

Bandwidth export to India okayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday approved an agreement with India to export 10 gigabits per second bandwidth to northeastern states of India.

The three-year agreement will be signed between Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Ltd (BSCCL) and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL).

Bangladesh will export the bandwidth by Tk 9.42 crore per year, Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan told reporters after a meeting.

He said the amount has been fixed through mutual discussion and understanding.

BSNL will purchase 10 Gbps initially and will increase the amount gradually, said Monwar Hossain, managing director of BSCCL, a state-owned entity.

As per the agreement, it could be extended up to 40 Gbps, Bhuiyan said.

Terminating the agreement as 'win-win' situation for both Bangladesh and India, he said Bangladesh has additional Gbps and India needs it as it would be very expensive to bring the line from Mumbai.

A 22-kilometre optical fibre cable link from Brahmanbaria to Akhaura boarder will be developed in four months to transport the bandwidth, Hossain said.

"We will rent the link to be developed by a firm suggested by Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission."

Bangladesh's submarine cable, whose lifetime will end in the next 12 years, has a bandwidth capacity of 200 Gbps, while it sells only 30 Gbps, Bhuiyan said.

Bangladesh would get another undersea cable of around 1,300 Gbps by December this year, he said.

"If we export 10 gbps now, we will have 160 gbps in our hand and we can utilise it at Union Parishad level," he said.

"Bangladesh will earn revenue of Tk 9.42 crore per year and one fourth of the money will cover salary and wages of the officers and staffs of BSCCL."

He said Bangladesh is currently connected with the South East Asia-Middle East-Western Europe 4 (SEA-ME-WE 4) optical fibre submarine communications.

Yunus among

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idea through Grameen Bank, Prof Yunus showed the world how bringing banking to the unbanked people could make a big difference.

His championing of small loans to the poor in Bangladesh -- and the related idea of social business -- has spread around the world, including in the US, according to the FT.

The efforts won Yunus and the bank a joint Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.

"Yunus's long-term vision is to eliminate poverty in the world," the jury concluded.

"That vision cannot be realised by means of microcredit alone. But Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank have shown that, in the continuing efforts to achieve it, microcredit must play a major part."

Established in 1983, the bank has now over 86 lakh members. On an average, it lends Tk 1,000 crore to Tk 1,200 crore per month and realises Tk 1,000 crore. It has 2,566 branches across the country.

Yunus is joined by Warren Buffett, called "the greatest investor ever" by

the FT, Amadeo Giannini, who revolutionised banking in the US, American businessman Henry Kravis, financier John Pierpont Morgan, and founder of the Rothschild banking dynasty Mayer Amschel Rothschild in the select group of financial pioneers.

The selection was based on suggestions from the readers, from the six judges and from FT writers around the world, according to the newspaper.

Michael Skapinker, an FT columnist and associate editor, chaired the judging panel, which also includes Jannik Lindbæk Jr, vice-president of corporate communications at Statoil,

the Norway-based international energy company, Jaideep Prabhu, professor of marketing at Judge Business School, the University of Cambridge, Jessica Spungin, an adjunct associate professor of strategy and entrepreneurship at London Business School, Heather McGregor, chief executive and principal shareholder of executive search firm Taylor Bennett, and John Gapper, FT's chief business commentator and an associate editor.



Ruling party activists vandalise a car in BNP chief Khaleda Zia's motorcade at Karwan Bazar.

PHOTO: STAR

Khaleda's motorcade comes under attack

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In the evening, the BNP-led 20-party alliance called a countrywide daylong hartal for tomorrow. The opposition combine will also stage demonstrations across the country today.

However, the Dhaka and Chittagong metropolitan areas will remain out of the purview of the agitations due to the city corporation elections on April 28.

Earlier in the morning, the policemen deployed for the security of the BNP chief's residence at Gulshan were withdrawn. The seven-member police team left the area around 7:00am, Syrul Kabir Khan, a staff of the BNP chief's media wing, told The Daily Star.

There was no police escort during yesterday's campaign.

"Although the BNP chief is not the opposition leader [in parliament], the police authorities usually send a police van with seven police members from the Rajarbagh Police Lines whenever

she goes out from her residence. But there was no police van yesterday when she left for electioneering," Syrul Kabir added.

Jahangir Alam Sarker, acting deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that Khaleda's state-provided security was indeed withdrawn.

Yesterday, Khaleda left her Gulshan residence around 4:50pm and reached Karwan Bazar around 5:30pm. BNP supporters and activists gathered on the road between Palli Bhaban and Karwan Bazar kitchen market, chanting slogans in support of Tabitha Awal.

