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Chief Adviser reaffirms that elections will be held on schedule

Hon’ble Chief Adviser, Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed reaffirmed the commitment of his government to hold the general elections on schedule. ‘I am optimistic and confident. The elections will be held on schedule,’ he said in an interview with the Chinese news agency Xinhua on the eve of his visit to China visit. ‘We’re moving towards the elections. We’ve just completed the finalization of voter list with photographs, which includes more than 80 million people,’ he added.

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed said the government was providing all facilities to hold free, fair and credible elections. When asked whether the elections would be held under the state of emergency, he said, ‘We’ll relax it for the purpose of the elections as much as is necessary.’ He said the government would continue to review the situation to see how they can make it possible for free, fair and credible elections in which voters would come freely to cast their votes according to their best judgments. Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed is paying an official visit to China on September 15-18, 2008.
Human Rights Commission Ordinance comes into effect

The National Human Rights Commission Ordinance came into effect on Monday, 01 September 2008 paving the way for the establishment of an independent body to safeguard the fundamental rights of the people.

According to the ordinance, the Commission will be formed with a chairman and two members, one of whom will be a sitting or retired Supreme Court judge. The president will appoint the chairman and members of the commission in accordance with the recommendations made by the selection committee. Once the Chief Justice nominates an Appellate Division judge to head the committee, the six-member selection committee will start its work, said A.F. Hassan Ariff, Hon’ble Adviser for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. The temporary office of the commission has already been set up at Hare Road, Dhaka.

The Law Ministry sent a letter to the Chief Justice requesting him to nominate a judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court to head a six-member committee, which will suggest names for the appointment of the chairman and members of the Commission.

According to the ordinance, the chairman and members of the Commission will be appointed for three-year tenure and for no more than two consecutive terms. They cannot be removed from the office before completion of the tenure unless a supreme judicial commission recommends the removal after conducting an inquiry. Their age limit will be between 50 and 72.

The functions of the Commission will include investigating any allegation of human rights violation received from any individual or quarter, or the commission itself can initiate investigation into any incident of rights violation.

According to the ordinance, the Supreme Court may also refer any matter, arising from any writ petition, to the commission for inquiry and the commission will have to report to the court after such inquiry.

In the meantime, UNDP’s Resident Representative Renata Lok-Dessallien praised the interim government for enacting the Human Rights Commission law.

US Congressmen support transition to Democracy in Bangladesh and laud the contribution of Bangladesh community in U.S.

“Bangladesh community in the US is a positive force for promoting development and diversity in this country.”

Congressman Howard Berman (D-CA), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee made this comment during a meeting with the Bangladesh Ambassador to USA M. Humayun Kabir in his office at the Capitol Hill on 10 September 2008. On his part, Ambassador Kabir thanked him for his support to the Bangladesh community in the Los Angeles area. He then briefed the Congressman about the recent developments in Bangladesh, which could facilitate holding of the Parliamentary elections during the third week of December 2008 and sought the support of the Congressman to help Bangladesh made this important transition to democracy. Congressman Berman promised to do so. He also accepted the invitation to visit Bangladesh at the earliest opportunity.

On the same day, Ambassador Kabir also met Congressman Gary Ackerman, Chairman of House Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on Middle East and South Asia and Congressman Joseph Crowley, Co-Chair of Bangladesh Congressional Caucus. He briefed them about the evolving situation in Bangladesh, with particular focus on the progress on human rights
issues and ongoing dialogue of the political parties with the Election Commission to work out the modalities for the elections. He also informed them about the recent formation of Human Rights Commission. Both Congressman Ackerman and Congressman Crowley were encouraged by the initiatives of the government and contribution of other stakeholders to energize the process of transition to democracy in Bangladesh. Congressman Crowley informed the Ambassador that a high level congressional delegation could visit Bangladesh soon. He also said that the Congress was considering a resolution to encourage the democratic process in Bangladesh. Ambassador Kabir thanked the Congressmen for their support to Bangladesh and expressed the readiness of the Embassy to remain engaged with them with a view to promoting the common bilateral interests.

