

মন্ত্রী
ডাক, তার, টেলিযোগাযোগ ও স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বাণী

গ্রামীণফোন এর দুই বছর পূর্তি উপলক্ষে এর সকল উদ্যোক্তা, বিনিয়োগকারী, কর্মী, গ্রাহক এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট অন্য সবাইকে জানাই আন্তরিক অভিনন্দন।


বর্তমান সরকার দেশের টেলিযোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থার উন্নতি সাধনে দৃঢ় সংকল্পবদ্ধ। সে লক্ষ্যে আমরা বেসরকারী উদ্যোগকে সবসময়ই স্বাগত জানাই। ১৯৯৭ এর ২৬শে মার্চ সবার আন্তরিক প্রচেষ্টার প্রতিফলন ঘটিয়ে বেসরকারী উদ্যোগে গ্রামীণফোন এর আনুষ্ঠানিক উদ্বোধন হয়।

বাংলাদেশের স্বাধীনতা দিবসের প্রেরণায় অনুপ্রাণিত গ্রামীণফোন নিরলস কাজ করে চলেছে অত্যাধুনিক সেলুলার মোবাইল ফোনের সেবা জনমানুষের কাছে সহজলভ্য করে তুলতে। সে প্রচেষ্টায় গ্রামীণফোন প্রাথমিক প্রতিকূলতা পেরিয়ে মাত্র দুই বছরের মধ্যে প্রশংসনীয় সাফল্য অর্জন করেছে। শুধু উন্নততর সেবা প্রদানেই সচেষ্ট নয়, এই কোম্পানীর নিবেদিত কর্মীবৃন্দ দেশব্যাপী কাভারেজ বিস্তারিত কাজ অবিরাম চালিয়ে যাচ্ছেন। তাদের পরিশ্রমের সুবাদে এই আধুনিক প্রযুক্তি আমাদের দেশে দ্রুত প্রসারিত হচ্ছে। এইভাবে একদিন মোবাইল ফোন সেবা পৌঁছে যাবে মেহনতি মানুষের দোরগোড়ায়। জনগণ উন্নততর যোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থার সুফল ভোগ করবেন।

প্রতিষ্ঠানগণ থেকেই গ্রামীণফোন গ্রাহকবৃন্দের সাথে স্বচ্ছতা রক্ষা করে জনগণের অধিকারকেই সম্মান দিয়েছে। জনগণের সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে আমি তাদের ধন্যবাদ জানাই। কারণ, এই সরকার বিশ্বাস করে যে স্বচ্ছতাই হচ্ছে জবাবদিহিতার প্রথম সোপান এবং একটি সুস্থ গণতান্ত্রিক পরিবেশের অপরিহার্য অঙ্গ।

গ্রামীণফোনের প্রতিষ্ঠাবার্ষিকীতে আমি এই কোম্পানীর সর্বাঙ্গীন সাফল্য কামনা করছি।

জয় বাংলা, জয় বঙ্গবন্ধু
বাংলাদেশ চিরজীবী হউক


মোহাম্মদ নাসিম

THE TWO-YEAR-OLD IS THE LARGEST

- 25 million people under coverage
- 435 cells built, 390 more coming by year end.
- 40,000 customers being served.
- 50 outlets serving customers
- 24 hour* charge free inquiry service
- 6 countries with roaming, 120 countries coming

Most serious cellular operator. GrameenPhone's investment and network are much larger than others. For instance, in Dhaka alone, GrameenPhone has more cells than all other cellular operators combined.

Nationwide network. Service is available not just in Dhaka and Chittagong, but between those two cities, in Sirajganj in the north and Sandwip in the south. GrameenPhone will soon have continuous coverage to Rajshahi, to Khulna, and to Sylhet. Work is going on throughout the country, in North Bengal, in the south (Bhola, Patuakhali, Hatya) and everywhere in between.

Best digital standard. GrameenPhone's standard GSM has conquered the world and is far, far ahead of other digital standards. New standards are naturally struggling to copy this success but are having much smaller success.

