

Cell phone firms demand shutdown compensation

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The mobile phone operators have asked for compensation from the government for repeatedly suspending their networks and mounting their losses.

They are calculating lost revenue due to such shutdowns. Individual demand for compensation would be placed together to the government very soon.

"If the government does not compensate as per the law, it will shatter investors' confidence," cautioned a major foreign telecom investor.

A letter signed by the managing

Orion Group becomes GP's corporate client

Orion Group recently signed an agreement with GrameenPhone Limited under GP's corporate sales package initiative, says a press release.

Under the deal, Orion Group has been provided with GP mobile phones.

Obaidul Karim, managing director of Orion Group, and Kafil H S Mueyed, general manager, Sales and Marketing Division of GrameenPhone, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations. Md Ebadul Karim, executive director of Orion, and Khalid Hasan, director, Personnel and Organization of GrameenPhone, were present at the signing ceremony.

Enayet Karim, senior vice president, Marketing of Orion, and Hassan Md Zahid, head of Corporate Sales Department of GrameenPhone, were also present.

directors of GrameenPhone, CityCell, Aktel and Sheba was sent in this regard to the secretary of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications.

They also protested the fact that the state-owned fixed telephones were functional while the private mobile networks were suspended. It has been "creating circumstances for our valued subscribers to feel discriminated and inconvenienced," the letter says.

The government has the prerogative to suspend the mobile networks as per the telecom law. But it also requires the government to compensate the operators for such temporary shutdown, which has never happened, the letter noted.

The caretaker government perceived cell phone as a tool of co-ordinated rigging and civil disobedience during the eighth parliamentary election. Accordingly, the ministry, which then used to be the telecom regulator, ordered country-wide shutdown of all mobile ser-

vices for 24 hours commencing from 6:00am on October 1, 2001.

Since then it has been a routine practice to shut down mobile networks during any election. However, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act 2001 became effective in January 30, 2002 and the regulatory authority was transferred to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

But the ministry has been ordering suspensions of mobile networks. Apart from the elections and by-elections of the eighth parliament, the mobile networks were kept shutdown altogether for 161 hours on account of city corporation and municipal elections.

The ministry also verbally instructed the operators to snap their services in Dhaka for six hours during the first four nights of the "Operation Clean Heart." Now the deputy commissioners of various districts are ordering the mobile companies to keep their network down in the Union

Parishad electorates during the polls.

"It is very difficult to comply with such orders," complained a highly placed source of the mobile industry.

Rolling out one after another "cell" of radio signals makes a mobile network. Such deployment of cells generally crosses over the administrative demarcations. If a network covering a constituency is required to shutdown, a large part of its surrounding area also faces communications blackout.

"We cannot justify such interruption to the peripheral subscribers and the government should protect us from such disruption," commented a source, requesting anonymity.

The telecom secretary could not be reached for comments.

"I have been told that the operators have given us a copy of the letter on this compensation issue and we will do the needful according to the law," said Syed Margub Murshed, chairman of the BTRC.

Permanent venue for trade fairs planned

Dhaka int'l trade fair concludes

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government is going to set up a permanent trade fair venue on a 35-acre of land near old airport area in Dhaka.

Terminating the present venue, where the Dhaka International Trade Fair is held, unhygienic, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) has already acquired 17 acres of land to construct the permanent venue.

The minister was speaking at the concluding function of the Dhaka International Trade Fair 2003.

LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan attended the ceremony as chief guest while Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and State Minister for Commerce Barkatullah Bulu were present as special guests.

Bhuiyan urged local manufacturers to improve quality to tap new markets and restrict smuggling of goods.

He said after 2005, quota and preferential treatment in garment sector would be abolished. Quality and price will only determine the market leaders at that time, he added.

Referring to smuggling of cheap foreign items, which rob gains of local products, he said if quality and competitive price are guaranteed consumers would surely switch to local goods.

"It's not possible to check smuggling by framing laws. Quality goods at comparatively low prices is the answer," he said, "If we offer eggs to consumers at competitive prices, those will not come from India," said the minister.

He advised local entrepreneurs to follow this formula to earn consumers' confidence and acquire a healthy share in world trade volume.

Some 414 enterprises from 21 countries took part in the annual fair. Around 14 lakh people visited the

fair against 20 lakh last year.

For the first time, the organisers allocated stalls for tribal and rural women for only Tk 1,000 instead of usual fee of Tk 90,000 as a gesture to promote business of the underprivileged section of the society.

However, the organisers alleged non-co-operation by the police, which caused some mismanagement. The exhibitors also blamed police for some 'untoward incidents,' they said.

Bhuiyan distributed prizes among participants for their performance during the month-long fair, which was opened on January 7.