Deputy Chief of Bangladesh Mission Sheikh Mohammad Belal and First Secretary Monwar Hossain also attended these meetings at the Capitol Hill.

**Bangladesh Ambassador attends Democratic Party Convention in Denver and Republican Party Convention in St. Paul**

At the invitation of the National Democratic Institute and Department of State Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States M. Humayun Kabir attended the Convention of the Democratic Party held in Denver, Colorado from 24-28 August 2008. Ambassadors from 108 countries, along with more than five hundred leaders from around the world including many former Presidents, Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers joined the Democratic Party Convention.

The Convention of the Republican Party, which took place in St. Paul, Minnesota from 1-4 September 2008 was attended by Ambassadors and diplomats from 88 countries. During their stay in St. Paul the diplomats also attended the lunch hosted by the Lt Governor of Minnesota Mrs. Carol Molnau and a breakfast hosted by Tim Pawlenty, Governor of the State. They also attended several interactions arranged at both of these conventions.

**UN to offer Bangladesh to lead LDCs in fight against poverty**

The United Nations is likely to request Bangladesh to lead the group of Least Developed Countries (LDC) to intensity fight against poverty and to ensure food security, an UN official told. The offer is expected to come at the ‘high level’ meeting, scheduled to be held at the end of the month in New York, to review the progress of the UN millennium development goals, which was signed by UN member states eight years ago to halve the global poverty by 2015.

‘We will formally request Bangladesh to take the leadership in the discussions on tackling food crisis, especially for the least developed countries,’ Minar Pimple, head of UN’s millennium development campaign in Asia, said while he was in Dhaka recently. Bangladesh led the LDC group twice — during trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization and on climate issue in the United Nations in a limited scale. Hon’ble Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed is scheduled to lead Bangladesh delegation at the meeting to be held at the UN headquarters on 25 September , 2008.

According to UN estimates, about 852 million poor people across the world, 95 per cent of who are living in the developing countries, are experiencing food insecurity, eradication of which requires huge political will. It has been predicted that the number of poor people is to rise by 100 million by 2015 in spite of the UN millennium development goal of halving the number by that time.
While talking to the media, the UN official said that Bangladesh had made significant progress towards achieving the MDG, especially in school enrolments where the number of girls was higher than that of boys, and also in reducing the maternal and child mortality rates.

**Kuwaiti authorities have assured of every effort to resolve problems of Bangladeshis: Dr. Iftekhar Chowdhury**

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Hon’ble Adviser for Foreign Affairs said on 5 September 2008 that Kuwaiti authorities had assured him of every effort to resolve the problems faced by Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait.

During his 2-day visit to Kuwait the Foreign Adviser held discussions with Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mohamed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Labour Minister Bader Fahed Ali Al-Duwailah, and other senior officials. He had also held two rounds of discussions with the members of the Bangladeshi community.

“The Kuwait authorities assured me that a minimum wage was being fixed for workers. Their living conditions would be improved. The question of compensation of deported labourers would be speedily addressed. Kuwait will also take stern action against Kuwaiti companies who have exploited Bangladeshis”, the Foreign Adviser said.

He also informed that on 10 September 2008 the Kuwaiti Parliament will meet in an emergency session to discuss the crisis with regard to foreign workers, including Asians and Bangladeshis: “in that respect the visit was well-timed,” he added.

Dr. Iftekhar Chowdhury further observed that the Kuwaiti authorities see Bangladesh as “a great friend who stood by them at the hour of their greatest need during the Iraqi occupation. I also appreciated their support to our economic development. I urged them to take skilled manpower from Bangladesh in the future. They also agreed to consider supporting some new projects in Bangladesh covering the Padma Bridge, Chittagong Port, and the Special Economic Zone in Sylhet.”

The Foreign Adviser also added that the Kuwaiti authorities had announced an amnesty till 15 October 2008 for illegal workers to depart Kuwait without any legal impediments.

