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BUSINESS

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starbusiness@thedailystar.net

## BPO summit ends with call for a wider local market

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The third BPO Summit wrapped up yesterday with a call on the government and local financial institutions to open up their back offices for outsourcing as it would accelerate digitisation. Leaders of the Bangladesh Association of Call Centre and Outsourcing (BACCO), which organised the two-day summit at the capital's Sonargaon Hotel, said they mostly support multinational companies, including some global banks. But the local institutions have shut their doors to the BPO industry, they said. Take the case of Atom AP, a Japan-Bangladesh joint venture ICT company that serves foreign banks like the Bank of Yokohama and Nomura.

"But we fail to convince the local banks to take our service, which would reduce their operational costs and improve their service quality," said AKM Ahmedul Islam Babu, managing director of Atom AP. Some companies are running their operations with artificial intelligence and supporting American companies' back office by sitting in Dhaka, said Zunaid Kazi, chief technology officer of Infolytx, a fully AI company.

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## REVENUE SHARING BETWEEN BANKS AND TELCOS

# Joy resolves tussle in mobile financial service

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Sajeeb Wazed Joy, Prime Minister's ICT affairs adviser, yesterday in a meeting has resolved a longstanding tussle between the mobile financial service providers and mobile operators.

The MFS providers use the mobile operator's Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD), which allows banking services from one's basic feature phone without the need for internet connection, to relay their service.

In return, the MFS providers share 7 percent of their earnings with the mobile operators, much to the dissatisfaction of the latter.

But now, the MFS providers will have to pay the carriers according to

usage. For each 90-second session Tk 0.85 will be charged provided a successful transaction had taken place.

Customers will get two text messages, the cost for which will be bundled within the Tk0.85 charge.

For other non-transactional services such as checking balance, the MFS providers will have to pay Tk 0.40, which they did not previously.

At present, the MFS providers charge the customers 1.8 percent of the amount as transaction fee.

For instance, if a customer made a transaction for Tk 10,000, his/her charge would be Tk 180. Of the Tk 180, the MFS providers forward Tk 25.71 to the mobile operators.

"As we are not changing the customers' charge right now there may

not be any reaction from them," said Abul Kashem Md. Shirin, managing director and chief executive officer of Dutch-Bangla Bank, the parent company of the second largest MFS provider 'Rocket'.

The changes might increase their cost of delivering the service but they will absorb it and later report to the government to review it again.

Earlier, both the market leading MFS operators bKash and Rocket claimed that the development might ward off the end users.

But yesterday, after the meeting they said they will observe the changes and after one or two months they will sit to find out the impact.

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## BUDGET 2018-19

# Telcos seek duty benefit for 4G handsets

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mobile phone operators yesterday sought duty benefits for the import of 4G-enabled handsets, which would help in reducing cost of such devices and widening access to fast internet.

To cut costs, they also demanded withdrawal of value added tax and supplementary duty and surcharge on internet usage, which now stand at 21.75 percent.

The Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh (Amtob) came up with the pleas at the National Board of Revenue (NBR) in the capital while presenting proposals for the upcoming budget for 2018-19.

At present, mobile handset importers pay a total of 31.75 percent of the price as duty.

The demand of Amtob, representing Grameenphone, Robi, Banglalink, Citycell, Teletalk and associate members Ericsson,

Huawei and Nokia, comes nearly two months past the launch of 4G services by the top three operators.

Despite the launch, nearly 10 percent of around 10 crore of the active cellphone users have 4G-enabled devices while 35 percent have 3G handsets, according to Amtob.

Mobile phone operators said high duty acts as a deterrent to the fast expansion of the usage of 4G-enabled phones.

"We urge for giving import benefit for two-three years," said Shahed Alam, head of regulatory affairs of Robi Axiata Ltd, the second largest mobile phone operator after Grameenphone.

Amtob Secretary General TIM Nurul Kabir said the majority of the devices being used in the country were basic phones. "Now if we want to reach the bottom of the pyramid, we have to address their affordability," he said.

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## Stocks rebound on buying spree

### Beximco share still rising

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka stocks rebounded yesterday after losing for four straight days, as investors went on a buying spree.

DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, rose 11.06 points or 0.19 percent, closing the day at 5,784.67.

The market started the day on a negative note but later in the day investors started taking position in the undervalued stocks, EBL Securities said in its daily market analysis.

Share price of Beximco was on the rise although the company informed the investors on April 8 through the DSE that there was no price sensitive information behind the unusual price hike. Since March 28 to April 11, share price of the company has seen a 40 percent rise.

Turnover, another important indicator of the market, jumped 25.1 percent to Tk 515.62 crore with 13.41 crore shares and mutual fund units changing hands on the DSE.

Of the traded issues, 165 advanced, 120 declined and 55 securities closed

unchanged on the premier bourse.

Beximco topped the turnover chart yesterday for the eighth consecutive day with 1.47 lakh shares worth Tk 43.56 crore changing hands followed by Brac Bank, Advent Pharma, Mercantile Bank and LafargeHolcim Bangladesh.

Among the major sectors, life insurance rose 1.62 percent in market capitalisation, followed by engineering that increased 1.18 percent, textiles 0.74 percent and fuel and power 0.45 percent.

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## Oil prices ease

AFP, London

Oil prices slid on Monday amid relief that US-led strikes on Syria did not provoke an escalation in the conflict, easing investor fears about the security of crude oil supply.

Russia holding back on any military riposte helped lift Wall Street, as did strong retail sales, but European equities closed lower as the region's key currencies strengthened against the dollar.

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