Packed with features. GrameenPhone has already introduced the best possible voice mail and short-messaging/e-mail. GSM allows the largest number of features, many of which have not yet been introduced to avoid confusing customers.

Proven pioneer. GrameenPhone introduced a 100% digital service, large coverage, continuous coverage between cities, purely mobile-to-mobile service, international roaming, customers' choice over source of handsets, directory books and assistance, information centers, dealers and newsletters.

Sensitive to customers' costs. GrameenPhone started by dramatically reducing prices, introducing services without security deposits, requiring low charges over large distances, and establishing a charge-free inquiry service.

Creating access to Gram Bangla. GrameenPhone is making Gram Bangla accessible. Borrowers of Grameen Bank are starting to retail telephone services in rural Bangladesh, so that people can reach their loved ones and establish businesses in places that have been hard to reach.

*From May 1, 1999. Currently 16 hours/day.

চেয়ারম্যান বাংলাদেশ তার ও টেলিফোন বোর্ড

বাণী




গ্রামীণফোনের দ্বিতীয় বর্ষপূর্তিতে সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে জানাই আন্তরিক অভিনন্দন।

আজ থেকে দুই বছর আগে বাংলাদেশের স্বাধীনতা দিবসে বর্তমান বিশ্বে আধুনিক প্রযুক্তি মোবাইল ফোনের সেবা এদেশের জনগণের কাছে পৌঁছে দেবার স্বপ্ন নিয়ে গ্রামীণফোন এর আবির্ভাব ঘটে। গতিশীল বিশ্বে সাথে তাল মিলিয়ে এদেশের টেলিযোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থায় এক বৈপ্লবিক পরিবর্তন আনয়নে গ্রামীণফোন এর অবদান অতুলনীয়। বর্তমান সরকারের অনুপ্রেরণায় ও গণতান্ত্রিক মনোভাবের সৃষ্ট অনুকূল পরিবেশে একনিষ্ঠভাবে কাজ করে চলেছে গ্রামীণফোন। সাদা আর সাধার এক অপূর্ব সমন্বয় সাধনের যে প্রতিশ্রুতি নিয়ে শুরু হয়েছিল গ্রামীণফোন এর পদযাত্রা, জনগণের নিকট আজ মোবাইল ফোনের সেবা গ্রহণের সহজলভ্যতাই তাদের সে প্রতিশ্রুতি বাস্তবায়নের সুদৃঢ় প্রমাণ।

উচ্চমান সম্পন্ন সেবা ও বিস্তৃত কাভারেজের সুবিধা ইতিমধ্যেই জনগণ উপভোগ করছেন। অতি দ্রুত নেটওয়ার্ক বিস্তারিত জনা তারা করে চলেছেন অক্লান্ত পরিশ্রম। ফলশ্রুতিতে সমস্ত দেশে একদিন চলে আসবে তাদের নেটওয়ার্কের আওতা। জনে জনে পৌঁছে যাবে গ্রামীণফোনের নির্ভরশীল সেবা।

আজ যেমনি মোবাইল ফোনের সেবা প্রদানে গ্রামীণফোন একটি মাইলফলক হিসাবে প্রমাণিত হয়েছে তেমনি যেন তারা ভবিষ্যত অগ্রগতিময় কর্মধারা বজায় রাখতে পারে, সেজনা তাদের সর্বাঙ্গীন সাফল্য ও উন্নতি কামনা করছি।


(ম. আ. মান্নান চৌধুরী)

TV INTERVIEW OF TROND MOE

PROGRAM NAME: Uddog

PRODUCER: Khama Haroon

INTERVIEWER: Fazlul Haque

INTERVIEWEE: Trond Moe

DATE: 14.03.99

TIME: 10:30 P.M.