It may be mentioned that to facilitate the Mission’s work in this regard, the government has decided to increase manpower at the Embassy. The Embassy has also engaged a Kuwaiti lawyer to look after Bangladeshi workers’ interests. Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said “I also had two sessions with members of the Bangladeshi community. I assured them that Bangladesh and Bangladeshis stand by them and will do all that is possible to bring happiness to their lives.”

**UK supports the efforts of Caretaker government**

The United Kingdom supports all steps taken by the caretaker government and the Election Commission to hold free, fair and credible elections in Bangladesh, said Stephen Evans, British High Commissioner in Dhaka on 02 September 2008. He made the comment after he had called on the Adviser for Foreign Affairs Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, at the latter’s office.

On his part, Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said that the caretaker government was determined to hold the general elections in December, 2008 and the Foreign Ministry was working to this end. They discussed a range of other issues, which are likely to come up at the UN General Assembly this month. Bangladesh and UK are already working together on many of them, particularly in areas related to climate change, security and Millennium Development Goals.
Evans said that when he would go home on leaver, he would hold meetings with British-Bangladeshi businessmen in London, Manchester and Tower Hamlet and find out how the cooperation could be enhanced and a better situation could be created for them.

**Bangladesh approves US-Bangladesh deal on Radiation Detection Equipment at Chittagong port**

The government has approved the draft of a Memorandum of Understanding between Bangladesh and the United States to set up radiation detection equipment in the Chittagong port. The Council of Advisers at a meeting on 4 September 2008 gave the go ahead to the proposal, which would help to prevent smuggling of atomic and radioactive substances on sea route.

**100-day job scheme starts for 2 million poor**

On 15 September 2008 the government launched a 100-day employment generation scheme for 2 million hardcore poor across the country to mitigate their sufferings during lean season.

Under the program, one person of a family will get Tk 100 per working day against his/her labor to be utilized in different types of projects like canal digging, embankment building, earth filling, pond cleaning and compost making.

The total number of people brought under the program worth Tk 2,000 crore is about 5 percent of the total number of extreme poor at over 4 crore. But according to government estimates, the number of total beneficiaries will be 1 crore as the program will offer job opportunity to one person from each five-member family.

“We have taken the program to mitigate sufferings of the hardcore poor. I hope it will help reduce seasonal unemployment in rural areas,” said Food and Disaster Management Adviser Dr. AMM Shawkat Ali at a press briefing.

The government took the initiative to address seasonal unemployment in rural areas where the extreme poor, mainly farm labourers, face joblessness in September-November period after plantation of the country's second biggest Aman crop. They also suffer from unemployment in March-April period after the plantation of the biggest crop Boro.

“We will implement the program in two phases. The first phase will continue until November,” the adviser said, adding that the scheme has been taken along with other social safety net programmes such as VGD (vulnerable group development), VGF (vulnerable group feeding) and Kabikha (food for work). The second phase of the program will kick off in March next year, Dr. Shawkat Ali said. “We are trying to increase purchasing capacity of these extreme poor through the program,” he said, adding that the program started in 480 upazilas of all the divisions. Of the divisions, Rajshahi and Barisal have got priority. Dr. Shawkat Ali said if any appropriate jobs cannot be created within 15 days, the people brought under the scheme will be provided with Tk 40 daily for the first 30 days and Tk 50 daily for the rest of the period.

The adviser said those who have already been covered by the government's other social safety net programmes will not be eligible for the 100-day scheme. Dr. Shawkat Ali said the local administration will run the program under different projects, and local non-government organizations will be involved in it to monitor the works and money distribution.
**Government approved Consumer Rights Protection Ordinance-2008**

The Council of Advisers approved the Consumer Rights Protection Ordinance-2008, which aims at protecting consumers’ interests at all levels. The approval was given at the meeting of the Council held in Dhaka recently. According to the new ordinance, a 21-member National Consumer Rights Protection Council would be constituted with the Commerce Minister as its Chairman. Apart from the national council, the Consumer Rights Protection Committee would also be formed at district, upazila and union levels.

