



P6 SCO calls for 'balance' in climate approach



P10 Michael Jordan's jersey sells for \$10.1m



WR1 All, except for farmers, profit from paddy farming



WR4 SATIRE Pound value falls with Charles's image on coins

BTCL defaults on Tk 2,259cr to exchequer

The state-run company fails to pay despite repeated requests: CAG audit

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MAHMUDUL HASAN

The state coffer is at least Tk 2,258.76 crore short, thanks to Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited's failure to deposit the sum for mismanagement, shows audit report.

The BTCL, whose main offering of landline telephone has fallen out of favour with the advent of mobile phone, provides a host of telecom services to stay alive by obtaining licences from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, the regulator.

And as per licensing terms, the state-run company has to share a portion of the revenue earned from the services with the BTRC, which then deposits the sum to the state coffer.

In July 2008, the BTCL was made a public limited company and its tendency to skip payments took root three months later.

Since October 2008, the BTCL has been skipping its payments to



This channel of the Buriganga under Kamrangirchar bridge in the capital's Lalbagh is absolutely clogged by discarded plastic bottles and bags, used in factories and households. The Dhaka South City Corporation has recently taken an initiative to clear the channel so water can flow through. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ROHINGYA CAMP 1 killed as shell from Myanmar explodes Five injured

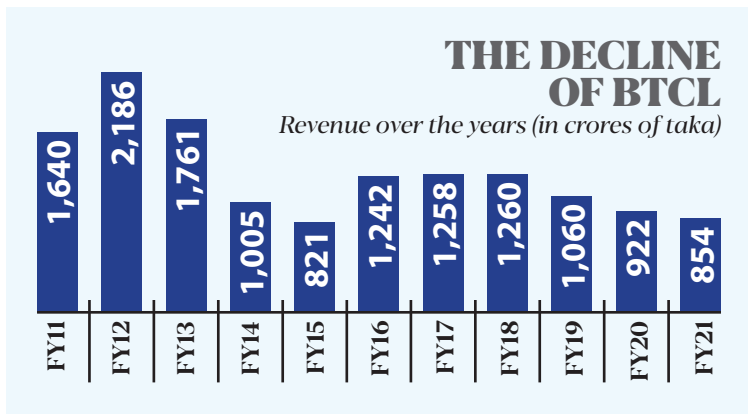
STAR REPORT

An 18-year-old Rohingya man was killed and five others, including two children, were injured last night as a mortar shell fired from Myanmar exploded at a Rohingya camp on a man's land near Tumbur bazar in Bandarban's Naikhongchhari upazila.

Iqbal Bari, son of Monir Hossain, died on the way to a hospital, said Dil Mohammed, a community leader of the Konarpara camp in Ghumdum area.

The injured, Muhammad Anas, 15; Sadia, 10; Zahid Alam, 30; Nabi Hussein, 22; and Sabekun Nahar, were taken to an MSF Hospital in Kutupalong, Cox's Bazar.

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the BTRC, found Bangladesh Comptroller and Auditor General, which pored over the state-owned company's books for fiscal 2017-18. The report was presented before parliament in June this year.

The BTCL owes Tk 628.40 crore to the BTRC as the regulator's share of the revenue from interconnection exchange (ICX) service from October 2008 to June 2014.

When a call is made from a mobile or fixed line number, the BTCL as an ICX routes it to the destination network in the case of a local number or to the international gateway (IGW) operators for a foreign number.

The BTCL also has the licence to act as an IGW operator and it missed payments for this service, too.

It failed to pay Tk 944.56 crore from the revenue earned from handling incoming and outgoing international phone calls from October 2008 to June 2014.

The payments were regular from July 2014 to April 2016 and then stopped the following month.

The telecom watchdog is owed Tk 389.03 crore from the BTCL's IGW service revenue from May 2016 to December 2017.

From its landline service revenue between October 2008 and December 2017, the BTCL was supposed to share Tk 298.68 crore with the BTRC. But it hasn't.

Similarly, it owes Tk 2.09 crore from the revenue earned from international internet gateway service from July 2015 to December 2017.

"The BTRC has sent many letters to the BTCL to pay its dues," the CAG report said.

But all calls fell on deaf ears.