HOQUE: In Bangladesh nowadays more foreigners are investing in different sectors. Today if we consider the biggest investors in these different sectors, such as telecommunications, then GrameenPhone is one of the biggest investors. Trond Moe is the Managing Director of GrameenPhone. We invited Trond Moe to our studio today, and we will now talk with him. Welcome, Mr. Trond Moe, to our discussion program today. First of all I would like to ask you some questions about your investment in our country.

MOE: GrameenPhone is a joint venture between local and foreign companies. You could say that the amount of investment so far is about 350 crores, which is quite significant.

HOQUE: Is it the biggest in the telecommunications sector as far as foreign investment is concerned?

MOE: Yes it is.

HOQUE: How did Telenor get attracted to invest in Bangladesh?

MOE: Telenor as a European company looked at Asia as a very interesting market in general. It looked at many countries and it happened that they found Bangladesh to be the most interesting place. It's a very big country in terms of population. There is a lot of demand, and we found a very good local partner, Grameen Bank. Those are two of the main reasons. It has been in operation for about two years with some phases before in planning and so on.

HOQUE: So roughly 4 or 5 years or so?

MOE: A little more than three years.

HOQUE: What is your overall experience with the telecommunications situation in Bangladesh and your activities in Bangladesh?

MOE: The main experience has been that there is a very low penetration rate when it comes to telecommunications. There are very, very few telephone lines compared to the huge population so the demand and the need is very, very big. It is always difficult in this kind of situation to start to expand telecommunications. It takes some investment, it takes some time, and as soon as the ball starts rolling it's possible to get

moving very quickly. I think we are on a good track.

HOQUE: Well, we can hope for even better very soon.

MOE: Yes. Absolutely. We are doing our part the best we can. Luckily there are other telecommunications companies. I think that is the best situation, because, when you have competition we all have to fight to do this as well as possible.

HOQUE: Are you doing anything to attract more foreign investment in Bangladesh?

MOE: Yes, definitely. You know with all investors in a country, one of the first questions they ask is if they can communicate. Can they keep their head office abroad updated on what is going on? Can they talk to each other in various parts of the country? So, I think telecommunications is really an investment to attract more investment.

HOQUE: As we are told the telecommunications sector has developed a lot in the last couple of years. Do you think it's playing a vital role in the overall development of this country?

MOE: Yes, I think it's playing an extremely vital role. According to international calculations, you can say that each new telephone line can generate about two lakh for the GDP of a country like Bangladesh. So, obviously, every single new telephone line you can give generates a lot of other business, which again generates taxes and VAT's and all kinds of things. So there is an enormous spin-off effect with telecommunications.

HOQUE: Do you think that there is still scope for a foreign investor to invest even in the telecommunications sector here in Bangladesh?

MOE: Yes, there is always scope for that. Absolutely. We are investing as an operator, but we also attract other companies like suppliers in telecommunications. Suppliers like Ericsson and Siemens are very much involved here as well as AKTEL and many, many, many smaller suppliers that we get from other countries.

HOQUE: What is your impression of the government's efforts to attract foreign investment?

MOE: I think the government is doing a lot to attract foreign investment. It is definitely trying to put the conditions in the right place. I think there are some other things that could be done to make it even better, but it's going in the right direction.

HOQUE: So, do you think the facilities that the government is providing for you, the infrastructure facilities, the port facilities, and other things are adequate now in Bangladesh?

or do you think they have to be improved?

MOE: Yes, when it comes to the transport and port facilities all of that is working more or less smoothly. There is no problem there. I think probably what the government could do is maybe lower some of the import duties. For example, on telephones there is a very high import tax. If that was lowered we would sell more telephones which again would generate more taxes in the forms of VAT's so that the government would really make a lot of money out of that.

HOQUE: There is a lot of debate regarding GrameenPhone's recent past, especially regarding the introduction of incoming call charges. You introduced the incoming call charges since the first of January last. What has been your experience in the last two and a half months?

MOE: Well, there have not been as many reactions as we expected. In fact, I think the main reason for that is that the incoming charges have worked a lot to the benefit of our subscribers. The call congestion has come down a lot, and it is now much easier to call to the fixed line network. I think that the vast majority of our subscribers find that this has really helped them.