**Dhaka to host BIMSTEC Poverty Alleviation Centre**

The 10th Ministerial Meeting of BIMSTEC decided that the BIMSTEC Poverty Alleviation Centre will be set up in Dhaka. The Meeting took place at the Indian capital New Delhi during the last week of August 2008.

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Hon’ble Adviser for Foreign Affairs formally made the proposal on 29 August 2008 during the meeting. Speaking to the media later, Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said, “We are delighted by the decision. I believe we have both the experience and expertise for it. We also hosted the first BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation in Dhaka in July 2008. I am sure we can make a positive contribution to this important area of BIMSTEC’s work”.

**British climate fund to boost Bangladesh’s effort to manage the impact of climate change**

The United Kingdom will give Bangladesh at least £75 million to adapt to climate change. The donation is the first big attempt by a developed country to stave off environmental catastrophe in one of the world’s most environmentally challenged countries.

Other global funds for vulnerable and poor countries are to be set up in the run-up to a new post-Kyoto climate change agreement at the end of 2009. Denmark, the Netherlands and the World Bank are also expected to contribute to the Bangladesh fund, which was launched at a donor conference in London on 10 September 2008.

Low-lying Bangladesh suffers from many climate-related problems, including floods, cyclones, and river erosion, and according to some assessments Bangladesh may face severe effects of climate change within the next few decades. According to Dr. Atiq Rahman, Bangladeshi lead author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: "A 30 to 45-centimetre sea-level rise will dislocate about 35 million people from coastal districts by 2050. The climate is changing far more rapidly than anticipated. Bangladesh is experiencing climate-related natural disasters and extreme events like prolonged and repeated floods which have deadly consequences on agriculture and food security."

In the past three years, Bangladesh has faced several of its strongest cyclones and worst floods. More than 3 million people were made homeless in super-cyclone Sidr in November 2007, when nearly 30% of the staple rice harvest was lost.

The fund, it is hoped, will attract nearly $215 million within three years. The World Bank will administer the fund. The money is expected to help farmers with new flood and drought-resistant crops, and with raising embankments and flood defences to protect homes. It may be mentioned that Bangladesh has already been testing new variety of rice and vegetables that can be harvested within shorter time and which could survive the rise in flood water.
‘Amar Sonar Bangla’ becomes second among participating countries’ national anthems in Beijing Olympic 2008

Bangladesh may not have won any medal in the Beijing Olympics, but the country has already won unexpected recognition for its national anthem that was played in the opening ceremony.

Alex Marshall, a freelance journalist specializing in music, tracked down every one of the 205 national anthems that might be heard at this year’s Olympic Games, and sat through an excruciating period of four and a half hours of listening to them before ranking them by musical quality. Marshall revealed the name of his best 10 national anthems that could make their countries proud and Bangladesh’s name came second in the list after Uruguay.

Marshal, in his report ‘And the winning national anthem is…’ said most of the national anthems in the world are tedious and only about a dozen of them are musically worth listening to. Marshal’s intention was clear, he wanted to compare the countries’ anthems musically. ‘There is no other fair way to compare…National anthems are the same the world over — a short, classical piece meant to stir up pride,’ wrote Marshall. The national anthems of Uruguay, Bangladesh and Tajikistan shared the top three honors in his list while Mauritania, Dominica, US Virgin Isles, Senegal, Nigeria, Nepal and Japan also made it in the top 10.

‘A wonderful anthem that sounds like it was written for a stroll along the Seine,’ said Marshall about Bangladesh’s ‘Amar Sonar Bangla’ while delivering his verdict. ‘It really needs Jacques Brel, which is probably not what the Bangladeshi composer had in mind,’ he said, referring to the legendary Belgian lyric writer. ‘After listening to 205 of them I have realised there are actually just two types of anthems: the perfunctory, lifeless ones, and those that make the effort to be different.’ said the writer. The long article ended with a verdict on Bangladesh that said though the country’s six athletes have no chance of winning a medal, they should be cheered for their music.

