

NEWS IN *brief*

Int'l calls down for 44 minutes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International call delivery in the country was disrupted for 44 minutes yesterday evening when power supply to some equipment at the Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd Moghbazar Exchange failed.

Morshed Mir Mohammed, director Public Relations of BTCL, said some of the equipment related to internet service and international calls were down between 7:53pm and 8:37pm.

Officials of the company handled the issue, restarted the equipment and it was business as usual after 8:37pm, he said.

Dhaka climate confce Mar 14-16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawmakers from at least 30 countries and representatives of different international agencies will join an international conference on climate change to be held in Dhaka from March 14 to March 16.

The conference, "International meeting of parliamentarians of countries most vulnerable to climate change: Beyond COP-17," will discuss the role of lawmakers of most vulnerable countries, says a press release issued by the parliament secretariat.

The conference, to be held at Radison Water Garden Hotel, will also adopt "Dhaka Declaration,"

UGC boss made South Asian University board chair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Dr AK Azad Chowdhury, chairman of University Grants Commission (UGC), has been elected as the chair of the governing board of South Asian University for one year with effect from yesterday.

The decision was taken at the second governing board meeting of the university held in Delhi yesterday, says a press release of Bangladesh High Commission at New Delhi in India.

The board members lauded Bangladesh's role in setting up this visionary institution and promoting and expanding its academic excellence.

Now 27 students from Bangladesh are pursuing courses at the university under various scholarships

Call to join rally to press govt to arrest journo couple killers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists yesterday called upon their fellows from all over the country to join the March 18 grand rally of the journalists to press the government to find the murderers of journalist couple- Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.

The commitments of the prime minister and the home minister regarding finding out the murderers has proved untruthful, they said adding that, the rally should be made successful to ensure countrymen's security, says a press release.

They said this at the executive committee's meeting of Bangladesh Mafoshwal Manobadhikar Sangbadik Forum.

Journalists also urged the government to find the

DU AF Rahman hall alumni reunion held

METRO DESK

The first reunion of Sir AF Rahman Hall Alumni Association was held on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Dr AAMS Arefin Siddiqui inaugurated the daylong programme in Teacher-Student Centre auditorium as chief guest, said a press release.

Pro-Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Dr Harun-or-Rashid, Treasurer Prof Dr Mizanur Rahman and Sir AF Rahman Hall Provost Prof Dr Azizur Rahman were present at the event as special guests.

The programme, chaired by Habib Ullah Majumder, founding convener of the association, was



Amidst the rush of male passengers at the door, women find it hard to board a public bus at Badamtoli intersection in Agrabad of the port city. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: STAR

Female commuters' woes intensify in Ctg city

MD TYMUR JAHAN CHOWDHURY, Ctg

Ishrat Parvin, service holder of a private organisation in Chittagong, boards a bus everyday from Bahaddardhat to go to her office in Agrabad.

While waiting for a bus at Agrabad recently, she said, "I have been trying for almost an hour just to board a bus.

When ever a bus stops, the male commuters rush in through the door, throwing aside any females or elderly that comes their way," she said.

At this hour, if a female does manage to get on a bus, she often has to stand among the male passengers and face harassment since the seats reserved for women in the bus is very limited, she added.

An ambitious female has to face many hurdles and non-support from societal factors, but the biggest hurdle of all is the one she has to face as a commuter, said Parvin, summing up the woes of female commuters.

The port city has witnessed a massive increase in the volume of working women and female students over the time, yet it is doing very less to ensure their smooth commuting.

Compared to the increasing number of female commuters, the number of seats reserved for them in public buses is highly adequate.

This situation is more visible during office hours or evening times, when getting on a bus is as hard as standing inside one.

Shumi, who regularly takes a bus to go to her coaching center on OR Nizam road, said, "The male passengers often behave roughly with the females in the public transports."

Some of the males even occupy the reserved seats and bawl at the bus driver or helper if they take on female passengers, said the student.

Sharmina Khanom, another student of Chittagong Government City College, said, "I have no problem standing inside the bus, but

harassment by the male passengers makes it rather difficult."

During peak hours, when the buses are jam-packed, the situation gets even worse, she added.

Also, the females have to bargain with the bus helpers just to board a bus during busy hours.

Jannatul Ferdous, a garments factory worker at Dewanhat, said boarding a bus takes so long that she often walks to her workplace. "Walking long distance is very tiring but it is not possible for low income people like me to hire a rickshaw or CNG run auto."

The female commuters urged the government to take steps to increase the number of reserved seats for women in public transports and to create separate buses for females.

School teacher Zakir Ahmed said, "In recent times, the number of women working or taking education has immensely increased. That's why, separate transport should be

introduced for their commuting immediately."

"Though we have launched special bus services especially for women in 2005 and 2009, but due to some definite reasons we had to discontinue it," said Joysen Barua, assistant engineer (mechanical) of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC).

However, he did not mention or clarify the reasons.

CCC Superintendent Engineer (mechanical) M A Malek also said, "CCC is not thinking of resuming bus service only for women right now."

Abul Kalam Azad, president of Chittagong Bus, Minibus and Human Hauler Owners Association, said, "The seats reserved for women in public transports often remain vacant. Thus, introducing separate public transport for women may not be feasible."

"However, we will discuss with our members about increasing the number of reserved seat for women at our next meeting," he added.

BGB man dies as train hits him while chasing smugglers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A jawan of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) was killed as a train hit him while chasing smugglers in Hili port area of Hakimpur upazila yesterday.

The victim, Md Masudul Karim, 40, was posted at Hili border outpost under 3 BGB Battalion, according to BGB officials.

Witnesses said a group of smugglers were trying to board the Titumir Express intercity train with their smuggled goods from India when the train arrived in the port area around 11:30am.

