

Robi launches VoLTE for better services

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Robi yesterday introduced voice over long term evolution (VoLTE) technology to provide the 4G users of the telecom operator with enhanced audio, better data usage and improved service.

"VoLTE is a real game changer," said Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, CEO and managing director of Robi.

Not only does the VoLTE provide high-quality voice services, it also significantly enhances an operator's ability to carry voice calls over their network, he said.

VoLTE has up to three times more voice and data capacity than older 3G UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System), he said.

"The most exciting part is that our customers won't have to pay any extra charges to avail this new innovative experience."

VoLTE service

Call generation time will come down by **1/3rd**

11% Robi customer have VoLTE supportive handset

5,000 sites ready for VoLTE service

3G will be obsolete within **3-4** years

Robi tested VoLTE for a year



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Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar pose at the inauguration of Robi's VoLTE service at a ceremony at InterContinental Dhaka yesterday.

After completing trial runs, Robi launched the service at a programme at the InterContinental Dhaka.

Robi users in Dhaka and Chattogram will be the first to enjoy the service as about 5,000 cellular towers equipped with VoLTE technology have been activated across the two divisions.

Gradually though, the service will be made available throughout the country, said Robi officials.

VoLTE is an inter-protocol based voice call technology which is specifically designed to ensure high-quality phone calls.

VoLTE treats a person's voice as though

it were an application, which use the operator's LTE data network to transmit data.

By doing so, calls can be set up within just 3 to 4 seconds, which is 40 or 50 per cent faster than how voice calls are traditionally handled, Robi said.

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Uber now in Cox's Bazar

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Uber yesterday launched its operations in Cox's Bazar, making it the fourth Bangladeshi city after Dhaka, Chatogram and Sylhet.

UberMoto and UberXL, two services of the global ride sharing company, will be available in the city to go up to Innani and Ramu.



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"We are delighted to announce our foray in Cox's Bazar, the heart of tourism in Bangladesh," said Ratul Ghosh, head of Bangladesh and East India for Uber.

The launch of Uber services in Cox's Bazar will offer affordable, reliable, and convenient transportation access to riders, and livelihood opportunities for drivers, according to a press release.

In 2019, riders from 76 countries had used Uber while visiting Bangladesh, Ghosh said.

"We are excited to contribute to the potential of this new city and optimistic that citizens and tourists will give us a warm welcome."

Uber has launched several safety products so that riders feel safe before, during and after trips, reads the press release. There is an emergency number that connects riders to law enforcement agencies, an in-app safety toolkit, and updated the app's community guidelines, which outline the behaviour expected from riders and drivers to foster mutual respect.

To ensure seamless post-trip assistance, Uber has invested in a 24/7 safety response team and a dedicated law enforcement response team for assisting police with any information they might need, it added.

8 social businesses get £2m from Unilever-DFID-Ernst & Young venture

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Maya is an online platform where any health-related question can be asked anonymously free of charge and without fear of judgment.

To provide round the clock expert advice on physical, mental and lifestyle issues from doctors, psychologists, and beauticians, the platform uses a database of over 25 lakh questions and their respective answers on various topics.

Also available in app form from www.maya.com.bd, Maya is being termed as a personal digital wellbeing assistant by its creators.

Maya is one of 8 innovative 'social business organisations' that received a donation of Tk 22 crore, or £2 million, in the past two years from 'Transform', a joint venture of Unilever, the Department of International Development (DFID) and Ernst & Young.

The initiatives were made public at The Westin Dhaka yesterday.

The eight enterprises are centred on enabling good health and wellbeing, which is also Sustainable Development



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Representatives of eight social businesses and officials of Unilever and the DFID pose at an event in The Westin Dhaka yesterday.

Goal (SDG) 3, and clean water and sanitation, or SDG 6. They are 'creating inclusive markets' to 'help alleviate poverty', or SDG 1, and embody partnerships for goals, SDG 17.