Source: The Guardian, UK
BGMEA & BKMEA provide subsidized essentials to workers

Apex trade bodies for woven and knitwear, the two major sub-sectors of readymade garments industry, announced the launch of its rationing programmes from 03 September 2008.

The program aims at catering essential commodities to workers across the nation at a subsidized rate. Official sources from Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers Association (BKMEA) told, “The program has been initiated with the joint efforts of our association and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) for providing workers at the mill with commodities like rice, lentil, gram and other basic part of their staple food at a price much lower than the market value. The distribution has already started and will continue through the entire month of Ramadan (fasting).”

It was also informed that the association has sent a proposal to the Ministry of Labor for increasing the wages of the workers by way of providing special allowances. An announcement of a salary hike from the government is likely to come in a few days.

BGMEA planned to sell the essential commodities at nine spots in and around Dhaka including two spots in Chittagong. Besides, the President of the Association also told the reporters, “Under the package, workers can purchase essentials once a week showing their identity cards”. BKMEA, on the other hand, has selected a total of five spots in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Savar for implementing its rationing plan in a quantity and at price similar to those offered by the BGMEA. It had started selling essentials to workers at a subsidized rate since last year and plans to continue it through the month of Ramadan.

Taka 1200 crore project for infrastructure development at Chittagong Port approved

A Taka 1200-crore export infrastructure development project has been approved to reduce growing pressure of export and import on the Chittagong Seaport. The project, which includes an inland container depot (ICD) at Dhirashrom near Tongi, construction of double railway lines from Chittagong Port to Foujdarhat, and procurement of 10 railway engines and 120 flat wagons, has received the approval of the project committee of the Planning Commission.

The construction work under the project will begin in November 2009 and will complete in 2014. After completion of the project, there will be a scope for handling 15 percent of the containers in Chittagong through the ICD by 2016 and 30 percent by 2026. The Shridham ICD under the project will be the country's second ICD with a capacity of 3.54 TEUs (twenty equivalent units). The ICD will be constructed on 137 acres of land at a cost of Taka 500 crore.

The country's first ICD was constructed at Kamalapur in 1987. Its capacity is 90,000 TEUs. Pressure is increasing on the ICD every year since its inception. In fiscal 2007-08, a total
of 82,000 containers were handled in the ICD. But this number is only 10 percent of the containers handled in the Chittagong Port.

**Government to set up SEZ Authority by year-end to boost investment**

The government is set to establish a Special Economic Zone Authority by year-end to speed up local and foreign investment in the newly-fashioned industrial parks. The Hon’ble Chief Advisor's office is now scrutinizing the final draft of a proposed 'Special Economic Zone Ordinance-2008' under which the Authority would be created. "The proposed ordinance has already been approved in principle by the Council of Advisers," one executive member of Board of Investment (BoI) said. The ordinance is being expedited after the advisory council led by Hon’ble Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed last month okayed creation of a SEZ in Sylhet. The government said it would develop several SEZs across the country to encourage investment in the country's manufacturing sector. The SEZ, the first of its kind in the country, will be modeled after similar 'successful' zones located in China, Vietnam, South Korea, Dubai and Jordan.

The proposed ordinance was drafted after interactions with SEZ authorities in other countries and representatives of local and foreign chambers and export oriented trade bodies.

Experts say the spillover effects -- in the form of job creation, investments, transfer of management skills and technology -- of SEZs will be much greater than the traditional industrial parks such as EPZs. Bangladesh set up its first EPZ in 1983 and since then its eight EPZs have netted over $1.5 billion in investments, although they cost the government millions of dollars in tax and fiscal benefits. The EPZs now host more than 283 industrial plants, which have created jobs for 220,000 workers. Their payments are far higher than national average. These factories last year exported US$2.43 billion which amounts to around 20 per cent of the country's annual export.

**China to invest $5m at Karnaphuli EPZ**

M/s. Blossom Textile limited a Chinese company will set up a Garments Manufacturing Industry in the Karnaphuli Export Processing Zone.