Around 5:35pm, Khaleda came out of her vehicle and stood on a makeshift platform. When she took the microphone, a group of AL activities began to shout at her. Her personal security force and supporters chased them away.

But the ruling party activists came back within minutes and showed black

flags to Khaleda. They became more aggressive when Khaleda began addressing people, seeking vote for Tabitha and asking all not to vote the AL-backed candidate.

They lambasted Khaleda saying she had killed innocents in the last three months. Her security personnel and party men again chased them, this time triggering a running battle.

At one point, Khaleda threatened the ruling party men with dire consequences and said, "I will see to you later."

At this, they start vandalising vehicles, throwing brick chips and hitting those with sticks. Khaleda's car too came under attack; one of its right-side windowpanes got cracked.

As Khaleda left the spot, the ruling party men chased the motorcade up to the rail gate near FDC and brought out a procession. They chanted slogans hailing Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

Around seven to eight policemen were on duty in the area. They, however, could not resist the vandalism.

Contacted, Mazharul Islam, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station, said a protest rally was being held at Karwan Bazar when Khaleda Zia's motorcade reached the area.

He said a running battle took place there, but he was "unaware" of vandalism.

MOUDUD'S BRIEFING

Moudud in an urgent briefing at the BNP's Nayapalton headquarters said the attack on Khaleda's motorcade was part of government plan to assassinate the BNP chief and this was the reflection of government's fascist attitude.

"Sensing defeat in the upcoming city corporation elections, the government is carrying out such attacks," he said, adding that the BNP chief, however, would continue her electioneering.



In protest against the sexual assaults on women during Pahela Baishakh celebrations, people daub a banner with their handprints in Dhaka University TSC area yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Hilsa spawning less and less

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Tolerance level varies among fish species, but ammonia toxicity is believed to be a cause of unexplained losses in fish hatcheries. Excess ammonia may accumulate and cause alteration of metabolism.

"If ammonia increases in water, it causes a significant impact on the food system of hilsa," said the BFRI director, indicating that this could explain the fall in hilsa spawning.

Even in the 1980s, hilsa was available in more than 50 rivers, including all the big ones, of the country. But now they are found only in 10 rivers -- Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, Paira, Tentulia, Bishkhal, Shibs, Baleswar, Kirtankhola and Arial Kha, experts say.

The fish has virtually vanished from the 170-km Karnaphuli river. Besides, they cannot be found anymore in the Shitalakkhya, Kaliganga and the rivers of the Ganges river system, including the Nabaganga, Garai and Madhumati, since India started withdrawing water of the Ganges through the Farakka barrage after the Liberation War.

Hilsas prefer around 25-foot-deep

water and strong currents to go against, but for loss of navigability, they have stopped migrating to many rivers, according to experts.

CC Halder, a retired scientist of BFRI, said impacts of climate change such as saltwater intrusion and rise in sea-level might not have affected hilsa movement much but pollution and loss of navigability in rivers were doing the main damage.

Hilsa can survive in both saline and sweet waters.

"However, because of the saltwater intrusion, hilsa may shift its spawning grounds to deeper inland water as it needs sweet water for releasing eggs," he said.

Also, they might have travelled to sweet waters in neighbouring countries through the sea for laying eggs, Halder added.

Last year, scientists noticed a significant change in the spawning habit of hilsa during the full moon in the Bangla month of Ashwin when around 70 percent of the fish was supposed to lay eggs.

But a large number of hilsa did not spawn even 10 days after the full moon. Usually, they release eggs

between three days before and seven days after the full moon in Ashwin (September or October).

Normally, most hilsa travels from the sea to sweet water weeks before the full moon. They then swim towards the rivers in the upstream, including the Padma, Brahmaputra and Surma, while taking food. When the full moon nears, they travel back to the estuary where sweet, saline and muddy waters merge.

Father and mother hilsas swim back to the sea after the spawning season while the baby fish, after hatching, travel towards sweet waters in the upstream and remain there until May or June before going to the sea. When the next spawning season comes, the baby fishes that have matured by this time come to sweet waters to release eggs with their parents and elders. Their usual lifespan is three to five years.

Anisur Rahman, the BFRI director, thinks hilsa might stop coming to Bangladesh rivers altogether and start migrating to those of Myanmar and India if hilsa fry are not conserved and the problems facing the silver fish are not addressed.

