

Telecoms

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recently that the government was thinking of forming a new ministry merging both the ICT and telecommunications sectors.

"Sometimes we face difficulties in working as the ICT and the telecommunications sectors are under different ministries. In other countries, these generally are under the same ministry. We want to follow that," he added.

Sources said if the change happens, according to the proposal, the telecom sector, including all the telecom service providers, will move under the ICT ministry.

State-owned Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited, mobile operator Teletalk, Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Limited, Telephone Shilpa Shangstha and Bangladesh Cable Shilpa Limited are currently operating under the Telecommunications Division.

Following the merger, the MoPT, currently headed by Rajiuddin Ahmed Raju, will be called Ministry of Post and Services which will be responsible for the century-old postal department.

The postal department is the country's oldest institution, having around 9,000 branches across its length and breadth.

According to telecom experts, mobile communication is the key role player in ICT development, especially when the world is moving forward with mobile broadband connectivity.

But telecommunications could not be incorporated in the ICT Policy 2009 as it was under another ministry.

Back in 2008, then BTRC Chairman Manjur Alam had proposed that the telecommunications sector and the ICT ministry should come under a common umbrella.

PBCP leader

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members. As the Rab men returned fire, a gunfight ensued, said Rab-6 Commander Hasanur Rahman Shanto.

Moka was hit by bullets while his associates managed to flee, he said.

The bullet-hit Moka was taken to the local health complex where he was declared dead, he added.

Two pistols, two bullets and a shutter gun were recovered from the scene.

Moka surrendered in 1999 when the then government offered the outlaws an opportunity to surrender. However, he was released on bail in 2003.

The outlawed leader was again arrested in 2008 and released on bail two months ago.

BDR mutiny

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Sessions Judge's Court as the 10th witness, Major Alamgir Hossain Dewan said he had heard two gunshots outside the hall during the director general's darbar.

Soon chaos ensued inside the hall and jawans started rushing out, said Alamgir, who was then posted in Sathkhira sector.

The chaos forced him outside the hall where he saw a group of 10 to 12 armed jawans shooting at the Darbar Hall, where only officers were inside. The jawans had already deserted the hall.

The four jawans are sepoy Matin, Mintu Sheikh, Kamal Mollah and Saiful of 44 Rifle Battalion.

Alamgir said he then managed to reach his residence inside Pilkhana. But there jawans looted valuables, damaged furniture and set fire to his car. Later, they took him and his family members to a prison cell in the quarter guard.

After Alamgir's statement, the court adjourned proceedings till December 11.

Earlier, defence lawyers completed cross-examination of Lt Col Maksudul Haque, the ninth witness in the carnage case, before the makeshift court at Bakshibazar.

Maksudul narrated how BDR (now Border Guard Bangladesh) rebels shot their 57 officers including the then director general Major Gen Shakil Ahmed during the mutiny.

Sue caretaker

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the campus violence.

The four-member probe body held a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday to wrap up its final report with 13 recommendations and 11 observations.

The committee recommended that the government amend the existing warrant of precedence to put lawmakers above army officers, and ensure accountability of army personnel.

It will submit the over 800-page report to the parliamentary standing committee on education ministry on December 21.

On approval of the main committee, the report will be placed at the next parliamentary session and the education ministry.

The probe body, headed by lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon, held 11 meetings and recorded the testimony of over 68 people, including Moeen, in connection with the atrocities on DU teachers and students.

It said the government should provide financial assistance to the students and people subjected to torture at the hands of army personnel at the time.

The committee observed that such an incident could have been avoided if the appropriate army personnel had acted professionally, and shown patience in the course of the campus violence.

"Their [army personnel] aggressive attitude led to such a violence incident," said the committee.

It suggested that the government take measures to strengthen civil-military relationship.

"We have come to the conclusion that the then chief adviser, former army chief, former home adviser and some top-ranking

DGFI officials had failed to discharge their duties in regard to the campus violence," Menon told reporters after the meeting.