This 100 percent foreign owned company will invest about Taka 34 crore in setting up their plant and will produce T-shirt, Polo shirt, Pant, Jacket. The company will also create employment opportunity for 2000 Bangladeshi and 50 foreign nationals. An agreement to this effect was signed between the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority and the M/s. Blossom Textile Limited in BEPZA Complex, Dhaka recently.

**Cairn to invest $9.5m in offshore Sangu gas field**

Cairn Energy Plc, a UK-based oil giant has planned to invest nearly $9.5 million to try to find more natural gas at the country's only offshore field at Sangu, which may be commercially exhausted by the end of next year.

"The firm has submitted a proposal to us to allow them to spend up to $9.5 million for continuing gas production from the offshore till 2011," said a senior official of oil, gas and mineral corporation Petrobangla. So far Cairn has invested about $1 billion in Bangladesh, including nearly $600 million in Sangu, which began producing gas in 1998, officials said. Last month the oil company informed Petrobangla the field was now left with a recoverable gas reserve of just 14 billion cubic feet (bcf) which would be exhausted by September, 2009.

"The company will spend money to perforate two wells and install two compressors produce 9.30 bcf more gas," the official said. A Cairn official said the firm might receive a decision from Petrobangla early next week after a joint management panel meeting. "We have to take a
decision quickly, as hundreds of manufacturing factories in Chittagong port city area depend on gas supplies from Sangu," the official added. Production from the field at the beginning was around 200 million cubic feet a day (mmcf/d) and has now slumped to below 50 mmcf/d, resulting in a severe gas shortage in the region.

**Bangladesh has potential to grab 10pc of global IT outsourcing**

Global technology giant Cisco has said Bangladesh can secure a sizable slice in the global outsourcing market provided the policy framework is responsive to information technology (IT) businesses.

"Bangladesh can easily capture 10 per cent share in the offshore market, provided that the government frames policies conducive to IT entrepreneurs," Lokesh Mehra, a regional manager at Cisco, the American networking technology goliath, said in an interview.

Mehra who visited Bangladesh recently, noted that it would also require a special incentive package tailored for local IT entrepreneurs and giving legal coverage to internet telephony to help the country prepare for the game.

With its low-cost base and quality manpower, the Cisco executive said Dhaka can grab a substantial share in the fastest-growing global industry, dominated by a handful of players, notably India, Ireland and Israel. "Currently, India's share in the global offshore business hovers at 20 per cent." The International consultancy group Gartner has estimated that the size of global offshore business market will be an astounding $142 billion by 2008.

Mehra suggested that Bangladesh should legalize the voice over internet protocol (VoIP) or internet telephony for at least software companies to ensure cost-efficiency in offshore business. Unveiling the Cisco's business plan, he said the company looks to expand further its operations to Bangladesh soon, with an eye on small and medium business (SMB) segments. Cisco's core business areas include SMB, government and defense, telecommunications and commercial segments.

The California-based company churned out a whooping US$34.9 billion in revenue in fiscal ending June 2007, an increase of around 23 per cent over the year before, according to its website.

So far as the Bangladesh market is concerned, Mehra said, the company will be focusing on the SMB and government segments, which hold out much potential. By 2009, Mehra figured out, Cisco's net revenue in Bangladesh could touch down to $10 million a year. The Cisco official said his company is also in talks with the government to help Bangladesh establish e-governance in the civil administration.

Mehra, who is also heading the Cisco's networking academy program in South Asia, said his company is sponsoring a basic networking course free of charges in Bangladesh as part of its corporate social responsibility. Cisco's networking academy is an initiative that trains people on the principles of designing, building, and maintaining networks capable of supporting national and global organizations. Cisco has already teamed up with 14 local educational institutions, including BUET and BRAC University, to provide basic networking education. In addition, it is running an advance course on networking technology in four public and private universities.

**Two Taiwanese companies to invest Tk 1.96b in Karnaphuli EPZ**

Two companies of Taiwan will invest Tk 1.96 billion (196 crore) for setting up two shoe manufacturing industries in Karnaphuli Export Processing Zone (EPZ). La Luna Shoes (BD) Limited will set up a shoe manufacturing industry in the extension area (CSD) of Karnaphuli EPZ. Another Taiwanese company, Sheng Tseng Enterprises Company Limited will
set up a shoe accessories and plastic products manufacturing industry in the same area.

