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Telecoms plan unveiled

Fibre-optic network to connect unions; hospitals, schools to get computers, net facilities

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday unveiled an ambitious digitisation plan for building Bangladesh as a country fully furnished with modern telecommunications system for faster delivery of services to the people.

Under the mega-scheme 'Digital Bangladesh: Plan of Connecting People', all Union Parishads will be linked with fibre-optic network, upazilas will also get Community e-Centre, and hospitals and schools get computer, web-cam and internet.

Already, 100 Union Parishads have been selected for giving fibre-optic cable connections while another 1,000 unions will be bound with the cross-country cable network soon.

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6-7pc rise in power tariff

Farm sector exempted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday increased electricity prices of four distributing companies by 5.98 to 6.99 percent, with effect from March 1.

Bangladesh Energy Regulation Commission (BERC) Chairman Syed Yusuf Hossain announced the price hike at a media briefing in his office in the capital.

He said the additional revenue earned by the four companies due to the power tariff hike, will be spent to increase power generation, and to curb system loss.

He said after a long hearing of different stakeholders' concerns, BERC decided to increase the power tariffs of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), Dhaka Electric Supply Company Limited (DESCO), West Zone Power Distribution

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This recent photo, taken at a high-rise near US embassy in Dhaka, shows how encroachers grabbed Gulshan Lake. The Daily Star published another photo taken on the same spot on June 28, 2009. Nothing has changed during this time.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Lake recovery loses HC trail

Court directives not yet followed

TAWFIQUE ALI

Instead of going by the High Court directions to protect Gulshan-Banani and Gulshan-Baridhara lakes from encroachers and restore them to their original state, Rajdhani Unnayer Kartipakkha is pursuing a scheme to conserve only whatever of the lakes are left.

Rajuk however intends to acquire any genuine private land on the existing shorelines, and arrange transfer to itself of similar lands owned by different government agencies, to make only minimal adjustment to the existing shorelines under its Lake Improvement Project.

But the current widths of the lakes have been hugely narrowed down from their original sizes over the years through encroachment by earth filling.

According to Rajuk, there is a number of private land claimants on the shorelines, most of whom possess dubious documents, while some of the private lands it intends to acquire might have genuine claimants.

The court order said legal and authorised occupants within the lake areas should either be provided with alternative plots or be rehabilitated some other ways including compensations.

The lake development project is worth Tk 418 crore, of which Tk 314 crore has been earmarked for acquisition of 80 acres of land, said Rajuk sources.

The project also includes construction of walkways and driveways, four bridges over the lakes, and excavation.

The High Court in July last year directed Rajuk to survey the lakes with the help of the Directorate of Land Records and Survey (DLRS), and the deputy commissioner (DC) of Dhaka on the basis of Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) to demarcate the lake areas by January 31 this year.

The court also directed Rajuk to publish the names of illegal occupants of lake areas after the survey.

Rajuk however did not carry out any fresh survey involving DLRS and the Dhaka DC office, nor did it publish any list of the illegal occupants.

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Tigers fail at the death

England take series

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's wait for completing a full circle of victories against all Test playing nations was extended to at least one more match as the Tigers went down to England by two wickets in the closely fought second match of the Beximco ODI series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Inspired by a good batting performance, the spinners worked their web around the English batsmen and ran them agonisingly close to a defeat, but 23-year-old left-hander Eoin Morgan stood valiantly to deny Bangladesh a glorious feat, in the process ensuring the 3-match series with second straight win.

Chasing a modest 261, England were under the cosh from the start and were three down for 68 when Morgan strode in. He was lucky to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

India keen to quiz Jaish man

STAR REPORT

A team of Indian security officials will visit Bangladesh to question a Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) operative arrested in Dhaka recently.

Citing top government sources there, our New Delhi correspondent reports that the team will quiz 35-year-old Nannu Mia alias Belal Mandol alias Billal, who has admitted involvement in the hijack of an Indian Airlines plane in December 1999.

Billal was arrested on Sunday along with four other suspected JeM militants including a Pakistani national.

The Indian sources said he is wanted in connection with the blasts in Bangalore and Surat in 2008. They, however, have yet to be sure if he was complicit in the hijack.

Meanwhile in Dhaka, Rezwan Ahmed, the detained Pakistani, has told investigators that an intelligence agency in his country had trained him how to operate sophisticated weapons and improvised explosives and later sent him to Bangladesh.

Officials, who have been grilling Rezwan, said he has admitted to receiving funds from Pakistan, but has yet to divulge the identity of the fund providers.

"Rezwan's job was to ensure safe passage to India for local recruits and Pakistani militants assigned to stage terror attacks there," an interrogator told The Daily Star in return for anonymity.

Rezwan and his four local associates--Billal, Naser Munshi, Munna and Khoka--were taken to the Task Force for Interrogation cell on Sunday night.

Our Delhi correspondent adds: India hopes that Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

REMARKS ON ZIA Opposition walks out of JS again

Speaker refuses to accept debates on point of order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led opposition lawmakers yesterday walked out of parliament in protest against an Awami League lawmaker's remark labelling late president Ziaur Rahman as a killer and an agent of the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI.

Participating in the thanksgiving motion on the president's address, AL lawmaker Shafiqul Islam had castigated Ziaur Rahman for his role after August 1975.

Opposition lawmakers broke into protest, shouting at the AL lawmaker. But Shafiqul continued his speech amid the noises.

The opposition lawmakers then staged the walkout at

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Shibir rented out RU hall seats

Documents from police raids showed they made around Tk 24 lakh a year out of it; RU moves to take legal action

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Seats of different dormitories at Rajshahi University were illegally rented out to students by Islami Chhatra Shibir cadres in connivance with a section of office staff.

The Shibir leaders and activists involved in the illegal business invested the seat rent money in credit schemes for party men in addition to paying out for organisational activities.

These facts were revealed from documents seized during joint raids to different dormitories by the university authorities and law enforcers since February 23.

The Daily Star has obtained copies of the documents seized at Suhrawardy Hall on February 25.

The university authorities are scrutinising the documents to detect those responsible and submit a report to police for taking legal action, RU Vice-Chancellor Prof M Abdus Sobhan told

The Daily Star.

He said the proctors and hall provosts have been assigned to prepare the report.

According to sources and the documents, Shibir men were pocketing around Tk 24 lakh every year through the seat business at 11 male students' dormitories since 2005.

The Shibir men used to rent out 40 to 50 rooms at each dormitory and their income from those rooms was Tk 18,000-20,000 per month.

The hall unit leaders used to maintain accounts of this business on several register books, which were also audited every month by leaders from other halls, RU and city units, the sources say.

The sources added that some supervisors and other staffs of the halls used to help the Shibir leaders trade on vacant seats.

The documents obtained from Suhrawardy Hall show Shibir's monthly income hovered

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TARIQUE'S BAIL Arrest order withdrawn

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday withdrew the arrest warrant against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman, a day after it was issued in an extortion case.

Arrest warrants against Tarique's business partner Giasuddin Al Mamun and four others were also withdrawn in the same case.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mehedi Hassan Talukder, who had issued the warrants on Monday, passed the order after counsels for one of the accused "Mota" Tareq appealed for the withdrawal.

The three whose arrest warrants were also withdrawn are Kamruzzaman, Mahbul Alam and Obaidul Khondaker. Earlier they were granted bail from the High Court on different dates.

In their petition, the counsels said the High Court on July 23 last year had stayed all the

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