

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▼ 0.60%	▼ 0.51%	\$1,556.94	\$54.52	▲ 2.30%	▲ 0.49%	▲ 1.29%	▲ 1.34%	BUY TK 83.95	92.03	108.61	11.86
4,479.40	8,269.53	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	40,789.38	23,084.59	3,159.57	2,783.29	SELL TK 84.95	95.83	112.41	12.46

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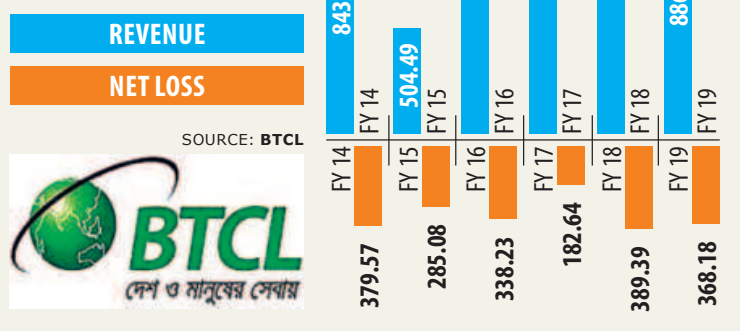
DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 5, 2020, MAGH 22, 1426 BS starbusiness@thedailystar.net

BTCL on project spree to reclaim glory

Working on Tk 22,000cr projects, readying for 5G

REVENUE AND NET LOSS

In crore taka



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

State-owned telecom company BTCL has taken a host of projects worth Tk 22,121 crore in a bid to ready itself for the upcoming 5G technology and at the same time reclaim its lost glory.

"The government is very serious about the 5G mobile services, and this is why, we have to make our system and networks compatible with all modern technologies,"

said Md Rafiqul Matin, managing director of Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited, yesterday.

Once the ongoing projects are complete, BTCL can keep up with any operator in the market, he told representatives of the Telecom Reporters' Network Bangladesh at a meeting.

BTCL is currently working on four projects of Tk 2,835.65 crore for: modernising telecom network,

upgrading switches and connections, establishing telecom network in Mirsarai economic zone, and laying fibre optic cables

PROJECTS (in crore taka)

ONGOING (to complete by 2020)

Modernisation of telecom network	2,573.39
Upgradation of switching and connectivity	155.38
Networking in Mirsarai economic zone	61.90
Fibre optic cable networking in school, colleges	44.98

WAITING FOR APPROVAL (to complete by 2023)

IP network upgrade	949.50
Transmission network for 5G readiness	1,265
Telecom networking in economic zones	101
Co-location for all telecom operators	1,200
Free wi-fi zone in hard to reach unions	460

In planning stage there are nine projects worth Tk 15,310cr

to provide Wi-Fi connections in about 500 schools and colleges.

The company has five projects worth Tk 3,975.5 crore now awaiting approvals from the planning and telecom ministries.

Another nine projects of about Tk 15,310 crore are at the "conceptual stage", Matin said, adding that all the schemes should be complete within 2030.

As BTCL's internet protocol-based network was not strong enough to meet the demands of the market, the current management was trying to make their services competitive, he said.

To that end, they have a long list

of chores to carry through, a few of them being: establishing fibre optic network in 16 backwater upazilas, building a telecom museum and launching a telecom staff college.

BTCL has conducted feasibility studies before finalising the projects, said AKM Habibur Rahman, deputy managing director (planning) of the company.

Once a hugely profitable enterprise, BTCL embarked on the project spree at a time when its revenue and profit were plumbing new depths every year amid the onslaught of modern mobile phone services.

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Exports remain sluggish

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Export earnings continued to remain sluggish until January this fiscal year, frustrated by slumping shipment of apparel and leather and leather goods, the two sectors that account for 85 percent of the total shipment.

Exports fell 5.21 percent year-on-year to \$22.92 billion in July-January of the current fiscal year, data from the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) showed.

In January export bucked the recovery trend seen in December. Manufacturers sent \$3.61 billion worth of goods abroad in January - 1.7 percent less than that in the same month a year ago, according to the EPB data.

"The reality is that we are getting less in value although the quantity remains almost the same," said Asif Ibrahim, a director of Newage Group, one of the leading apparel exporters.

Apparel, which makes up more than 80 percent of national exports, slumped 5.71

percent year-on-year to \$19 billion in July-January of fiscal 2019-20.

Knitwear exports declined 5.13 percent to \$9.6 billion during this period, while shipment of woven garments dropped 6.29 percent to \$9.44 billion.

Bangladesh has now overcapacity in making basic garment items, he said. "This has created a situation where many, particularly large exporters, are cutting prices of apparel to stay afloat," he added.

"We also lag behind our peer countries in terms of production efficiency. We could not move upward in the value chain to make upmarket garments for a lack of research and development," said Ibrahim, also a director of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The shipment of leather and leather goods also continued to remain on a downward curve for a loss of consumers' appetite for leather goods and a lack of environmental compliance by local firms.

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NBR once again extends deadline for VAT software use

SOHEL PARVEZ

The National Board of Revenue has extended the deadline for the third time for use of software for record-keeping by firms with turnover of Tk 5 crore and above in the face of resistance to installing the costly software.

The new deadline is February 29.

The tax authority is now trying to bring down the price of the software by asking more companies to develop it, said an NBR official requesting anonymity as he is not authorised to speak with the media.

At present, 24 companies are authorised to make the software, which will connect businesses with a server at the revenue authority's premises. The companies are demanding Tk 10-15 lakh for the software.

"This software should not be compared

with the ordinary ones. It is a system developed in line with the law. It is a sophisticated task and we have to do it carefully," said Md Mahadi Hasan, head of operation of Dhruvadi Techno Consortium Ltd, one of the NBR enlisted software firms.

The company has already developed 70 such software out of 110 orders it received from local companies so far.

He, however, said a trading company with a turnover of Tk 5 crore and above might get an NBR prescribed software in between Tk 2-4 lakh.

Prices become higher when it comes to large manufacturing firms, he added.

The call for software use came in September 2018 as part of the NBR's initiative to automate the value-added tax system, the biggest source of revenue for the state.

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