The two fully foreign-owned company will invest about Tk 1.38 billion (138 crore) and Tk 580 million respectively in setting up their plants. La Luna will create employment opportunity for 2,344 Bangladeshi and 115 foreign nationals while the other company Sheng Tseng will create employment opportunity for 548 Bangladeshi and nine foreign nationals.

In this connection, an agreement was signed between Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) and La Luna Shoes (BD) Limited at the BEPZA complex in the city recently.

Grameen Phone to raise Tk 425cr through bonds

Grameen Phone is set to raise Tk 425 crore through issuing bonds, a move that promises to shore up the country's ailing bond market. The country's largest mobile operator, majority-controlled by Norway's Telenor, has received the green light from the Securities and Exchange Commission to raise the funds through private placement, said an SEC official. According to the official, the value of the two-year tenure bond will be Tk 1.0 crore each and the coupon rate will be no more than 14.50 percent.

BTRC drafts Wi-Fi guideline

Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has published a draft guideline for use of Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) technology that they believe will quicken the pace of internet penetration in Bangladesh. BTRC published the draft recently.

BTRC said it would like to seek views from the industry and any interested party on the various issues discussed in these Draft Guidelines. The stakeholders are requested to send their comments on these Draft Guidelines for use of Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) Technology in Bangladesh.

The Commission has provided guidelines for the approved commercial/non-commercial use of the Industrial, Scientific and Medical (ISM) band frequencies in Bangladesh using the Wi-Fi technology in order to ensure rapid expansion of services and accelerated increase in Internet penetration. As per the National Frequency Allocation Plan 2005 (NFAP 2005), spectrum from the ISM band in 2.4000-2.4835 GHz and 5.725-5.875 GHz is allocated for Wi-Fi use.

According to the draft, access to the spectrum will be on shared basis. There will be no exclusive assignment to any individual or organizations, whether for private, public or commercial use. Any Government or Private Organization/Educational Institution/Corporate Body can establish and use Wi-Fi Network on non-commercial/non-profit basis. Household/private users, however, are not required to take any permission from the Commission or pay any levy/charge for using Wi-Fi in the given ISM band.

All commercial Wi-Fi Hotspot operators/service providers shall possess an ISP or equivalent License (e.g., BWA License). Existing operators
having such License from the Commission will be eligible to establish Wi-Fi network for providing last mile solution. There will be levy/charges applicable annually for all hotspots.

**Private firms start handling international phone calls**

Private firms began handling international phone calls under international gateway (IGW). Mr. MA Malek, Special Assistant to the Hon’ble Chief Adviser, inaugurated the IGW service of Mir Telecom at Eskaton in Dhaka on 21 August 2008.

Mr. Manzurul Alam, Chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), said the government would earn Tk 1500 crore from private operators on international calls. It is said illegal international call terminations have cost the country’s exchequer Tk 6,000 crore in yearly losses. To prevent further loss in the sector, the current Caretaker Government had launched a massive drive against illegal VoIP with the BTRC realizing Tk 839 crore in fine from mobile operators for their alleged involvement in illegal VoIP.

Meanwhile, for the convenience of the consumers’, government had taken an initiative and added a section to the International Long Distance Telecommunication Services Policy 2007 to legalise VoIP. According to the policy, three local companies had been awarded for international call terminations, along with state-run Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited, formerly BTTB. Earlier, Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited was the sole company in the field.
PHOTO GALLERY

Photos taken at Democratic Party Convention in Denver and Republican Party Convention in St. Paul

Group photo of Ambassadors at the farm house of Minnesota Lt. Governor Mrs. Carol Molnau

Ambassador M. Humayun Kabir with Minnesota Lt. Governor Mrs. Carol Molnau

Embassy officials at Congressman Gary Ackerman’s Office

Ambassador with Congressman Howard Berman

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