The committee also mentioned that Moeen and Fakhruddin -- both of whom have been living in the US for the past nearly two years -- did not play their due role in bringing an end to the clash between some army personnel and students over a football match at the DU gymnasium field in August 2007.

Some army personnel beat up three students, and insulted a teacher during the match, sparking off a spate of violence on the campus.

The committee said a section of army personnel deliberately used the incident to execute their "evil design" and continue the army's control over the then military-backed caretaker government.

Meeting sources said, "The committee has asked the government to try the persons responsible under the existing law."

The parliamentary standing committee on education ministry formed the sub-committee on August 19, 2010 to probe the campus violence and its aftermath.

Four DU teachers and eight students were arrested following the violence on DU campus. The caretaker government released them on January 2008 in the face of strong protests.

Thousands of DU students took to the streets to protest the torture on three of their fellow students on August 20, 2007. Pitched battles between students and police continued for the next two days, leaving more than 250 people wounded, mostly students.

Mirsarai tragedy

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carried out consecutively. However, Mofizur's stay in prison would be counted from the day of his arrest, the PP added.

Meanwhile, no lawyer of the Chittagong bar agreed to defend Mofizur. The accused himself cross-examined the prosecution witnesses.

Truck driver Mofizur was arrested on July 21 at Batna village in Barisal.

On July 11, 39 people, including 37 students, died on the spot while 14 others were injured when a truck carrying over 70 students plunged into a ditch beside the link road between Barotakia and Abu Torab Bazar in Mirsarai upazila.

Five more injured students later succumbed to their injuries.

Kabir Ahmad Nizami, chairman of Mayani union parishad, filed a case on July 12 with Mirsarai Police Station blaming the driver of the truck for the tragedy. Police submitted the charge sheet on September 25. The charges were framed on October 30.

The parents of the victims expressed dissatisfaction over yesterday's verdict as they felt that the punishment was "too little" compared to the casualty the accident had caused.

"I knew the driver would get only five to six years' imprisonment," said Jahir Uddin, who lost his son in the accident.

Mohammad Redwan, father of another victim, said, "Nothing, be it money or punishment, can compensate my loss." He, however, was happy about the fact that the trial had not taken a long time.

Hosne Ara, a mother who lost her only son in the accident, said, "I expected a life term as senior politicians, including the prime minister and the opposition leader, had promised severe punishment to the driver."

Zafar Sadek, headmaster of Abu Torab Bahumukhi High School which the most of the deceased students belonged to, expressed deep shock over the verdict. He demanded a law ensuring

AUG 21 CASE

Ex-police, NSI bosses appeal for exclusion

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former IGP Shahidul Haque and former NSI director general Maj Gen (retd) Rezaul Haque Chowdhury yesterday appealed to a Dhaka court to discharge them from the August 21 grenade attack cases.

They submitted the discharge petitions before the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 when it resumed the hearing on charge framing against 52 accused including BNP Senior Vice-chairman Tarique Rahman.

Earlier on the day, the counsel for Kashmir based Lashkar-e-Taiba leader Golam Mohammad alias Abdul Malek completed his argument on a discharge petition.

The then opposition leader, Sheikh Hasina, narrowly survived the grenade attack on an Awami League rally in 2004, but 24 people including incumbent President Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman were killed and scores maimed.

A total of 16 accused including Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsanul Mojaheed, former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar, former inspector general of police Khoda Bakhsh Chowdhury, former director general of National Security Intelligence Abdur Rahim, Lt Commander (retd) Saiful Islam Duke and Harkatul Jihad al Islami leader Maulana Abu Taher so far appealed to the court to be discharged from the cases.

BNP Senior Vice-chairman Tarique Rahman and 18 other accused are absconding.

The Criminal Investigation Department on July 3 submitted supplementary charge sheets mentioning 30 names in addition to the 22 accused of the main charge sheets.