Transform is said to be an attempt

to further Unilever's 'Sustainable Living Plan', which aims to decouple its growth from environmental footprint while increasing positive social impact.

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Coronavirus to affect Bangladesh's tourism

Says a senior govt official

UNB, Dhaka

Coronavirus outbreak in China, which has spread to two dozen countries, will negatively affect Bangladesh's tourism and aviation sectors, a senior government official said yesterday.

"The effect of coronavirus has spread throughout the world. We can't deny the fact that it will have some impact on Bangladesh," said Md Mohibul Haque, senior secretary of the civil aviation and tourism ministry.

He was interacting with journalists at the secretariat after inaugurating a magazine - "Beautiful Bangladesh" - for passengers of Bangladesh Biman Airlines. At the programme, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahbub Ali said there is nothing to be scared about coronavirus as Bangladesh does not have any direct flights to China.

"As you know, coronavirus is destroyed in 32-35 degrees Celsius and within the next few days Bangladesh's temperature will reach 32C. So there's no need to worry," he said.

Ali said the government has taken



FAHD MANNAN

Birds take to the skies as the sun goes down in Nijhum Dwip under Noakhali's Hatiya upazila.

all possible measures to tackle the new virus, adding that passengers are being screened at the airport.

The viral outbreak that began in

China's Wuhan has infected more than 45,100 people globally. Deaths in mainland China stood at 1,115 yesterday, according to reports.

Why is tax-GDP ratio so low in Bangladesh?



NASIRUDDIN AHMED

TAX compliance means registration of a taxpayer in the system, timely filing of tax returns, completion of accurate reporting and payment of taxes on time. It can be voluntary or enforced.

There are two dimensions of voluntary compliance: committed compliance and creative compliance.

Committed compliance is the willingness to discharge tax obligations by taxpayers without grumbling. On the other hand, creative compliance refers to any act by a taxpayer aimed at reducing taxes by reducing one's tax liability.

With tax-GDP ratio of 9.3 per cent, Bangladesh's tax-GDP ratio is much below the average of developing countries (15 per cent).

This is mainly because of poor tax compliance rate in both income tax and value-added tax (VAT), which contribute about 85 per cent of the revenue collection of the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

In Bangladesh, a large number of individuals and firms are unregistered and the vast majority of registered individuals and firms fail to pay right taxes.

Out of more than 10 million potential individual income

taxpayers, 3.8 million are registered in the system, but about 1.5 million people file tax returns along with tax, according to NBR data.

Therefore, the personal income tax compliance rate is 14 per cent. On the other hand, out of about 213,505 companies registered with the Office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms, only 45,000 companies submit returns with taxes. So, the compliance rate of corporate income tax is 21 per cent.

Personal income tax contributes only about 40 per cent of the income tax revenue. The remaining 60 per cent of the revenue comes from corporate income tax.

The compliance rate of VAT registered firms is 11.56 per cent. The figure does not include those firms which are neither registered nor do they submit monthly VAT returns to the NBR (non-filers).