As Masudul went to chase the smugglers away, the train hit him.

Rescuing the soldier from the spot, some other BGB men with the help of locals rushed him to Hakimpur Upazila Health Complex.

Later he was shifted to Joypurhat Modern Hospital, where dies around 1:30pm.

Grand alliance forms human chains in dists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League-led 14-party combine yesterday formed human chains in all district headquarters across the country, demanding the trial of war criminals be completed soon and the main opposition BNP's conspiracy to foil the trial be prevented.

The human chain programmes were held from 3:00pm to 4:00pm, AL deputy office secretary Mrinal Kanti Das told The Daily Star. Senior leaders of the alliance joined the programmes in their respective districts, he said.

The 14-party combine will organise another human chain in the capital on March 11 and a mass rally on March 14 and several grand rallies in other divisional headquarters towards the end of the month with the same demands.



Colourful kites add spectacle to Dhaka University campus at a Kite Festival organised by Dhakabashi yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Bikalpa Dhara to join BNP rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) will join Monday's grand rally in the city called by BNP to press several demands with focus on the restoration of the caretaker government.

"We are expressing solidarity with the grand rally and have already directed all leaders and activists of the party to participate in the programme peacefully", BDB President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said at a press conference at the Institute of Diploma Engineers yesterday.

Terming the rally a democratic right of the opposition, he said, "We lent our support to democratic movements in the past and we do it till now".

Strongly criticising the government for giving threat to the opposition over the rally, he said, "The ruling party has launched a counter-programme. But it cannot be considered a decent democratic manner".

Referring to different remarks of the prime minister about the BNP rally, the former president said, "The prime minister's comments make us laugh".

Asked if his party would join BNP-led four-party alliance, Chowdhury said, "We will extend our support to BNP in all issue-based movements, which go in favour of the people".

YABA HAUL CASE Statement recorded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A prosecution witness told a Dhaka court on Thursday how they seized 130,000 Yaba tablets, 5,000 Yaba's alternative drugs ice pills and ice pill preparing chemical from an office at Gulshan in 2007.

Constable Mohammad Moju, now posted at Nakla Police Station, described this before the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4.

Judge Mohammad Motahar Hossain recorded the statement and later the witness was cross-examined by the lawyers of two accused-Amin Huda and Ahsanul Haque. The court fixed March 13 for next hearing of the case.

CTG INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR Outing chance for city dwellers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong International Trade Fair (CITF), which kicked off on Polo Grounds of Chittagong city on February 24, was abuzz with the footsteps of visitors yesterday which was a weekend.

However, most of the visitors at the month-long fair organised by Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry were seen to be more interested in roaming around the fair rather than purchasing goods put up on display.

A total 350 pavilions and booths, including those of some foreign companies from Pakistan, India, Thailand, Turkey, Dubai, the US and Europe, were set up at the fair.

One visitor, Urma Das, arriving with her husband and son, said, "The goods are good in quality but they are not as cheap as

I had expected."

She was quite happy with the environment and security provided at the fair.

Another visitor, Eliza Parveen, a school-teacher, said, "The price, collection and standard of the products are satisfactory."

Owner of a cosmetics stall, AR Razzak, said, "Around 1,000 people come visiting my stall everyday. On public holidays, the number of visitors increases by two or three fold, which is good for business."

One visitor happily admitted that a visit to the fair was a chance for outing for some people like him. "We hardly manage to go out for a visit around the city," said the visitor, Saiful Islam, a businessman by profession.

DHAKA TODAY

Art exhibition
Bangladesh National Museum and Japan Embassy will jointly organise an art exhibition. Time: 3:00pm. Venue: The museum.

Award Ceremony
The fortnightly Ananya will organise an award giving ceremony. Time: 4:00pm. Venue: Bangladesh National Museum.

Workshop
COAST will organise a workshop. Time: 2:00pm. Venue: Jatiya Press Club.

Conference
Islamic Foundation will organise National Imam Conference. Time: 10:00am. Venue: Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

Seminar
Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) will hold a seminar. Time: 5:00pm. Venue: ERC conference room.

Hunger Strike
Communist Party of Bangladesh will stage a hunger strike. Time: 10:00am. Venue: Jatiya Press Club.

Flag-off Ceremony
City Bank will hold a flag-off ceremony. Time: 12:00pm. Venue: City Bank Center.

Workshop
Blast will organise workshop. Time: 10:30am. Venue: Blast office.

Programme
Bilia will organise a programme. Time: 11:30am. Venue: Bilia auditorium.

Dialogue
ActionAid and UN Women will organise a dialogue. Time: 9:30am. Venue: NILG Bhaban.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Sylhet division and the regions of Dhaka, Tangail, Mymensingh and Comilla.

Moderate heavy falls at places over Sylhet division are also likely, Met office said. Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Day and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:06pm and rises tomorrow at 6:11am.

Country's highest temperature 33.5 degree Celsius was recorded today at Patuakhali and lowest 16.0 degrees at Rangpur, Dinajpur, Syedpur and Ishwardi.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

| City/Town | Temperature in Celsius | | Humidity in percentage | |
|------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|---------|
| | Max: | Min: | Morning | Evening |
| Dhaka | 32.5 | 24.0 | 84 | 48 |
| Chittagong | 29.2 | 22.0 | 73 | 81 |
| Rajshahi | 32.6 | 16.2 | 44 | 39 |
| Rangpur | 31.0 | 16.0 | 73 | 43 |
| Khulna | 33.0 | 23.0 | 93 | 72 |
| Barisal | 32.3 | 23.0 | 79 | 61 |
| Sylhet | 29.6 | 19.9 | 89 | 64 |