

# star BUSINESS

DHAKA THURSDAY AUGUST 17, 2017, BHADRA 2, 1424 BS

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## BTRC sticks to its recommended voice call rates

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The telecom regulator stuck to its original recommendation for minimum voice call rates even though the government sought for downward revision.

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, after holding proper consultations with stakeholders, yesterday fixed the minimum on-net (calls between the same operator) call rate at Tk 0.35 per minute, up from existing Tk 0.25.

The off-net rate (calls between different operators) has been fixed at Tk 0.45 per minute, down from existing Tk 0.60.

"We will send our recommendation to the government for its nod as early as possible and then they will decide," said a commissioner who attended the meeting.

The increase in the minimum on-net call rate will not affect the country's 13.5 crore registered mobile subscribers as no operator currently offers Tk 0.25, he said.

"Actually, all the operators are charging more than Tk 0.35 per minute for on-net calls. We think this will not impact the market."

However, slashing the off-net call rate by 25 percent to Tk 0.45 per minute will benefit the customers, he added.

In all the mature telecom markets, the difference between on-net and off-net call rates is negligible, said another BTRC official.

"But here, in our country, there is a huge gap. And ultimately, we are helping customers to save their money for making calls to other networks," he added.

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## Bangladeshi consumers very optimistic: Mastercard survey

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh is the third most optimistic market in the Asia Pacific thanks to consumers' positive outlook on stockmarket, jobs and income, according to the Mastercard Index of Consumer Confidence released yesterday.

In the first half of 2017, the country's score in the index rose 6.6 points to 89.4 compared to the second half of 2016.

The index is calculated on a scale of 0 to 100, with zero being the most pessimistic, 100 the most optimistic and between 40 and 60 being neutral.

With the increase, Bangladesh moved further into the 'very optimistic' territory, with improvement in all five compo-

nents that made up the index.

Cambodia leads the region as the most optimistic market with 93.1 points. Vietnam (90.8), the Philippines (88.8) and China (88.2) rounded off the top five.

This is the most comprehensive and longest running survey of its kind in the region.

Between April and June, 9,153 respondents, aged 18 to 64 in 18 Asia Pacific markets, were asked to give a six-month outlook on the economy, employment prospects, their regular income prospects and their quality of life.

Bangladesh saw the biggest jump in the stockmarket sub-index, as its point rose to 74.9 in the first half of 2017 from 59.9 in the second half of 2016.

The country witnessed a 7.2-point increase to 93.7 on the outlook on employment prospects while the points rose by 6.8 to 95.7 on the regular income prospects.

The outlook on the quality of life improved by 3.9 points to 91.4 while outlook on the economy rose 0.1 points to 91.3 in the first half of 2017 compared to the second half last year.

Overall consumer confidence in Asia Pacific has shown marginal change with some economies facing headwinds, said Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager of Mastercard Bangladesh.

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## BGMEA plans to form platform like Accord, Alliance

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Local garment makers have proposed the formation of a factory inspection and remediation agency similar to foreign agencies Accord and Alliance to strengthen workplace safety in the apparel sector.

Once registered under relevant laws, the platform, to be called 'Shonman' (respect), would be run under the guidance of an ombudsman chosen by the Prime Minister's Office.

However, the platform will also have a steering committee comprising representatives from organisations such as the BGMEA, the BKMEA, the

ILO, brands, trade unions and the commerce and labour ministries.

All decisions would be consensus-based and neither the government nor the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) would have veto power.

"We have not finalised everything yet. But terms and conditions are ready," said BGMEA President Siddiqui Rahman.

He said the BGMEA executive board would sit with the government after Eid-ul-Azha. He said he would disclose details very soon.

As per the draft, the steering committee would appoint a chief operat-

ing officer and a chief technical officer and form a review panel to deal with pending decisions.

The implementation board of the existing Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC) of the government would be responsible for dealing with technical taskforces, case handlers and fire, electrical and safety engineers.

In the first phase from January to June 2018, the RCC management board would list factories under the National Action Plan, Accord and Alliance, which will achieve 85 percent of their remediation targets by December this year.

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## HSBC launches app to help clients track global trade transactions

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

HSBC yesterday introduced a new mobile banking application for exporters and importers in Bangladesh to give them an edge in tracking international trade transactions digitally.

The world's leading trade bank unveiled the HSBCnet Trade Transaction Tracker at a ceremony at the Westin hotel in Dhaka. The app can be used on iPhones and all android smartphones. It will provide HSBC customers with a real-time view of their documentary credits, collections and payments across markets and countries worldwide.

"The HSBC Trade Transaction Tracker helps customers manage their trade banking activities more efficiently," Ajay Sharma, regional head of global trade and receivables finance of HSBC Asia Pacific, said at the launch.

"We are delighted that customers in Bangladesh are the first in the Asia Pacific to get a unique digital application that allows them to view the status of all their trade transactions with HSBC worldwide in one simple window."

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