

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS			CURRENCIES				
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY
▲ 0.11%	▲ 0.18%	\$1,338.50	\$47.57	▲ 0.93%	Closed	▼ 0.16%	▲ 0.56%	BUY TK	77.80	86.13	100.46
4,665.35	8,727.35	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	28,773.13		2,846.06	3,042.69	SELL TK	78.80	89.53	103.86

আপনার বিআরটিএ ফি এবং সকল ইউটিলিটি বিল এসআইবিএল এর যে কোন শাখায় মাধ্যমে জমা দিন



* ফ্রি অনলাইন সেবা
যে কোন প্রয়োজনে ০৯৬৬২০০৯২২

Star BUSINESS

DHAKA FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 23, 2016, ASHWIN 8, 1423 BS

3G internet gains momentum

Telcos added one crore users last year; operators call for reducing handset taxes to help 3G services flourish

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The number of 3G mobile internet connections rose 60 percent year-on-year to 2.88 crore in fiscal 2015-16, according to a draft report of the telecom regulator.

As of June, 5.97 crore SIMs had internet connections, and of them, 48.28 percent were enjoying the fastest data service. Total active SIMs at that time were 13.14 crore.

Industry insiders said it is a success of the operators. Due to higher investments in 3G rollout, people were able to experience the fastest data service, they said.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission will publish the report soon, said an official.

"We are quite satisfied with how things are going forward in the industry," the BTRC official said.

Average data consumption per user has seen significant growth over time, fuelled by an access to a wide range of digital lifestyle solutions, social media and other applications, he added.

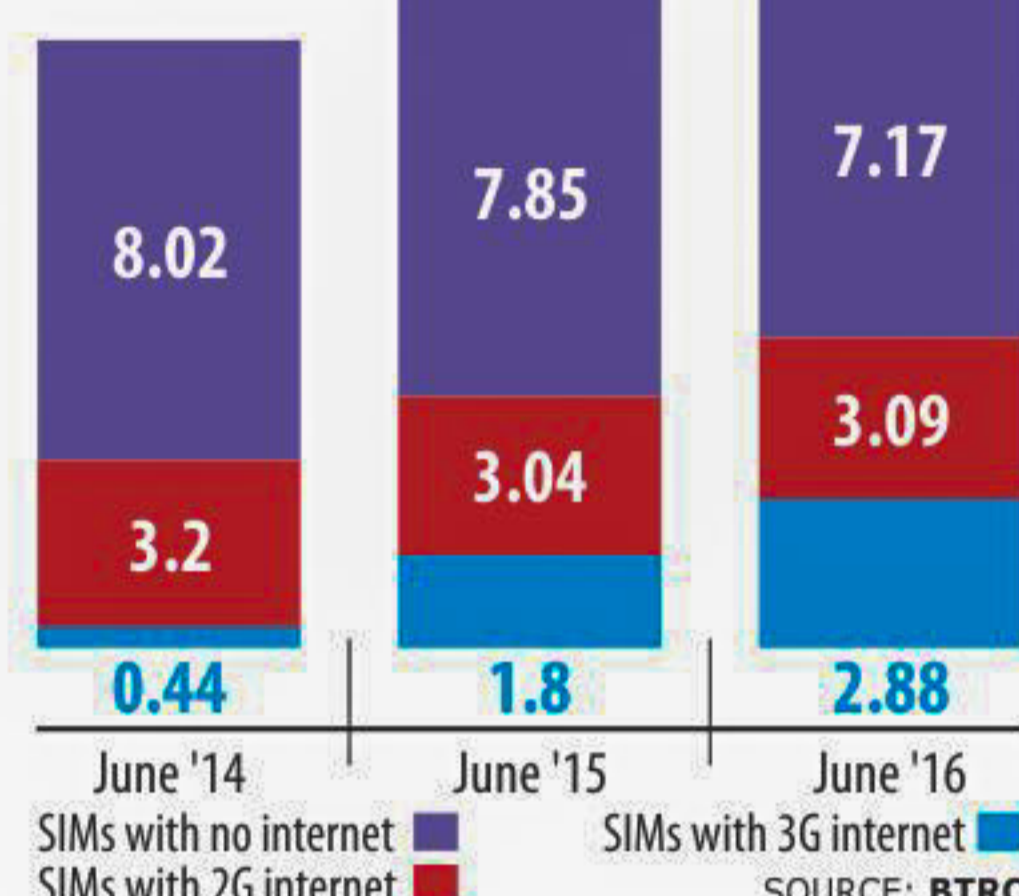
From July last year to June this year, the industry added 1.08 crore 3G customers.