The prosecution on October 9 placed proposals for framing charges against all accused.

Thirty-two accused, including Babar and Mojaheed, now in jail, were produced before the court yesterday. Ariful Islam Arif, DCC ward councillor, now on bail, was also present.

Judge Shahed Nuruddin fixed December 13 for the next hearing.

Sehwag

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Test and one-day batsman, made 200 not out against South Africa in Gwalior in February 2010.

Sehwag surpassed Tendulkar's score when, on 197, he cut Andre Russell to the point fence for his 23rd boundary.

The Delhi batsman hit 25 boundaries and seven sixes before he was caught in the deep off Kieron Pollard in the 47th over.

Sehwag's blitz helped India pile up their highest one-day total of 418-5, surpassing the 414-7 they made against Sri Lanka in Rajkot in 2009.

It was Sehwag's 15th three-figure knock in one-day cricket and the first since making 175 against Bangladesh in the opening match of the World Cup in Dhaka in February this year.

"I had never dreamt of doing this," Sehwag said on television during the innings break.

"The easy wicket and the short boundaries made it easier. I told Gauti [Gambhir] that if we showed a little patience we could get a big one. But I never expected to make a double century."

"The pitch was so true that one could play all shots. When Sammy dropped me, I knew God was with me. I am relieved but also tired because I am an old man now."

"I just want to thank my family and all those who have supported me in my career," he said.

Sehwag also has two triple Test centuries to his credit, one of only four batsmen to achieve the feat. Others with two 300s each are Australian legend Don Bradman and the West Indies duo of Brian Lara and Chris Gayle.

Power import uncertain

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As the two countries have not signed the PPA, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has put on hold the disbursement of its approved loan.

But Bangladesh has meanwhile signed deals worth \$142 million with two foreign power companies to set up a power grid and a power conversion station at Bheramara. A large segment of this money will be given by the ADB that signed a \$100 million loan deal with the government last year.

As the ADB suspended loan disbursement, the Power Grid Company Bangladesh (PGCB) had from its own fund made 20 percent advance payment to the two companies--Cobra SA and Siemens Germany--to initiate the project.

Explaining the power tariff issue, a top PDB official said as per the understanding between the two governments, Delhi would provide Dhaka the cheapest possible power. India's power tariff is higher than that of Bangladesh in general.

Power tariff in India is different at different power plants. Some are cheap and some are costly for all clients, except the central government which gets the lowest tariff.

To give Dhaka an extra benefit, Delhi had agreed to supply power under the central government's quota. But even that rate can vary from power stations to power stations. India has already offered tariff from some West Bengal power

plants, while Bangladesh said there are some plants that sell power at still lower rate.

"But it is not just about getting power at low rate. We have a long term vision of interconnectivity with our neighbours. This kind of cooperation would ensure a regional energy security in the long term," said a high official.

"Unfortunately, it seems India does not share the same vision. They are more keen to ensure their business interest first. This is why the signing of the PPA remains uncertain," he added.

The official pointed out that Bangladesh was ready to sign the deal any day if India offered an acceptable tariff.

Project background

The move to import power from India was initiated in January 2010 when the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding. To import power, a 125 km transmission line has to be constructed between Behrampur in India and Bheramara in Bangladesh. Of this, 40 km would be within Bangladesh.

The transmission systems of India and Bangladesh, which are based on 400 kV alternate current (AC) and 230 kV AC respectively, are proposed to be synchronised by installing a back-to-back high voltage direct current (HVDC) link. The line will have an initial transfer capacity of 500 MW, which

will later be raised to 1,000 MW.

Early last year, the PGCB invited a tender for installing a 30 km, 400 kV line for Ishurdi-Khulna double-circuit (D/C) transmission line at Bheramara. It floated another tender to install a 500 MW back-to-back HVDC system at Bheramara.