No evidence found

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youths then start groping her. Within seconds, 10 to 15 more men encircle her, each trying to grab her.

Rights activists expressed concerns over the minister's comments, saying the comments might influence the ongoing probe.

"Anyone holding such an important office in the government should never comment about an incident under investigation," Ain o Salish Kendra Director Noor Khan told The Daily Star last night.

"It may affect the entire investigation. The example given by the minister regarding a girl losing her scarf itself constitutes a sexual harassment as per a High Court verdict," Noor said.

"May we ask him [the state minister] why is that not a case of sexual harassment?" he asked.

The incident of sexual assault has sparked a wave of protest at home and abroad.

The minister's comments came hours after the High Court ordered the government to arrest the culprits within 24 hours.

Earlier, the HC had ordered the

inspector general of police and the vice-chancellor of DU to probe the incident and submit reports before it by May 17.

On April 16, journalists obtained from the police the footage Asaduzzaman was talking about. Based on the footage, the print and electronic media reported that several women were indeed molested by several groups of rowdy men.

Social networking websites, including Facebook and Twitter, are flooded with screenshots of a man's face seen in the footage.

DMP Joint Commissioner Monirul Islam on April 17 had admitted to have noticed incidents of sexual assault in the footage.

"It was an act by some perverts," Monirul said.

A high-powered committee has been formed to investigate the matter and reported police negligence during the assault that went on for over an hour.

Activists and political organisations have been staging demonstrations demanding exemplary punishment for the perpetrators.

Popularity test by police

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Five OCs have confirmed to The Daily Star that they received letters from DCs and worked accordingly.

DMP sources said the deputy commissioners assigned all OCs in Dhaka North and South to make the assessment. The DMP has 49 police stations, two of which are out of city corporation areas.

Despite repeated attempts, DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia couldn't be reached over his mobile phone.

Wishing anonymity, an AL central committee member said the DMP was assessing the popularity of pro-AL councillor aspirants, but the party didn't request the DMP to do so.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the evaluation papers given to the OCs. The document contains serial and ward numbers, name, address, age and profession of the candidates, whether a candidate is AL-endorsed or AL rebel, and a box for giving mark out of 100 to judge a candidate's popularity.

The OCs were asked to send a

copy of the assessment report to opsdmp@gmail.com and also fax it to 8332775.

A police official said many OCs already submitted the reports while some sought more time to complete the task.

"Apart from our regular duty, we made the assessment as asked by the high-ups," said an OC, who was apparently embarrassed to do the task.

Former IGP Nurul Huda said that in a broader context, police can make assessment on anyone if they want.

"If police think assessment of Awami League candidates are needed to maintain public order and prevent crime, they can do it," he said.

Meanwhile, police stepped up drives to arrest mayoral and councillor candidates accused in criminal cases, leaving most BNP candidates, sued for criminal offences, with no option but to stay out of election campaigns.

In the last three days, two BNP-backed councillor candidates were

arrested in Mirpur and Paltan, creating panic among the candidates accused in criminal cases.

A number of OCs said they launched special drives on Saturday to arrest the accused in criminal cases, listed criminals and possessors of illegal arms ahead of the city polls.

"In my area, a BNP-backed councillor candidate is accused in cases for committing acts of violence. We are looking for him... But he was not even seen in election campaigns," said an OC in Mirpur.

Joint Commissioner Monirul Islam, spokesperson of the DMP, told this correspondent that police would arrest anyone -- be it a mayoral or councillor candidate -- if he is accused in a criminal case.

According to affidavits submitted to the Election Commission, 62 of the 88 BNP-endorsed councillor candidates are accused in criminal cases.

Most of the cases were filed in the last three years for vandalism and torching of vehicles.

Visiting several wards in both city

corporations, the correspondents found that the AL-backed councillor candidates and its rebels were carrying out hectic campaigns. But the presence of BNP-backed candidates was thin.

Locals in several wards said the BNP-endorsed candidates are running campaigns only through posters. In some wards, wives of BNP-backed councillor hopefuls are conducting campaigns on behalf of their husbands who chose not to go out in public for fear of arrest.

The AL lent its support to 91 candidates against 93 councillor posts, leaving two wards open to all party men. The party is trying to convince its dissidents to publicly support party-backed councillor aspirants, but hasn't seen much success.

According to AL insiders, around 100 AL dissidents -- 60 in Dhaka South City Corporation and 40 in Dhaka North City Corporation -- are in the race.

Rashidul Hasan and Mahbubur Rahman Khan contributed to this report.