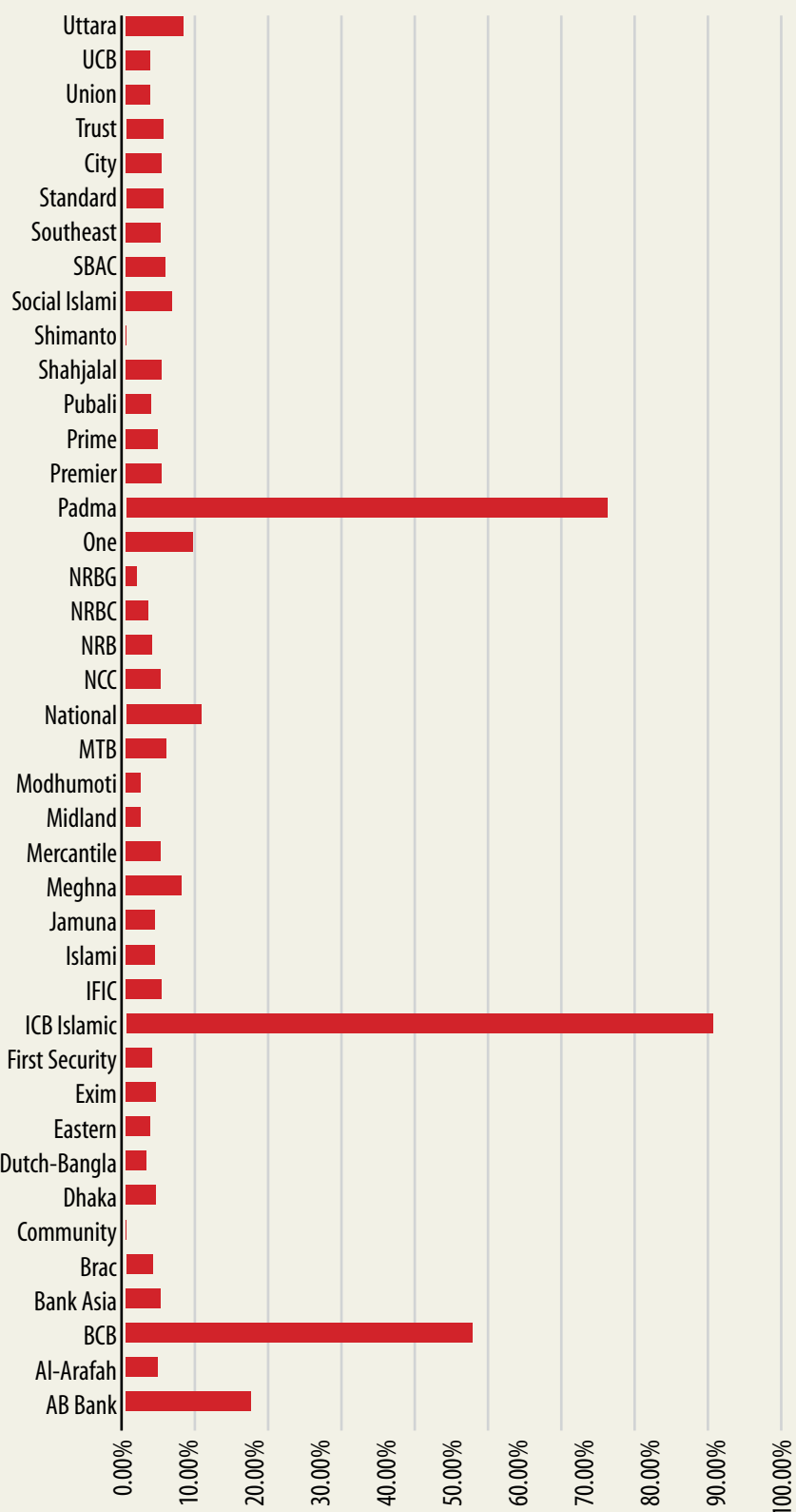


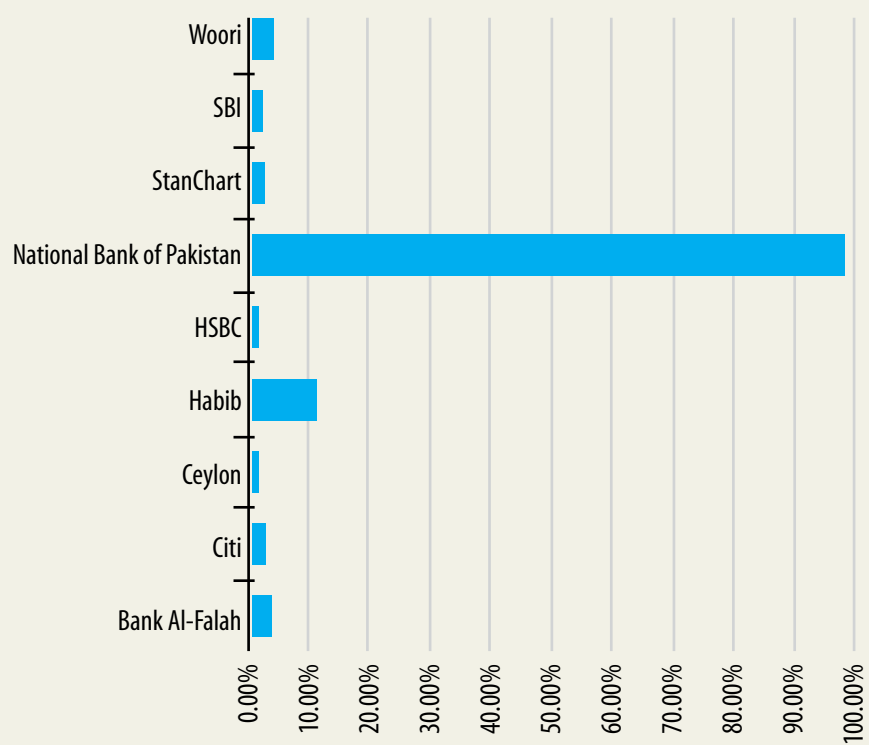
BANKS' CLASSIFIED LOANS AS PROPORTION OF TOTAL OUTSTANDING LOANS ON JUNE THIS YEAR

SOURCE: BB

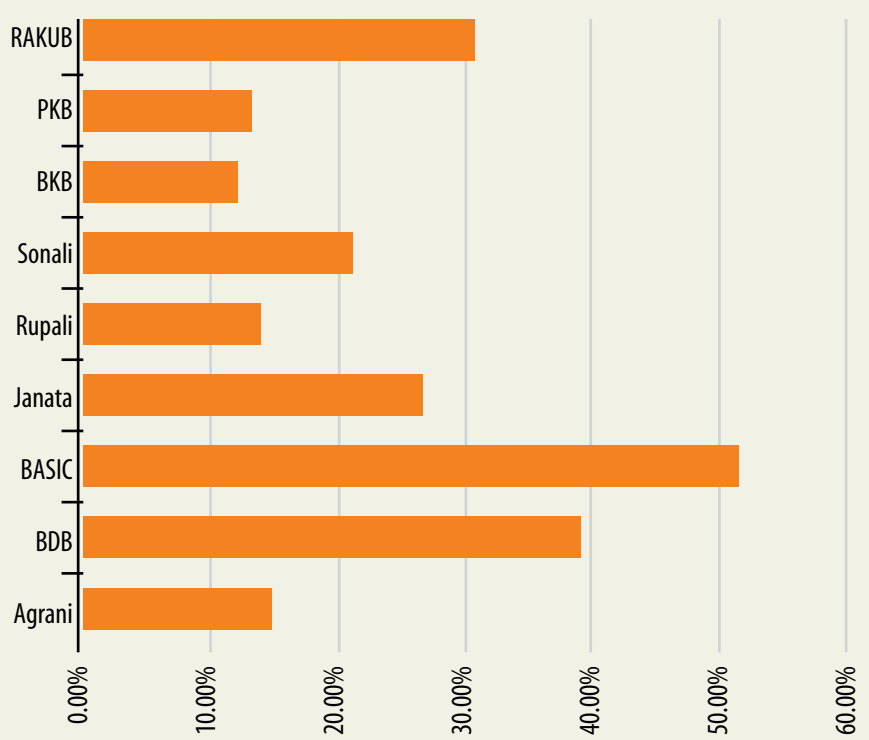
PRIVATE BANKS



FOREIGN BANKS



STATE BANKS



Binge, Bangladesh's first IPTV, diving deep into Bengali original video content

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Binge, the country's first internet protocol TV (IPTV), is now coming up with Bengali original video content, buoyed by the tremendous response in the first three months of its launch.

The video content, which would be a family- and thriller-oriented telefilm and four dramas, would be released this month.

And to facilitate customers to watch the content, Binge has cut down the price of its Android smart devices by Tk 1,000 to Tk 3,999.