In July last year, the PDB signed a 35-year power transmission agreement with Power Grid Company of India Limited (PGCIL) to import 250 MW of electricity. Under the agreement, the power and transmission tariff the PDB will pay to its Indian counterpart will be on a monthly basis, and it will be determined by India's Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC).

In October last year, Bangladesh government and the ADB signed the \$100 million loan deal for interconnection.

In February this year, the PGCB awarded a \$14.5 m contract to Spanish company Cobra SA for constructing the Bangladesh segment of the line. The deal requires Cobra to complete the double-circuit overhead line by 2012. And in April this year, Siemens Germany was awarded a \$128 million contract to set up the converter station at Bheramara that will convert 400 kV high voltage power from India to 230 kV voltage for feeding into Bangladesh's existing grid. Siemens is required to complete the contract within two years.

US sent arms to Egypt

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permit the shipments, noting in its statement that the Egyptian government responded to protests by using excessive and often lethal force.

"It is inconceivable that the US authorities did not know of evidence of widely documented abuses by the Egyptian security forces," Amnesty said, urging an international treaty to cover munitions used by law enforcement agencies.

It urged to halt all such US weapons shipments "until there is certainty that tear gas and other munitions, weaponry or other equipment aren't linked to bloodshed on Egyptian streets."

More than 840 Egyptians were killed in the uprising against the government of then president Hosni Mubarak which erupted in late January and recent clashes against the military rulers killed another 43

people.

Mubarak resigned and has been replaced by military rulers who have vowed to hand over power after presidential elections by the end of June next year.

US company Combined Systems, Inc has made at least three shipments during the last one year, according to Amnesty International.

Combined Systems, based in Jamestown, Pennsylvania manufactures munitions for military forces and law enforcement agencies, including rubber bullets and riot control irritants such as tear gas.

The US State Department, when asked about the Amnesty report, said American companies had shipped tear gas to Egypt under a previous license that has since expired.

"We've condemned the use of excessive force against

protesters during the recent period of civil unrest in Cairo," spokesman Mark Toner told reporters.

"We do take allegations of misuse of tear gas very seriously," he said, noting that officials had investigated whether it had been misused.

Amnesty said many of the cartridges and grenades picked up by protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square -- the heart of the demonstrations -- bore the company's trademark.

Other recent weapons shipments from the United States to Egypt included deliveries of 21 tonnes of ammunition in April, and another of 17.9 tonnes in August.

Amnesty said in its statement that a commercial trade database listed both shipments under the product code for bullets, cartridges and shells.

Khaleda goes to HC, gets bail

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Station against the BNP chief and three others for abusing power in setting up the charity named after late president Ziaur Rahman.

According to the first information report, Tk 7.81 crore was deposited in the bank account of the trust in a week starting from January 13, 2005.

Khaleda as its first managing trustee opened the account with the Sonali Bank branch at Prime Minister's Office on January 1 in the same year.

Of the amount, Tk 6.19 crore came from several party accounts of BNP and the rest from unknown sources.

The charges said the fund was collected from different sources using the influence of the then prime minister's office.

During the bail hearing before the HC bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Hossain and Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore, defence counsels barrister Rafique-ul-Huq and advocate Ahsanul Karim prayed to the court to grant bail to their client for six months or till framing of charges in the case.

Ahsanul said Shaheed Zia Charitable Trust is a private organisation which is not involved in any corruption. According to law, the ACC cannot interfere in its financial dealings.

Khaleda Zia had not influenced the dealings while she was the prime minister, claimed the lawyer adding, she (Khaleda) is now on bail in all five cases filed against her.

Additional Attorney General Momtaz Uddin Fakir opposed the bail prayer, arguing that the petitioner has expressed no confidence in the lower court.

He also cited a portion of the petition, which said, "For that the petitioner seriously doubts that if she surrenders before the lower judiciary, she will neither be treated lawfully nor fairly."

Contacted, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam said his office will not move any appeal before the SC against the bail order.

