

NO-DEAL BREXIT?

UK PM Johnson says preparing for it after EU tells him to make concessions or go
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"This president embraces all the thugs in the world,"
JOE BIDEN RIPS INTO DONALD TRUMP FOR EMBRACING STRONGMEN LIKE PUTIN, KIM



"We estimate that 11 million girls will be unable to go back to school around the world."
UNESCO HEAD AUDREY AZOULAY ON COVID-19 CRISIS



Inequality is one of the great problems of our society and we must fight to correct it as soon as possible.
LIONEL MESSI, SPEAKING TO ARGENTINE MAGAZINE LA GARGANTA PODEROSA

SURVIVAL BID

BTCL strives to rise again

In the red since 2013-14, the company now undertakes projects to restore customer confidence, get back subscribers

ASIFUR RAHMAN

While many may not remember the last time they used a landline phone, some families still have it -- either gathering dust in storage or still displayed on the corner table in the living room.



"We have had a telephone connection in our home since the late '60s. But we hardly use it these days, rather keeping it in memory of our grandfather," said Navid Hasan Khan, a resident of Elephant Road.

Aside from these nostalgists and baby boomers, Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTB) is barely surviving by peddling a still working but out-of-fashion technology in the age of mobile phones.

Introduced in Bangladesh in the early '90s, mobile phones hit hard BTB's user bank and its revenue, from which the state-owned entity has still not recovered.

Renamed Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited (BTCL), it, however, has been taking several initiatives to provide more and better services in an effort to stay relevant.

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Movies return to cinemas but not the audiences. Only a few people turn up at Chitramohol Cinema in the capital's Tantibazar yesterday, the first day of reopening cinemas in the country after being closed for more than six months amid Covid-19 pandemic. Under the health guidelines, cinemas are allowed to operate at half the capacity for the time being.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

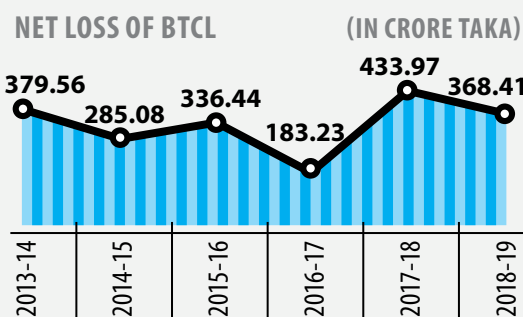
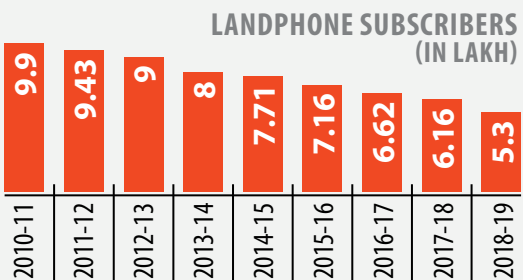
BTCL STARTED ITS JOURNEY IN 2008 WITH 8.66 LAKH USERS



Number of traditional telephone users now is 5.30 lakh

Number of subscribers continued to fall since 2010-11

BTCL made net profit last time in 2012-13 (Tk 5.13 crore)



"Our main challenge is to restore customer confidence by improving the quality of services. We are now addressing any complaints from customers within one to three days."
BTCL MD RAFIQUK MATIN

"Even if they provide internet service through the telephone line, I have to think whether I will take it or not. Because it's not a matter of how fast the internet is or how much it costs, it's a matter of how good they are in providing customer service."
BADAL CHOWDHURY, A 50-YEAR-OLD BUSINESSMAN FROM RAMNA, DHAKA

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GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

Bangladesh moves 13 notches up

Outshines India and Pakistan, ranks 75th among 107 nations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been ranked 75th out of 107 qualifying countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020 with a score of 20.4.

The country has moved 13 notches up from last year's 88th position.

Bangladesh also did better than South Asian countries Pakistan (88th), India (94th), and Afghanistan (99th), according to the report jointly published by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe on October 12.

With the score 20.4, Bangladesh, however, has a level of hunger that is "serious", the report mentioned.

Among other qualifying South Asian countries, Sri Lanka (64th) and Nepal (73rd) did better than Bangladesh in the index.

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INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY

US wants Dhaka on its side

Promises more investment

PORIMOL PALMA

US Deputy Secretary of State Stephan Biegun left Dhaka yesterday, giving a clear message in his three-day visit that his country wants Bangladesh on its side as the US advances the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

He lauded Bangladesh's stability, sustained growth and geostrategic location, skilled labour and a big consumer class while promising more investments here.

He also explained that not only Bangladesh, the entire South Asia has long been left out of any US-led Asian strategies.

Stephan Biegun has not mentioned, in any of his statements, the name of China, with which the US relations has turned very sour now, but noted that a number of challenges and tensions in the Indo-Pacific region have alarmed the US and other regional countries.

The US official specifically mentioned the Indo-China tension over the Line of Actual Control in Galwan Valley, dispute over Senkaku Islands in Japan, tension in Taiwan, repression in Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Tibet, and increasing economic hostility towards the people of Australia -- all the issues have connections to China.

Foreign relations analysts say the US was trying to institutionalise the Quad, an alliance of US, Australia, SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Nobody will go hungry in the country

PM says govt committed to ensuring food security for all



Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said not a single person in the country would remain hungry as her government gave top priority to increase food production to ensure food security for all.

"Our country is very small in terms of its land area while our current population is 165 million or around 17 crores. The most important thing is to ensure food security for such a huge population," she said

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Four including 3 of a family killed as train hits car

It happened at an unmanned level crossing in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Four people, including three of a family, were killed and two others injured as a train hit a car on a level crossing in Jashore's Noapara yesterday.

The Khulna-bound Mahananda Express coming from Chapainabganj hit the car while crossing the Bhanga gate level crossing around 5:30pm. The vehicle, carrying six people, was going to Noapara from Narail, said police and fire service officials.

The train pushed the car around 150 metres forward on the rail track, they said.

Mohsin Reza, station master of Noapara, said there was no gateman at the level crossing when the train was crossing it. The car driver tried to cross the level crossing without noticing the train coming.

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A mangled car lies on the railway track in Noapara of Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila yesterday afternoon after Mahananda Express hit it on a level crossing in the area. The accident left four people dead.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Global daily cases top 400,000 mark

Record cases in US, Europe; WHO trial casts doubt on remdesivir as Covid-19 drug

AGENCIES

More than 400,000 new coronavirus infections were declared across the world on Thursday, a record number, as coronavirus infections exploded across Europe and America.

Globally, a total of 404,758 new cases were reported, with 6,086 new deaths. In Europe, the number of cases rose sharply in a single week, by 44 percent compared to the previous week, while in the United States and Canada infections increased by 17 percent.

In the medical world, hopes for one of the most promising Covid-19 treatments, the antiviral drug remdesivir, were dashed when a study backed by the World Health Organization found it does little to prevent deaths from the disease.

In the United States, where the number of reported cases declined in September after peaking in mid-July, infections have also been on the rise. There was a daily average of more than 50,000 new cases over the past seven days, peaking on Thursday at more than 70,000.

Health experts have long warned that colder temperatures driving people inside could promote the spread of the virus.

According to a Reuters analysis, 25 US states have so far set records for increases in new cases in October.

All Midwest and Northeast states have reported more cases in the past four weeks than in the prior four weeks, with the number of new cases doubling in states like Wisconsin, South Dakota and New Hampshire.

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