event, the mobile operator awarded BEXIMCO Group as the first business customer. DHL Worldwide Express (BD) Ltd was named the first data solution customer and BRAC Bank the Business Customer of the Year 2009.

## IOM sees better days for women migrants

BSS, Dhaka

Demand for Bangladeshi women workers abroad in nursing, house management and garment sectors is increasing by the day.

Over 20,843 Bangladeshi women immigrants are now working abroad, according to statistics provided at a training programme on household work management organised by International Organisation for Migration (IOM) at its office in Dhaka.

The training manual prepared with the assistance of the IOM includes house management, child nursing, caring for people in old age and patients, health and sanitation, inservice security, overseas income management and language skill, IOM said in a press statement.

Director (training) of Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training Ahsan Habib said the government wants to extend such training programme for skill development of women workers, who intend to go abroad.

IOM Regional Representative Rabab Fatima said the demand for women workers would rise in the overseas market if they were provided with training of international standards.

There is no correct figure on how many Bangladeshi women are working in the Middle East and South Asian countries, she added.



MA Rouf Chowdhury, chairman of Rangs Group, poses with participants in a five-day technical training programme at Rangs Workshop Ltd, organised by Mitsubishi Motors Corporation in Dhaka recently.

## Eurozone buying index rises

AFP, Brussels

Activity in the manufacturing and service sectors of the 16 eurozone countries firmed for the fifth month running in August while still contracting, a key survey of buying managers showed on Wednesday.

The index of purchasing managers' activity in the manufacturing and services sectors by the Markit survey company put the index at 47.0 points, higher than an earlier estimate and topping the 44.6 recorded in June.

It is the highest reading since August 2008, with the figures buoyed by near-stabilisation in Germany. However, output has now fallen for 14 months in what has been by far the longest and deepest downturn in the 11-year history of the PMI survey.

Germany, Europe's industrial powerhouse, enjoyed a record rise in its index figures, allowing the eurozone as a whole to post the higher-than expected figures.