

DHAKA THURSDAY JULY 20, 2017, SRABAN 5, 1424 BS

Telcos to spend Tk 22,600cr on 4G services

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Private mobile operators are seeing no way of getting back within the first three years a "substantial" return of the over Tk 22,600 crore they will need to invest to roll out 4G services in Bangladesh.

And their estimate has not even taken into account the spectrum charge.

They say high spectrum charges and tax and low 4G device penetration and data price rates are to blame.

Top operators Grameenphone, Banglalink and Robi got back only Tk 6,000 crore of the Tk 32,000 crore invested in the first three years of introducing 3G services, says the Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh (AMTOB).

"This is a serious concern for the investors," said AMTOB Secretary General Tim Nurul Kabir. Recent service guidelines have narrowed down the scope for business, which investors think will discourage further funding, he said.

Terming some of the guidelines "unrealistic", mobile operators urged the government to review the issue with a holistic approach. "The government should fix a rational price for the spectrum. The operators will not just buy spectrum, they will also need to invest a significant amount of money to take the 4G services to people's doorsteps," said Kabir.

The government recently posted two guidelines on 4G services and spectrum auction at the telecom division's website and the operators sent back their feedback.



4G investment return rate to be discouraging: operators

Govt should fix a rational price for spectrum, they say

GP, Banglalink, Robi got back Tk 6,000cr of Tk 32,000cr invested in the first three years of introducing 3G

Operators want to borrow from local banks

They say price per megahertz of spectrum should stay below \$15m

The proposed base prices per megahertz were \$30 million (900 MHz band), \$35 million (1,800 MHz) and \$27 million (2,100 MHz).

The operators are hoping for the price per megahertz to stay below \$15 million.

In previous requests to halve the price, AMTOB reasoned that revenues were decreasing against rising data consumption.

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Operators add 1.74cr new users in 9 months

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mobile phone operators added 1.74 crore new connections in the nine months to May this year.

Market leader Grameenphone added 65.62 lakh new customers to its network during the period, which is 37.68 percent of the new connections added. Robi added 76.36 lakh or 43.27 percent of the new customers, the highest among all operators, thanks to its merger with Airtel and introduction of attractive data and voice services.

In the period, Banglalink has got 24.66 lakh new subscribers while state-run Teletalk added 8.51 lakh.

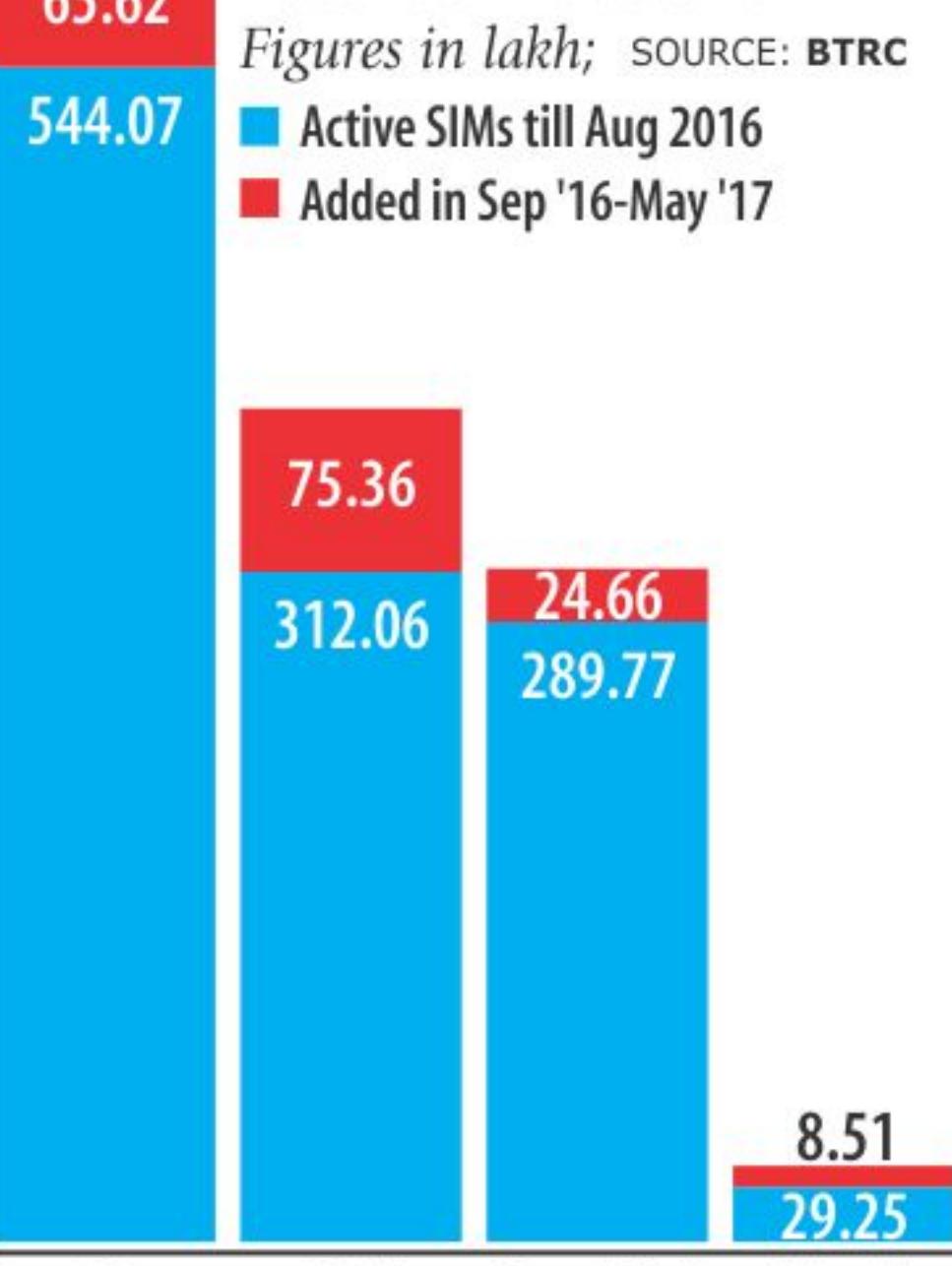
The new additions brought the total number of active mobile phone connections to 13.50 crore at the end of May, according to a report of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

In August last year, the number of active connections had gone down to 11.78 crore mainly because of the launch of the biometric re-registration of mobile phone connections.

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Total connections

Figures in lakh; SOURCE: BTTC



Banks asked to open help desks to boost FDI

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday asked all banks dealing in foreign currencies to set up at least one dedicated help desk in their Dhaka and Chittagong head offices with competent officials to help potential foreigners in making productive investment.

READ MORE ON B3

CEO of Nokia phone maker steps down

REUTERS, Frankfurt

HMD Global, the Finnish company that owns the rights to use Nokia's brand on mobile phones, said Chief Executive Arto Nummela is leaving the company.

Florian Seiche, HMD Global's president, has been appointed to the additional role of acting CEO, the company said.

An HMD spokesman said Nummela's departure was a personal matter between him and the company's board of directors, but declined to elaborate.

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