

# China to expand duty benefits for Bangladesh

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

China plans to extend duty-free benefits to 17 more products from Bangladesh, including leather goods and tobacco, in an effort to deepen trade relations between the two countries, officials said yesterday.

China has long been providing duty-free benefits to 4,700 products, mostly garments from Bangladesh. The new duty-free list includes some additional garment products.

"Beijing has agreed in principle to widen its trade benefits," said Mohammad Mejbahuddin, senior secretary of the Economic Relations Division.

Mejbahuddin made the comments at the end of the 14th session of the biannual Bangladesh-China Joint Economic Commission at the ERD.

Gao Yan, vice-minister for commerce of China, led the Chinese delegation, while Mejbahuddin led the Bangladesh side. Representatives from China's commerce ministry and Eximbank were also present.

The delegation has requested Bangladesh to start the procedures so that the benefits can be reaped at the earliest, he added.

The meeting also discussed 13 projects that are being implemented with soft loans from China. Beijing is providing about \$10 billion low-cost

loans for the projects.

The two sides will have to sign commercial contracts for the projects before signing the loan agreements. The discussion over the commercial contracts is underway.

The projects include Karnaphuli Tunnel involving \$705 million; surface water treatment plant (\$500 million); installation of single point mooring with double pipeline (\$500 million).

The \$2.57 billion Padma bridge rail; \$1.39 billion Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway; and power system network expansion involving \$2.04 billion are the other projects.

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# Put spotlight on people on margins: analysts

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

The government should pay more attention to marginalised and excluded groups trapped in poverty as it strives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, experts said yesterday.

Bangladesh has successfully reduced high general poverty and extreme poverty in the last several decades, said Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of the Power

Participation Research Centre.

"But there are groups that have been trapped in poverty because of exclusion and marginalisation. If we don't give them special attention, our efforts to cut poverty further as well as implement the SDGs will not be successful."

Rahman's comments came at a national workshop on "Leaving No One Behind: Exclusion and Marginalisation Challenges in Bangladesh", held in Dhaka.

The Society for Environment and Human Development, the PPRC, the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh and Gram Bikash Kendra jointly organised the event in association with the European Union. The number of people belonging to the marginalised groups might be about 58 lakh, according to a government estimate. But Rahman said the number could be roughly about 80 lakh.

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## Beza to award final licence to Meghna

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority or Beza will award a final licence to Meghna Group of Industries today to operate the economic zone that it built in Sonargaon to attract investments from home and abroad.

This will be the first licence that is being given to a private sector economic zone, as Meghna Group has completed all the requirements, including an environmental impact assessment, feasibility study and prepared a master plan in line with a prequalification licence.

Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of Beza, will hand over the licence for Meghna Economic Zone at a programme in Dhaka.

An economic zone is a designated area in a country with special regulations that differ from the rest of the country. An entrepreneur can enjoy benefits, including tax incentives by setting up an industrial unit in an economic zone.

The Meghna Economic Zone is one of the two economic zones being developed by Meghna Group at Sonargaon in Narayanganj.

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# Teletalk yet to block its 20 lakh unregistered SIMs

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

State-owned mobile operator Teletalk is yet to block 20 lakh of its biometrically unregistered connections, which is allowing a huge volume of illegal international incoming calls and depriving the government of revenue.

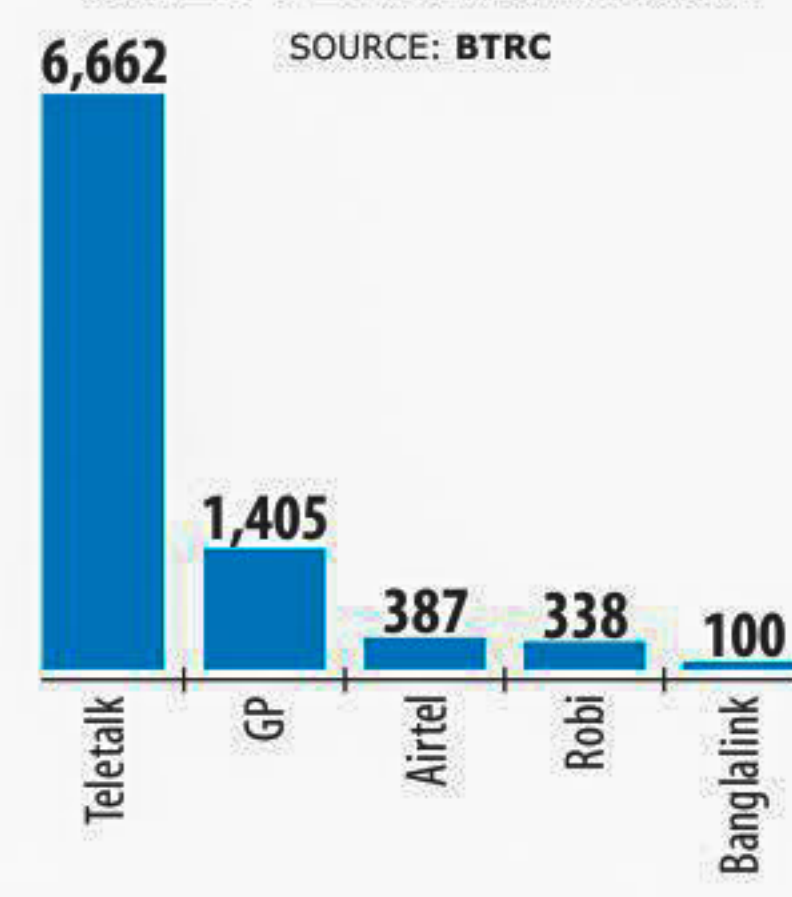
In two different drives in the last two months, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission found a huge number of Teletalk SIMs that were used in illegal call termination.

BTRC seized 9,130 SIMs, of which 6,662 were Teletalk. The number of Grameenphone SIMs was 1,405, Airtel 387, Robi 338 and Banglalink 100.

State Minister for Telecom Tarana Halim in a meeting on Thursday directed BTRC to take action against Teletalk even though it is a state-owned company.

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## SIMs USED IN ILLEGAL CALL TERMINATION



# Citycell won't shut until Sep 16: court

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

Moribund mobile operator Citycell got some breathing space after a High Court bench yesterday asked the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission not to shut down its operations until September 16.

The government had planned to bring down the curtains on Citycell's operations on August 24 after the operator failed to clear dues amounting to Tk 477.63 crore.

"It's a relief for us," said Mehboob

Chowdhury, chief executive officer of Citycell, adding that the operator will work to clear its dues within this time.

The court order came during the hearing of China Development Bank's petition to realise its dues of \$36.63 million from Citycell.

During the hearing Citycell's lawyer filed an application to prevent the telecom regulator from shutting down its operation, said Barrister Khandaker Reza-E-Raquib, a lawyer for the BTRC.

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