The BTRC chairman wrote to the posts and telecommunications

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Cut, polished and sold to deceive

People pay extra for rice marketed as miniket but get less nutrients



"Actually, there is no rice called miniket. Over the last 10 to 12 years, millers have been marketing miniket because of the public demand."

SUKANTA HALDER and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Pay more to get less is what the miniket rice is all about.

For decades, the rice grain, modified from coarse to fine by machine, lived up to its billing as the brand for upper-middle-class families. Extra money is for extra thin, extra white rice!

But little do they know that they're losing both ways. The modification process of miniket gets the rice less nutritious.

Using modern rice husking machine, millers

cut and polish hybrid coarse variety into fine rice before whitening it with chemicals.

"Most of the micro-nutrients get lost while whitening and polishing the rice. Only carbohydrate remains," said Dr Nahidul Islam, assistant professor of the agro-processing department, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University.

Different micronutrients are preserved in different layers of rice. As the millers polish the grain with chemicals, the process eventually

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Essentials getting pricier again

SHAHEEN MOLLA and MOSTAFA YOUSUF

Prices of eggs, rice, vegetables and flour have risen in the capital's kitchen markets again, increasing the burden on those with limited incomes.

These essential items decreased in price last week, said traders and customers.

One of these correspondents visited kitchen markets in Mirpur-II, Kazipara, Shewrapara and Karwan Bazar yesterday, and found fine rice being sold at Tk 66 per kg, up Tk 4 from last week.

Coarse rice rose by Tk 1-2 per kg.

Md Jashim, owner of Mokbul Rice Agency in Mirpur, told The Daily Star that every variety of rice has become more expensive.

"This week the price of fine rice rose by Tk 4 per kg while coarse rice also saw a rise of Tk 1 or Tk 2," he said.

Rice traders said they lowered the price of rice last week in anticipation of rice to be imported from India, but hiked it again this week as price of imported rice was higher than the local variety.

Broiler chicken also got dearer, with its price going up from Tk 165 per kg last week to Tk 180 per kg this week.

Md Shahabullah, owner of Ma Safia Chicken Store at Karwan Bazar, told this newspaper that the supply of chicken is poor, leading to a rise in price.

"We usually get supply from Kaptan Bazar and Tejgaon. The traders there attributed the soaring price of broiler chicken to the rising cost of production," he said.

Babul Mia, owner of Raj Flour Mill at Karwan Bazar, said the price of flour rose by Tk 2 per kg due to the crisis

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SSC EXAMS

Jashore board postpones test for Bangla 2nd paper MCQ

STAR REPORT

The Jashore education board has postponed today's multiple-choice question test of Bangla second paper of SSC examinations.

However, only creative test of the subject will be held from 11:00am to 12:40pm today, a notification, signed by Prof Md Ahsan Habib, chairman of Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Jashore, said yesterday.

The MCQ test was postponed due to unavoidable reasons, said the notification, adding that the fresh date would be announced later.

Talking to journalists, Madhab Chandra Rudra, controller of examinations of the board, said the MCQ of Bangla second paper was distributed during the test of Bangla first paper on Thursday at three centres

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Smoke rises from a steel factory in the capital's Shyampur. Operation of smoke-emitting factories in the city goes on unabated, exposing the residents to health hazards. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

EC'S ELECTORAL ROADMAP

All challenges not addressed

Say experts

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The Election Commission's roadmap for the next parliamentary polls is very much "conventional" and it does not detail how the challenges of holding a free, fair and inclusive election will be addressed, say experts.

According to them, the commission in its roadmap tried to justify its decision to use the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), a plan opposed by the majority of political parties.

The experts also raised questions about the definition of "participatory election" in the roadmap. The EC defined it as "active participation of the registered political parties willing to join polls."

"It seems the roadmap has drawn up the routine jobs of an Election Commission. They mentioned the challenges of holding a free and fair election, but did not say how those challenges will be addressed," former election commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) Sakawat Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said meeting some challenges, including ensuring impartiality of field-level administrative and police officials, law and order, and compliance with the electoral code of conduct, under the present circumstances largely depend on the government.

"The roadmap gives no indication of how those challenges will be met. They [EC] have identified the challenges, but those cannot be addressed only through dialogues," he added.

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