

China's ZTE signs \$16m deal with Banglalink to upgrade network

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

China's ZTE is stepping into Bangladesh's telecom infrastructure business by striking a \$16 million deal to upgrade Banglalink's 3G networks in Khulna.

Under the agreement, Banglalink will upgrade 15 districts of Khulna with the shared wireless access protocol, which will also lay the groundwork for the rollout of 4G services, the country's third largest mobile operator said in a statement.

At the same time, customers in Rajbari, Faridpur, Madaripur and Shariatpur will also benefit from this

transformation.

Banglalink will upgrade 1,400 base tower stations in 15 districts. Some base stations have already been upgraded and within the next few months the total process will be completed.

Earlier, Banglalink upgraded its network to 4G in some other parts of the country with China's tech giant.

"We are truly happy and excited to take such a bold step ... as part of our digital transformation," said Sanjay Vaghania, chief technology officer of Banglalink.

The new effort in the Khulna

region will enable the operator to provide its customers with a superior browsing experience and the fastest network service, Vaghania said.

"We are committed to giving the best network experience to our customers across the country as we move with our strategy to redefine the network infrastructure."

"We promise to provide the latest technology to Banglalink to ensure best user experience with high-speed internet and fastest network service," said Zhong Zhi Quan, chief technology officer of ZTE Bangladesh.

WB gives \$360m to improve waterway connectivity

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It will also build new and rehabilitate existing passenger terminals in Sadarghat, Narayanganj, Chandpur and Barisal.

To help the poor population living in remote areas, the project will construct 14 landing ghats/stations in chars (shoals), where waterways are often the only mode of transportation.

The terminals and landing stations will be built to improve the security, safety and sanitation conditions, and incorporate the needs of female users, the elderly, and

small traders, with women-only toilets and waiting rooms.

The inland water transportation sector can play an important role in improving domestic connectivity and regional integration. The project will benefit traders, exporters and commuters by cutting down transport time and cost," said Qimiao Fan, World Bank country director for Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

The project will help improve the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority's capacity to comply with international standards and adopt modern management practices for

inland water transport, and achieve long-term operational and financial sustainability.

The agreement was signed by Qimiao Fan and Mohammad Mejbahuddin, senior secretary of the Economic Relations Division of the Bangladesh government, at ERD office.

The credit from the World Bank's International Development Association, which provides grants or zero to low interest loans, has a 38-year term, including a six-year grace period, and a service charge of 0.75 percent.

Private sector key to SDGs: economist

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He said ensuring additional finance is important for attaining the SDGs.

"The domestic resources will play a critical role. Foreign aid will not be there as it was promised," said Bhattacharya, also the convenor of the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh, a platform whose objective is to contribute towards the delivery of SDGs and enhance accountability in the implementation process.

The finance needed for SDG implementation should come from both public and private sectors, he said.

"Tax-GDP ratio will become critical," he said, adding that revenue-GDP ratio should be increased to at least 18 percent from the present 12 percent.

"It is not an impossible thing," said Bhattacharya, citing the example of Tanzania, another least developed country that has 18 percent tax-

GDP ratio.

Bhattacharya stressed the need for curbing the illicit outflows, which stood at \$5.6 billion on average during 2004-2013 -- 6.4 percent of Bangladesh's gross domestic product.

Skilled workers, decent job, healthy human resources and better institutions are necessary for economic growth and development, said Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of the Power and Participation Research Centre.

The government will disclose a report on SDGs in July next year on what Bangladesh had done, said Md Abdul Kalam Azad, principal coordinator for SDGs at the Prime Minister's Office.

Apart from five-year plans and annual budget, the government also signs annual performance agreements with all ministries and divisions to monitor progress and improve perfor-

mance. "Each action of ministries is being translated into data," he said.

The government has also targeted to improve the country's ease of doing business ranking from existing 176 to 99 by 2021, Azad added.

"In one month time, we will chalk out our plan," Azad said, adding that the government also plans to set up one stop service centres so that doing business could be easy. "The draft law is done. We will consult with the investors and put it before the cabinet for approval," he said.

Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque said, due to SDGs, businesses will come under increasing scrutiny and monitoring by global bodies.

Bjorn Lomborg, president of Copenhagen Consensus Centre, and Farzana Chowdhury, managing director and chief executive of Green Delta Insurance, also spoke.

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