"We have a big and brilliant content creating team and our main emphasis is now making Bengali crime thriller, drama, comedy, video content based on real-life crime and many more," Noor E Tazrian Khan, marketing lead of its parent company Red.Digital, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The dramas can be viewed in higher definition on both big and small screens (smart TV and mobile handsets), Khan added.

One of the shows on the platform, which came at launch in May, called August 14 was a smash hit.



The series is inspired from a true incident of 2013, when a police officer and his wife were brutally murdered by their daughter.

"Our first such real life-based was a hit and everyone appreciated the quality of the content. So, we will bring more such web series," Khan added.

Red.Digital, a subsidiary of Robi Axiata, the country's second-largest mobile operator, rolled out the Binge Android smart device and streaming platform -- both of which were developed by local Genex Infosys -- at a time when the demand for video content hit the roof as people stayed home to

flatten the curve on coronavirus that was tearing through the country at a breakneck speed.

Subsequently, in just over three months, it has logged in 1 lakh subscriptions.

Powered by the internet, the Binge Android smart device, which resembles a set-top box, lets one can play more than 150 live TV channels, more than 3,000 series, films, exclusive originals and many more digital entertainment contents.

Dubbed the future of video entertainment, the IPTV differs from the regular cable or satellite TV in that instead of transmitting

content via light pulses in fibre-optic cable or radio waves from a satellite, it sends shows and movies through the standard internet connection.

In case of regular cable or satellite connection, broadcasters send out signals and viewers receive them, meaning one is only able to watch what is being broadcasted. Unless there is some sort of recording device, one does not get to dictate what's on when. You just tune in when you can and watch what's available.

But most IPTV uses video on demand (VOD) or time-shifted media instead of broadcasting a range of shows on a specific schedule.

The subscription fee for the Binge streaming platform, which can only be accessed through the device, is Tk 399 per month.

"Bringing all classes of viewers to this platform is our ongoing plan," Khan said, adding that it is also making content for children.

Red.Digital also has global domination in sight: it plans to take Binge to the Bangladeshi and Bengali-speaking diaspora spread all over the world.



RAJIB RAIHAN

Covered vans parked on Outer Ring Road in Chattogram city, most of which are usually built by bolting a modified shipping container onto the chassis at a cost of Tk 2 lakh to Tk 2.5 lakh. The average price of a van is Tk 20 lakh. Shipping containers brought in from abroad are supposed to return with export goods or empty. But they are being sold in the local market evading customs duty due to customs authority's negligence and absence of monitoring. Of the 3.5 lakh-odd trucks and covered vans engaged in the transportation of goods among Dhaka, its adjacent districts and Chattogram port, nearly 70 per cent carry textile and garment items, while the rest transport products for other sectors.

Capitalist urges imperil Bichanakandi's ecological balance

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, from Sylhet

Stone lifting from Bichanakandi is harming the ecological balance of the famous tourist destination in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila.

The area is located on Bangladesh's border with India's Meghalaya where a waterfall flows just inside the Indian border and the stream created a lake-like spot that connects with the nearby Piyain river.

Stone lifting started there after 18 March, when the Sylhet district administration imposed a shutdown on all tourist attractions, including Bichanakandi, in order to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Taking the benefit of the ban, some traders started stealing stones, especially during nights, locals said.

In a recent visit to the spot, this correspondent also found a group of people busy lifting and carrying stones away with small boats. They were storing the stones in several nearby places for selling later on.

The spot, which is close to the border, is under the jurisdiction of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), which prohibits entry of tourists inside 500 metres of the area.

Some locals have complained that the stone lifting is taking place inside the area under BGB's jurisdiction also.

"We have no information of stealing or lifting stones within 200 metres of the perimeter. It might happen in areas outside our jurisdiction," said Ahmed Yusuf Jamil, the commanding officer of BGB Battalion-48.

Over the last decade, all nearby villages of Bichanakandi have been damaged by the stone traders.

Illegal stone lifting must be stopped at any cost to save the environment, said Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon.

"But unfortunately, such things are happening in front of the law enforcers and administration," he added.

Nazmus Sakib, Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Gowainghat upazila, said he has ordered the local police and BGB to take steps to restrict stone lifting from Bichanakandi.



SHEIKH NASIR

Top, Visitors are seen at Bichanakandi in June last year. Bottom, thanks to illegal lifting of stones, the bank of the stream is bereft of the boulders that made it a renowned tourist attraction in Sylhet. The photo was taken on 20 August this year.