However, operators said they can grow further if the ecosystem supports them as expected.

TIM Nurul Kabir, secretary general of Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh, said they have invested a lot to deliver high speed data services but the ecosystem is not ready enough.

MOBILE INTERNET

Connections in crore



"Although 3G network has spread across the country, smartphone penetration is still less than 25 percent," said Kabir. The government should cut handset taxes to help 3G services flourish, he added.

However, data users and experts are unimpressed.

Mustafa Jabbar, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services, said the numbers may be increasing, and that is the common trend in the current digital world. "But the services we are getting

from the operators are terrible."

Operators are offering data in megabytes but what users are getting is only a few kilobytes, he added.

As of June 2015, there were 4.84 crore SIMs connected to the internet and 38.38 percent of them were 3G-enabled at that time, according to BTRC.

Total active SIMs were 12.60 crore in the market at that time.

Internet connections are increasing every year, and maintaining the pace, the number of SIMs without internet connections is declining.

The telecom watchdog arranged an auction and awarded four 3G licences in September 2013. Within a month, private operators began their services.

Teletalk, the lone state operator, began its services without a licence in October 2012.

The industry's 3G connections stood at 44 lakh in June 2014; Teletalk had a majority at that time. The major players have already covered all the districts, towns and growth centres with 3G services.

Market leader Grameenphone covered more than 10,000 sites across the country with 3G, while its nearest competitor Banglalink covered 6,000 sites.

Robi has 4,500 3G sites, while Airtel, which is waiting for merger with Robi, has 1,700.

As of June, Grameenphone had 2.18 lakh active internet connections, with customers using an average of 502MB data a month.

Inspection for non-garment factories in the works

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments is in talks with different agencies to launch inspections into non-garment factories to ensure workplace safety.

"We have already spoken with Germany's development agency GIZ to start inspections into non-apparel factories," said Syed Ahmed, inspector general of DIFE.

There are upwards of 4,000 non-garment factories in Bangladesh. "We must launch the inspection to save the lives of the workers there."

The labour ministry has already agreed to launch inspections similar to the ones taking place in the garment sector after the Rana Plaza building collapse in April 2013, according to Ahmed.

"We will need technical and financial support from both the government and the international communities for the inspection."

The DIFE will also speak with the International Labour Organisation in this regard soon, Ahmed said.

The non-garment factories have been running without inspection for years, leaving the structural, fire and electrical conditions of most factories unknown.

"We should know the conditions of all three -- structural, fire and electrical -- in the non-apparel sector to avoid further worker deaths."

For instance, the Tampaco Foils factory structure was probably strong but the housekeeping like placement of boilers, foils, chemicals, electrical wires and meters let it down.

Had the Tampaco factory been inspected the accident might not have taken place, he said.

"I will not sit idle. I will launch inspec-

tions into those factories because saving the lives of workers is our highest priority. We need money and technical support now," Ahmed said.

The DIFE that was created after the Rana Plaza collapse is responsible for ensuring workplace safety and compliance in factories.

Since the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013, Accord and Alliance, the two foreign inspection agencies, have been inspecting 2,000 garment factories to fix the fire, electrical and structural flaws.

Another 2,000 garment factories, which are not members of the Accord and the Alliance, are being inspected under a government initiative in collaboration with the ILO.

The non-garment factories were not in focus as everyone was occupied with safety in garment factories after the Rana Plaza incident that claimed 1,138 lives, he said.

The inspection of structures and boilers is mandatory as the majority of the non-garment factories are old and require immediate inspection.

On compensation for those affected by the Tampaco fire, Ahmed said the labour ministry has already announced Tk 2 lakh for families of each of the dead worker.

The compensation will be given from the recently formed Worker Welfare Fund.

Ministry officials and doctors are preparing a list of the workers who died or were injured to give compensation, Ahmed said.

Rescuers have so far recovered dead bodies of 35 workers killed in the blaze on September 22.

Labour leaders and local and international rights groups have already expressed concern over the Tampaco Foils accident and demanded a fair compensation package for the victims based on ILO Convention 121, which deals with payment for industrial accidents.

Akij to invest Tk 1,500cr in three plants in its economic zone

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Akij Group will invest about Tk 1,500 crore to set up three industrial plants in its economic zone in Mymensingh to produce raw materials for plastics which will cut imports.

