



BUSINESS

DHAKA FRIDAY DECEMBER 19, 2014, e-mail:business@thecitizenstar.net

Switching between mobile networks possible in 3 years

Operators say; users to enjoy the service with their numbers unchanged

ABDULLAH MAMUN

Mobile operators said they will be able to let users switch from one operator to another without changing their numbers within two to three years.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission is now taking opinions of stakeholders, including subscribers and operators, to introduce the service -- mobile number portability (MNP).

More than 70 countries have MNP, which increases competition among operators in terms of service quality, said Md Sarwar Alam, BTRC secretary and spokesperson.

The process of taking the opinions on whether the service would be viable for Bangladesh, when it should be introduced and how it will benefit users started a month ago and will run till tomorrow, he said.

TIM Nurul Kabir, secretary general of Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of

MNP HIGHLIGHTS

Operators are optimistic

More than 70 countries implemented MNP

Regulator is taking comments from stakeholders

Regulator offers two governance models

Challenges include SIM tax and multiple interconnection exchanges

losses will be.

The telecom regulator has been with the plan to implement the MNP since early 2012. In June 2013, the BTRC gave operators seven months to introduce the service, but the companies were not ready at that time. Industry insiders said such an initiative takes at least two years to come into being.

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Bangladesh (AMTOB), said they will support the regulator in introducing the service.

But, he said, the process will face a huge challenge as complexities will arise out of the SIM tax issue or multiple interconnection exchanges (ICX) that connect one operator with another.

In Bangladesh, there are 26 ICXs to interconnect six mobile operators and a few others, including landline operators.

Operators, on behalf of users, pay Tk 200 tax for each SIM sold. The more users an operator loses, the higher its

losses will be.

With 2,500 million cubic feet of natural gas supply per day, it is impossible to satisfy all the sectors of the country's massively growing economy, he said.

As a consequence, the alternative left for households is LPG, Chowdhury said.

While that is a good solution to the supply constraints, it will only be viable if the alternative source has the capacity to meet the households' demand.

Given these circumstances, the annual market for LPG will stand at 5 lakh tonnes in

Canadian charity contributes \$20,000 to Rana Plaza families

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The Steelworkers Humanity Fund, a Canadian charity, yesterday said it contributed \$20,000 toward compensation for victims and families affected by the 2013 Rana Plaza tragedy.

"In announcing this contribution to the Rana Plaza Trust Fund, we are calling once again on retailers and clothing brands to fulfill their obligations to compensate victims and families," Ken Neumann, United Steelworkers (USW) National Director, said in a statement.

"North American retailers and international clothing brands have collectively failed to provide the full \$40 million that is needed to compensate eligible claimants," Neumann said.

"To date \$22 million has been collected. Loblaw (owner of Joe Fresh) continues to be the only Canadian company that has publicly declared its contribution to the trust fund."

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the next ten years, from the present 1.5 lakh tonnes, according to Chowdhury.

At present, 80 percent of the country's annual demand for LPG is met by imports and the rest is produced by state-run Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation.

Private players like Bashundhara, Jamuna Spacetech, French TotalGaz and Australian Kleenheat sell LPG by importing it.

Omera Petroleum, which will import LPG as well, has the storage and distribution network of 100,000 tonnes a year, and at any one time, it would have a capacity of around 4,000 tonnes, which is by far the highest in Bangladesh, said Ahmed.

Its barge has the capacity to carry 300 tonnes of LPG, and is also equipped to supply bulk LPG to any industrial customer based on the riverside.

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Enthusiasm over tourism fair in Chittagong



People visit the stall of United Airways at the Chittagong Travel Mart, an international tourism fair that began at the Peninsula hotel in the port city yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Chittagong will be built into a tourism city and a commercial hub, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon said yesterday.

The tourism industry has not yet been explored properly, the minister said while opening an international fair—Chittagong Travel Mart 2014—in the port city.

The Bangladesh Monitor, a fortnightly travel publication, organised the three-day event at the Peninsula hotel.

Local people need to be tourism-friendly to help boost the industry—a sector that does not get enough budget, he said.

"As part of our effort to develop the sector, we have proposed to declare 2016 as the tourism year. A declara-

tion may come officially very soon."

The tourism industry can provide a huge number of people with jobs, said Housing and Public Works Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain.

Security problem is the main hindrance for the sector to boom, he said.

"Foreign tourists should feel secure while visiting Bangladesh; otherwise they would not come to the country."