Basundhara Paper Mills got the first prize in the pavilion category while Asian Textile Mills Ltd bagged second prize. Star Particle Board Mills and Akter Furniture Ltd jointly received third prizes.

BRB Cable Industries got first prize in mini-pavilion category and Artisti Collection bagged first prize in stall category.

Among the foreign participants, Export Promotion Bureau of Pakistan received first prize in pavilion category. Jordana Cosmetic Corporation of the USA and Lian Watt Electric Company of Singapore bagged the first prizes in the mini-pavilion and stall categories.

Correction

There was an error in the first paragraph of yesterday's column titled "Password" on the Business page due to a technical glitch. It should be read as "The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) celebrated its first birthday on January 30. It was established under the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act, 2001. The Awami League government took more than three years to pass this law." We regret this inadvertent error.

CURRENCY

Following is yesterday's forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank

Selling		Currency		Buying	
TT/OD	BC	USD	TT Clean	OD Sight Doc	OD Transfer
59.1000	59.1500	58.2000	58.0341	57.9629	
64.9598	65.0467	EUR	62.1158	61.9324	61.8558
97.3043	97.3463	GBP	94.2804	94.0139	93.9593
35.7294	35.7539	AUD	33.6400	33.5475	33.4674
0.4947	0.4949	JPY	0.4792	0.4790	0.4780
43.9608	43.9853	CHF	42.5792	42.4847	42.4002
7.0453	7.0504	SEK	6.8017	6.7841	6.7681
39.0692	39.0938	CAD	38.0457	37.9520	37.8699
7.5853	7.5866	HKD	7.4573	7.4396	7.4222
34.002	34.0233	SGD	33.1910	33.1472	33.0326
16.2220	16.2396	AED	15.7077	15.6858	15.6673
15.8851	15.9035	SAR	15.4022	15.3695	15.3473

Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar

Indian Rupee	Pak rupee	London rupee	Taiwan	Norwegian Krone	NZ dollar	Malaysian Ringgit
47.67	58.99	96.855	42.915	6.9126	0.5489	3.8000

Local Interbank FX Trading:
The local interbank foreign exchange market subdued Saturday. US dollar almost unchanged against the taka on Saturday. At the close, taka was quoted at 58.66/58.68 against USD compared with 58.66/58.70 previously.

Local Money Market:
Demand for call money was high on Saturday. Call money rate rose Saturday because of the Eid withdrawal pressure ahead of Eid-ul-Azha. At the close call money rate ranged between 14.00 and 16.00 per cent compared with 5.75-6.25 per cent previously.

International Market:
International market was closed on Saturday. Dollar was flat against European currencies and up modestly on the yen Friday after a rally on US jobs data subsided and attention turned to geopolitical concerns and the threat of terror attacks. US dollar rose on news that US non-farm payrolls surged at the fastest pace in two years in January with 143,000 new jobs created, more than twice what economists expected. But the good feeling was short-lived as drop in December payrolls was revised to 156,000 in December from 101,000. Putting further pressure on the dollar was news that the US government had put the country on the second highest level of security alert.

At the closing of New York on Friday, euro was at 1.0823/28, GBP at 1.6317/22 and yen at 120.26/31 against the dollar.

ReadyCash Raffle Draw Winners

The latest ReadyCash Raffle draw was held at ReadyCash Bangladesh office at Dhanmondi in the city on Thursday, says a press release.

Prizes	Name of Winners	Card No
China Junction Chinese free lunch for two	Nuri Abul Quasem	5047980010009743
Meal in the box free lunch for two	SARafuzzaman	5047980010010051
Sticky Fingers free lunch/dinner for two	K M Mostafa Mahbub	504798000045841
Obsessionn free gift box	Azim Anwar	5047980010010176
Wonder Optics free sunglass	Sanjida Parvin	5047980010010033
Liton's Snacks free meal box	Md Mostafizur Rahman	5047980010009922
Desh Karupannya free gift box	Md Fakrudin	5047980010010161
The Dhansiri free lunch/dinner for two	Md Sk Sirajul Islam	5047980010009905
Kamal General Store	Md Musa Ali	5047980010010115
Swiss Free meal for three	Apu Mahajan	5047980020002008

Winners can collect their prizes from the Executive, Promotion of ReadyCash within 30 days of this news circulation by producing their ReadyCash card transaction vouchers. ReadyCash encourages its cardholders to read The Daily Star and the Daily Prothom Alo on every Sunday or call our Customer Service at 8123850, 8130497, and 8125294-7.



PHOTO: GP

Kafil H S Mueyed, GM of Sales and Marketing Division of GrameenPhone, and Obaidul Karim, managing director of Orion Group, sign an agreement recently.

STOCK