At these plants, Akij will produce formaldehyde, biax film and urea moulding compounds, which are now imported. The company received a prequalification licence from Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority or Beza for building the economic zone.

Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of Beza, handed over the prequalification licence to Sheikh Bashir Uddin, managing director of Akij Group, at a programme at the Beza office in Dhaka on Wednesday.

"We can save at least Tk 1,000 crore if we don't need to import these products," said Bashir.

Formaldehyde is a raw material for producing resin, while urea moulding compound is the raw material for manufacturing plastic products. Biax film is a kind of thin and transparent polythene used in food and tobacco packaging.

Akij also plans to set up a plant for manufacturing particle board and medium-density fibreboard in its economic zone.

The zone to be developed on around 110 acres will create direct jobs for some 20,000 people in the next five years, as it will be a suitable place for both local and foreign entrepreneurs, officials said.

READ MORE ON B3



Visitors take a look at a new Samsung TV launched at an event at Radisson Hotel in Dhaka yesterday. Story on B3

Two-day conference on urban poverty starts tomorrow

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Power and Participation Research Centre or PPRC and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics will start a two-day international conference on urban poverty in Dhaka tomorrow.

Bangladesh as a whole made significant progress in rural poverty reduction, but unfortunately there are huge inequalities in urban areas, Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of the research centre, said at a media briefing at its office in Dhaka yesterday.

PPRC and the statistical agency jointly started working on a study on urban poverty in 2012, and the findings of the study will be placed in the conference.

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Monetary policy should be pro-poor: Atiur

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The monetary policy should target the country's poor section, said Atiur Rahman, former Bangladesh Bank governor.

"We conducted monetary policy not through 'helicopter-money' but more through 'ox-cart money' that touches and transforms the ground," he said at a seminar on 'Innovations in Monetary Policy' at the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC.

The seminar was chaired by WB Chief Economist and Senior Vice-President Kaushik Basu.

Rahman shared his hands-on experiences as a long-serving governor of Bangladesh's central bank and spoke at length on how the institution gradually transformed itself into a reputed developmental central bank with wider participation of stakeholders without compromising its predominant role of controlling inflation.

Bangladesh experienced unprecedented reduction of poverty -- over 50 percentage points -- and fastest growth of life expectancy (70 years +) in just four decades, he said.

Thanks to the drive of financial inclusion, the growth in inequality has also been minimal.

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Govt explains payscale confusion

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Government employees will not get timescale or selection grade in the same post more than twice under the new payscale.

The finance ministry in a revised notice on Wednesday gave specific explanations aimed at removing confusion over selection grade and timescale for government employees.

Any employee after getting either of the two will receive a higher grade after six years.

If any employee does not get either timescale or selection grade, he/she will get a higher grade after 10 years and another higher grade after six years from then, if he/she remains in the same post.

READ MORE ON B3

Hasina urges global retailers to be responsible

UNB, New York

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged the global producers, retailers and consumers to be responsible for the progress of business and realisation of labour rights.

"We would benefit more if business is regarded as a shared responsibility by all at home and abroad," she said.

Hasina was addressing the launch of the global deal initiative on enhanced social dialogue for decent work and inclusive growth, organised by Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven at the UN headquarters on Wednesday.

Hasina described development as a collective enterprise and called for devising a robust mechanism to facilitate mutually enriching dialogue among the stakeholders.

"Development is premised on a productive relation among governments, employers and workers. It's a collective enterprise and has to be

competitive, compliant and caring."

She said the global initiative encourages dialogue among the partners for building a harmonious and just society.

In Bangladesh, she said, the government has been following the path of inclusive economic development ensuring that no one is left behind.

"In our Vision 2021, people have been placed at the centre of all our development efforts focusing on people's dignity, safety and security."

She said garment and other industries have been contributing to employment, empowerment and economic emancipation in Bangladesh.

For better industrial relations, the labour law has been amended, she added.

Hasina said her government has declared minimum wages for the workers of the garment industry with an increase of 77 percent from

the previous one.

"We've adopted the labour inspection strategy and strengthened the Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments."

She said the government recognises the importance of further raising the capacity and awareness of industry associations, trade unions, factory management and workers.

"We've been closely working with all development partners and stakeholders for a better future for our industries, employers and workers."

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, PM's ICT Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Engineer Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain and Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Nurul Islam, PM's Energy Adviser Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, State Minister for Labour and Employment Mujiburul Haque, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahrir Alam also attended the event.