HOQUE: And what about your profit? Your revenue income? Is it increasing, or?

MOE: Well the incoming charges as such have not increased the revenue because, as you know, the first minute is free of charge, and a lot of people utilize that facility. So that is really insignificant, and that was not the main reason why we did it.

HOQUE: Are they becoming clever enough to finish their conversation within one minute?

MOE: Yes, a lot of people do that. They seem to speak very quickly.

HOQUE: So what do you think? If the behavior of your clients changed in the near future, do you think you can change your charges also? Can you waive your incoming charges?

MOE: Yes, as I said the last time that we met here that is the ultimate goal. That would require some time and would require better facilities in all networks so that we could have the proper revenue sharing in place between all the various operators.

HOQUE: Another question is that we have a few other foreign companies like AKTEL and Sheba. These new companies and all the companies introduced their incoming charges at almost the same time. Is there any secret understanding among the companies?

MOE: No, no, definitely not, but all companies are in the same situation. The congestion to the fixed network that we experienced may have been the first because we are the biggest, but it was exactly the same for all. So, the logic was there, and I think that is why we all are doing the same thing.

HOQUE: What is your plan to develop your services as far as GrameenPhone is concerned? What can a GrameenPhone subscriber expect from you in the future?

MOE: They can expect a lot right now. We are going through the most

busy expansion phase ever in GrameenPhone. We are doing it a little quietly, but we are expanding the coverage area a lot. By March we will reach all the way to Mymensingh and Sirajganj by way of the Jamuna Bridge. By April and within May we will be in Khulna. So, a lot of new areas are coming under our coverage areas and that will really benefit our subscribers and our new subscribers.

HOQUE: If I can remember in our last meeting on this program, in part you told us that you were going to introduce the roaming service very, very soon, but so far, I know it has yet to start. What is the situation?

MOE: Well in two days from now we will commercially open the first roaming service, but we have to go country by country. We have solved all the technical problems, but we have to make agreements with all the different countries. We have so far signed up England, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, and more countries are coming. It will take a few weeks before you can commercially use this but it will gradually be more and more introduced.

HOQUE: You call it the GP Regular. That means it connects the mobile phone with the fixed line, the BTTB line. As far as I know, all the companies, especially GrameenPhone and AKTEL, do not have this service available in Dhaka city, but so far we can guess that there is a big demand for this sort of telephone line.

MOE: Yes.

HOQUE: When are you thinking of introducing this line again?

MOE: Well, there is definitely a huge demand for all kinds of telecom services. At the moment we have the GP Regular with the T and T connection in Chittagong, and that is selling real well. There is a big demand here in Dhaka too. As you know, when we talk about two networks we have to have the

investments and the facilities in place on both sides. As long as there is congestion and as long as there are not enough lines we have to take care of the existing subscribers first. We cannot take in new subscribers that would make the service worse for our existing ones. After all, they were the first. So, we'll have to wait. We are working jointly with BTTB to find solutions to this. It will probably take some time but I hope that we can jointly find some way in the not too distant future.

HOQUE: As you told us the situation improved remarkably after you introduced the incoming charges, but is that not enough to introduce the GP regular again very soon?

MOE: No, unfortunately it is not enough. It is just enough to give a reasonably good service to our existing subscribers. We would like to give them an even better service than we have today. So we have to be very, very careful to take care of them. We cannot make it worse again.

HOQUE: Did you ask BTTB already to give you more lines?

MOE: Yes, we have asked them many times. I don't think it's a question of asking. It's a question of finding the technical possibilities.

HOQUE: Do you think they will agree very soon?

MOE: Well I think they already agree, and they want to do it. There is no problem with that. But you know there are real limitations. There are congestions in the network that have to be solved first.



sheba telecom
SIMPLY BETTER

Happy Birthday!

Sheba Telecom wishes every success of
GrameenPhone
on the occasion of
2nd Anniversary