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Omera Petroleum to enter LPG market in March

GAZI TOWHID AHMED

Omera Petroleum is set to supply liquefied petroleum gas to households and industries from March next year in a bid to tap the growing demand for an alternative to piped gas.

A subsidiary of lubricant supplier MJL Bangladesh, Omera Petroleum has invested around Tk 540 crore to set up operations, which includes the purchase of the country's first LPG carrying barge, Omera Princess, and incorporating European technology at its facilities.

"This reflects our commitment to ensuring global standards," said Iftiqaq Ahmed, Omera Petroleum's chief executive officer.

To be sold under the brand name of Omera LPG, the cylinders would come in: 5.5kg, 12kg and 35kg. For industries, it would provide tailored solutions.

The company plans to sell 5 lakh LPG cylin-

ders in 2015, according to Tanzeem Chowdhury, Omera Petroleum's manager for corporate planning.

With 2,500 million cubic feet of natural gas supply per day, it is impossible to satisfy all the sectors of the country's massively growing economy, he said.

"Bangladesh falls among the few countries in Asia that still supply piped natural gas to households. Our finite supply of natural gas should be completely redirected to the productive sectors in order to sustain our growth rate."

As a consequence, the alternative left for households is LPG, Chowdhury said.

While that is a good solution to the supply constraints, it will only be viable if the alternative source has the capacity to meet the households' demand.

Given these circumstances, the annual market for LPG will stand at 5 lakh tonnes in

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BY THE NUMBERS

INVESTMENT

Tk 540 cr

STORAGE CAPACITY

4,000 tonnes

CYLINDERS TO COME IN

5.5kg, 12kg and 35kg

TARGET FOR 2015

5 lakh cylinders

Fortis opens first cardiac centre in Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

India's Fortis Escorts Heart Institute opened its Bangladesh unit yesterday, aiming to provide cost-effective cardiac care service. Fortis will manage and operate the 42-bed centre set up by AFC Health Ltd, a concern of Bangladesh-based Active Fine Chemicals, at Sonadanga in Khulna at a cost of around Tk 30 crore.

The 23,000-square-foot centre will offer diagnostic services such as angiography to detect heart diseases as well as varied treatment options, including artificial pacemaker, coronary artery bypass, valve replacement and periphery bypass surgery.

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Third from left, Amit Mathur, international business head of Micromax, poses with a Canvas A1 smartphone at the local launch of the handset at a programme in Dhaka yesterday.

Micromax launches smartphone with Google

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Indian handset vendor Micromax Informatics yesterday launched the Android One smartphone in partnership with Google Inc for the Bangladesh market.

Consumers in Bangladesh will get the new device for Tk 10,000.

Android's 4.4 KitKat operating system handset features front and rear-facing cameras, 1 gigabit RAM and a 1.3 gigahertz quad-core processor with dual SIM options.

The Canvas A1 device will have access to many apps that allow people

to send messages, make video calls, socialise, check the news and weather, and play games.

Google applications such as Gmail, Google Search and Google Translate will come preloaded on the phone, Micromax said in a statement.

"Canvas A1 is a high quality smartphone for the people of Bangladesh, which brings together unique solutions around hardware, software, and connectivity," Amit Mathur, international business head of Micromax, said at the launch of the device at the Westin hotel in Dhaka.

"Consumers today are looking for

smartphones that offer advanced and seamless functionality with regular operating system updates.

Our partnership with Google will ensure that the device will get guaranteed updates for the next two years, directly from Google."

Micromax is one of the top 10 global handset players, while it aims to stand among the top five or six, he added. Micromax is among the top three names in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

He said feature phones are highly popular in Bangladesh, though smartphone penetration in the country is the highest in terms of global trend.

CSE revises trading charges

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Chittagong Stock Exchange has revised trading charges in line with the Dhaka bourse.

The port city bourse withdrew share transaction charges, commonly known as hawla, and increased the commission on trade to 0.03 percent from 0.02 percent earlier.

"This will supersede all previous decisions in respect of contract charges and commission," the CSE said in a posting on its website yesterday.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Dhaka Stock Exchange revised its stock trading charges, following the introduction of a lot-free share transaction system last week, as those were slowing trade down.

The premier bourse withdrew the hawla charge and fixed the fees on trade value, at 0.03 percent instead of a 0.02 percent rate. The hawla charge was Tk 4 (Tk 2 at buyer's end and Tk 2 at seller's end) for each contract as of Wednesday.

The issue of revising the charges came into consideration after the bourse replaced its 16-year-old trading system with a new mechanism, allowing investors to trade single shares instead of in lots.



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