He, however, mentioned that as a politician the former premier should have approached the lower court for bail in this case to set an example of showing respect to that court.

The three other accused in the case are Abul Harris Chowdhury, former political secretary to the then prime minister, his assistant personal secretary Ziaul Islam Munna, and Monirul Islam Khan, APS to the then Dhaka City Corporation mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka.

Apart from Khaleda's counsels and pro-BNP lawyers, a large number of

Ershad asks

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Indian prime minister's assurance during his Dhaka visit last September that his country would never take any steps that might harm Bangladesh. "It's unfortunate that despite his promises, India has signed an agreement to implement the project."

The former military strongman said people in Bangladesh were concerned about the adverse impact of Tipaimukh dam. Sylhet, in particular, will be worst affected as it is a region full of haors (water bodies).

Therefore, he reasoned, a joint study must be conducted and its findings made public.

Even if the findings show that the dam will not affect Bangladesh, India must guarantee through an international treaty that it will not withhold water for irrigation, he added.

"India is our friend and neighbour. But if it presses ahead with the project ignoring our concern, Jatiya Party will put pressure on the government to go to the international court to resist the Indian move," he said.

Padma bridge

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The newly appointed minister, however, hoped that the suspension would go soon.

He was briefing reporters at Daudkandi in Comilla after visiting three major bridges on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

"Having had fruitful talks with the World Bank country director, I think they [WB] will lift the suspension. Otherwise, we'll go for a second Padma bridge," said Obaidul, who took office on Wednesday.

Referring to Wednesday's talks with WB's Bangladesh Country Director Ellen Goldstein, he said he expected more good news regarding the Padma bridge project from Goldstein on her return from Washington.

He added that a Malaysian construction company had already shown interest in constructing a second bridge over the Padma river.

It will be constructed under design-build system in which a single contractor will be responsible for financing, designing and constructing.

The new plan comes against the backdrop of allegations of corruption swirling around the first \$2.97-billion Padma bridge project. The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and Japanese agency Jica pledged funds for the project.

The WB, the lead financier and coordinator of the project, temporarily suspended its \$1.2 billion loan in September, raising allegations of corruption against Syed Abul Hossain, who was removed from the ministry on Monday.

Allegations are that Abul and his family firm Sahco influenced the tender process of the bridge.

The WB and the Anti-Corruption Commission are now investigating the alleged fraud.

Abul has all along maintained his innocence. On one occasion, he even boasted he was a "proven honest man."

However, after visiting the Meghna, Gumti and Kanchar bridges, the new communications minister said they were in a dangerous condition.

"All the three bridges are in a bad condition but the Meghna Bridge is under serious threat," Obaidul told reporters.

Expressing his frustration over the worn-out condition of the bridges, he directed the chief engineer and other officials of the Roads and Highways Department to immediately repair them.

The four-lane Dhaka-Chittagong highway project will be completed soon, Obaidul added.

The route is considered the economic lifeline of the country. But transport on the highway is often disrupted due to its narrowness given the number of vehicles plying it every day.

Rejoinder

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Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's recent speech delivered in Imphal.

It read, "The reference to the World Bank concerns a Government of India request to fund a separate power transmission and distribution project in the same region as the Tipaimukh Dam. This is an accurate reflection of the World Bank's engagement, which does not include support for the dam project."

Quoting Singh, the Bank said, "In the power sector, I have been informed that the 1500 MW Tipaimukh Hydro Electric Project will be executed by a joint venture company of National Hydroelectric Power Corporation, Satlej Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited and the Government of Manipur. Environmental clearance for this project has been granted and forest clearance is under process. I understand that a project for expansion and up-gradation of power transmission, sub-transmission and distribution networks in the North-Eastern States has been posed to the World Bank for funding. I am asking the concerned Central Government Ministries to pursue the matter actively with the World Bank."

The WB also added that it remained committed to working with The Daily Star to ensure access to accurate information about the World Bank and its activities in Bangladesh and beyond.