# Mobile broadband is the finest way for internet in Bangladesh

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GLOBALLY there are 160 crore mobile phones that have broadband capacity who are connected with the high speed internet, while the world has 710 crore people; that means only one fourth people are getting the service. But if we consider the number for Bangladesh it is more and more frustrating for us.

In Bangladesh, the number of mobile users is 11 crore but how many of them use broadband enabled handsets or smartphones that can get the access to the high speed internet? Again the number would be more frustrating.

Currently around 15 lakh households or offices have access to the broadband as fixed internet service was never developed in Bangladesh. In fact the country could not build such institutions that can provide the broadband service to the doorsteps of the people.

In the situation, mobile broadband can be the finest solution for the country to provide broadband services in a fastest manner. It is true, mobile broadband may not be able to provide huge bandwidth supply such as high quality video services, but it can meet the basic demand of the people.

According to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), there are 3.7 crore internet users in the country though there are criticisms against the information that these connections are not active and the number is of course less than 1 crore.

Less than 1 crore internet users in a country where 16 crore people live! Now the million dollar question comes; "how many of them use smartphones or mobile broadband." The percentage would not be more than 30 percent, though a huge number of Chinese mobile handsets are imported to the country that are 3G enabled.

Not all is negative, there are hopes also. Bangladesh government issued 3G licenses to four private mobile operators in September. The operators launched the service within a year of the license issue. Not only that, the operators will reach the network service to the people far ahead than government's roll out obligation.

The country is far lagging behind from the developed world in terms of 3G deployment but still there is hope as the operators have invested lots of money to roll out the network in a competitive manner. They also are trying to provide WiFi and WiMax services with the assistance of other companies.

At the same time, the WiMax operators in the country are also working to offload 4G service (long term evolution) in the country as they have already received the license from the government.

Now the challenge is how the private and public sector contribute to create internet content that can be used for real development of the country. Facebook or other social media cannot be a good example to declare the high user base of internet. People should get all the necessary services through digital devices.

However, the government has also taken a project to reach internet broadband to 1 lakh institutions including Schools, Colleges, Hospitals and other public and autonomous offices.

# WTISD-14: Call for action

WORLD Telecommunication and Information Society Day, celebrated each year on 17 May, marks the anniversary of the signature of the first International Telegraph Convention in 1865, which led to the creation of the International Telecommunication Union. This year, World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD-2014) will focus on the theme: "Broadband for Sustainable Development", in accordance with Resolution 68 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010) and as endorsed by ITU Council.

Digital development is a transformative tool to fast-track sustainable development. In order to realize its full potential it is essential to roll-out high-speed broadband networks, making it affordable and universally accessible.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) recognized the capacity of broadband to facilitate the delivery of a broader range of services and applications, promote investment and provide Internet access at affordable prices to both existing and new users. In this respect, ITU and the Broadband Commission for Digital Development are at the forefront of advocating the roll-out of broadband as a means of achieving sustainable development.

ITU invites to organize activities to mark WTISD-2014 and encourage to involve all sections of society to formulate awareness and consensus on the issues underlying the theme "Broadband for Sustainable Development".

The purpose of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) is to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) can bring to societies and economies, as well as of ways to bridge the digital divide.

**ITU Secretary-General's Call for Action**

The theme for WTISD-14, "Broadband for Sustainable Development", will focus attention on multi-stakeholder commitment to achieve universal access to broadband connectivity and content and foster political will on achieving this objective; identify key gaps in broadband research and development, infrastructure, and packaged development of applications and services; define policy priorities for action in the areas of allocating radio frequency spectrum for broadband, universal access obligations and innovative financing mechanisms; and lead to technological solutions, particularly in the extension of broadband access into rural areas, least developed countries and small island developing states.

Given that estimates suggest that mobile broadband subscription may achieve 10 billion by the end of this decade and that over 90 per cent of international data traffic runs over fibre-optic cables ITU's thrust to push the broadband agenda for sustainable development focuses on the dual goals of supporting the deployment of mobile broadband based on ITU's International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) and the continued rollout of fixed-line technologies. International consensus achieved on ITU standards and radio spectrum related activities for mobile telephony, fibre optics and access standards such as DSL, is the key to achieving the goals of universal access.

The evolution of this work is complemented by key activities including earth monitoring through satellites and oceanographic radars, developing green standards and smart interventions to combat climate change, and m-Powering development.

Broadband infrastructure development is a critical element in ensuring that ICTs are used innovatively as delivery vehicles for health, education, governance, trade and commerce in order to achieve sustainable socio-economic growth. Education is a keystone for educating people with regard to the impact and consequences of their activities for sustainable development, thereby ensuring a better future for all.

As the leading specialized agency of the United Nations for information and communication technologies (ICT), ITU looks towards its Members to harness the catalytic role of ICTs in achieving sustainable development.

I invite all Members of the Union to take practical steps to further national and domestic policies to accelerate the roll-out of broadband and to make it more affordable and accessible to all citizens, as a means of empowering them with information and knowledge to meet their aspirations and to achieve the overall goals of sustainable development.

**"Broadband for Sustainable Development"**

Develop and adopt national policies and plans promoting the roll-out of broadband networks, applications and services.

The links between broadband deployment and economic growth are now relatively well-established. A 10 per cent increase in broadband penetration could increase growth in GDP by up to 1.38% (ICT 4 Development Report 2009, World Bank). For every job lost through the emergence of the Internet, between 2.4-2.6 jobs may emerge (Internet Matters Report, McKinsey Global Institute, 2011). ITU/Cisco research indicates that adoption of a broadband plan is associated with 2.5% higher fixed broadband penetration, and 7.4% higher mobile broadband penetration on average. Adoption of a National Broadband Plan may help focus efforts across the industry, in coordination with policy-makers, emphasize the role of broadband as a national priority, and signal national commitment to the roll-out of broadband (Planning for Progress: Why National Broadband Plans Matter, ITU/Cisco, 2013).

The full benefits of broadband are most likely to be realized where there is strong partnership between Government, industry and other stakeholders.