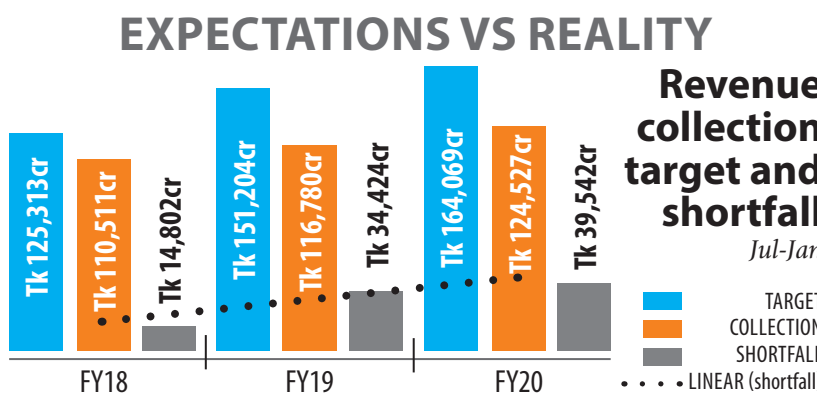
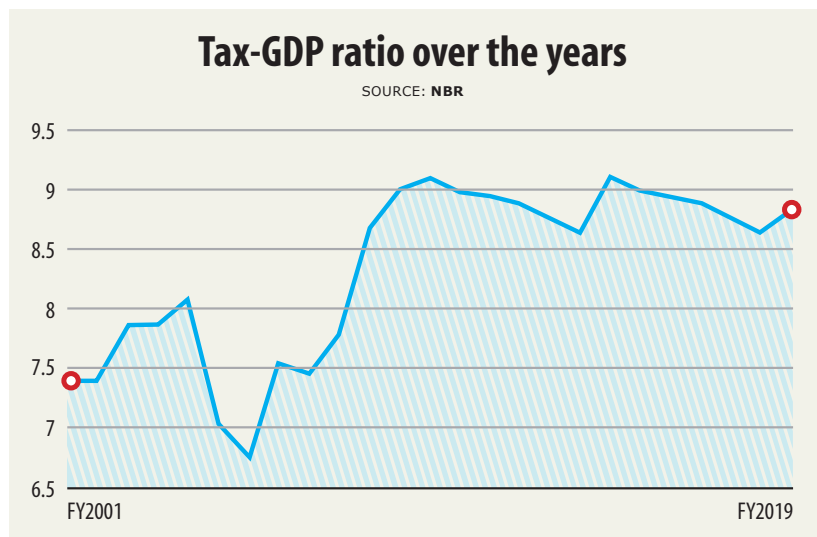
Bangladesh faces the problems of both creative compliance (tax avoidance) and enforced compliance (tax evasion). Apart from this, tax exemption and tax evasion are rampant.

Litigation management is a key issue of taxation. Moreover, the size of the informal economy constitutes 35 per cent of GDP.

The Eighth Five-Year Plan for fiscal year 2020-21 to fiscal year 2024-25 has set the target of raising the tax-GDP ratio to 14.2 per cent by 2025.

The plan underscores the need for consolidating efforts for revenue mobilisation, which can eventually be used for public investment.

More generally, the investments in health, education and social protection largely rely upon the size of the government revenue.



In order to attain the sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030, the NBR needs to prepare and implement a five-year tax modernisation plan. The plan may aim at reforming both tax policy and tax administration in order to improve tax compliance in the country.

The present Income Tax

Ordinance, 1984 is outdated to keep pace with the changing need of time. So, a new income tax code is needed to put in place an efficient and modern income tax regime in the country.

The design of the new code will encourage wide voluntary compliance by the overwhelming majority of taxpayers. This will be achieved by

declaration and eliminate distortions.

The NBR has taken an innovative programme like holding income tax fair. Similar programmes may be undertaken in cases of other taxes. The NBR has put in place the mechanism of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to reduce the tax pendency in the courts.

Now time has come to strengthen the mechanism by bringing all related stakeholders in compliance.

IGC research findings show that social incentives and peer effects are an effective way to improve tax compliance. The government may scale up the programme to a larger geographic area for enhancing tax revenue in Bangladesh.

The NBR should link electronic government (e-GP) with the tax system.

The NBR may be strengthened by redefining its status and regulatory powers and its relationship with the government, restructuring it and its field formations by function and type and by providing customer services to all taxpayers through a web-enabled tax administration (e-registration, e-filing of tax returns, e-payment and e-refund).

The tax administrator can also be strengthened by developing a strategic communication and taxpayer outreach and education programme and developing human resources and institutional capacity of the NBR.

The government may form a platform of think tanks for undertaking research and advocacy on taxation.

The writer is a former chairman of the National Board of Revenue