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## MNP users face troubles

Many reverting to old operators

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

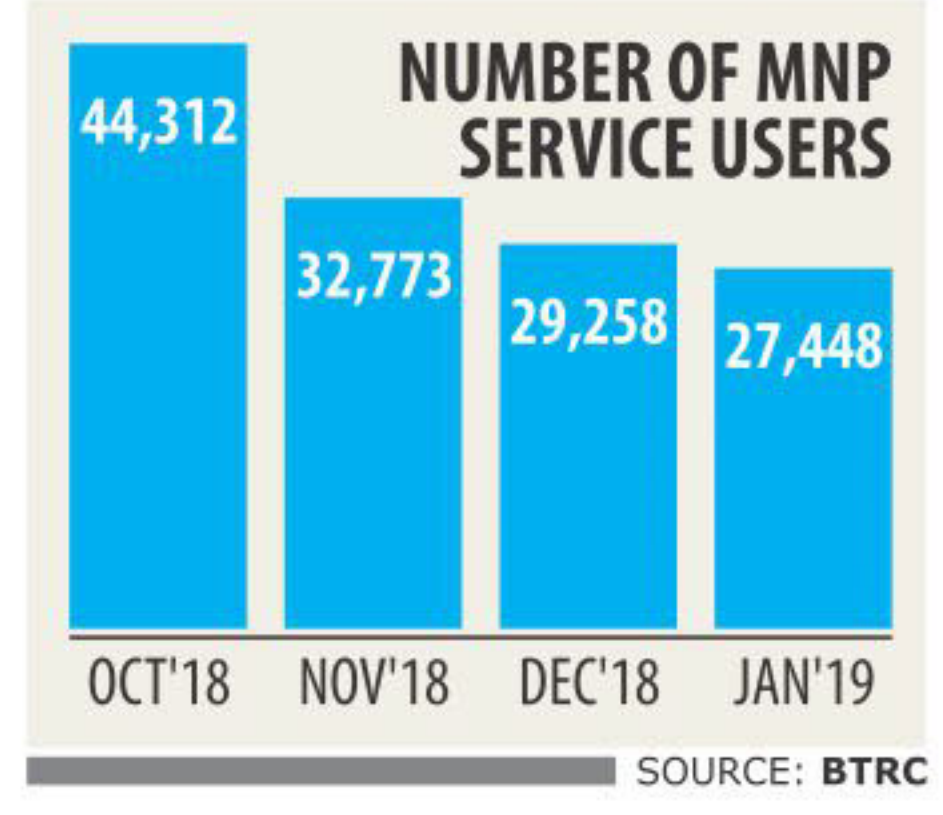
Fed up with the poor service quality, Imran Hossain, a buying house executive, could not wait to switch his mobile operator. But what held him back was that he would have to give up on his 11-digit mobile number, which he had circulated to one-too-many people.

His wishes were answered in October last year, when the government rolled out the mobile number portability facility, becoming the 72nd country in the world to do so.

Hossain rushed to avail the service as soon as it came out, but his relief at switching to a better network operator was short-lived. He was no longer getting text messages for transactions in his accounts with banks and mobile financial service (MFS) providers.

Moreover, one-time passwords (OTP) of authentication requests from Google, Facebook and other entities stopped coming. The situation turned deeply troublesome for him when he failed to respond to such an authentication request of the Bangladesh Election Commission.

And, it was not possible to return to his previous operator as the rules did not permit it before 90 days. He just gritted his teeth and waited out the 90-day embargo and on January 2 he went back



to his previous network.

"But there were some new problems this time," said a frustrated Hossain.

Hossain's case is not an isolated one. The poor feedback on the MNP means many who were looking forward to switching operators have now forfeited their plans, taking the momentum off the service that the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) introduced to enhance competition in the market.

"In some cases, it has become a nuisance," said, said Mohammad Zulfikar, chief executive officer of Infozillion Teletech BD, the MNP service provider.

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## GLOBAL CONNECTEDNESS INDEX

### Bangladesh slips 6 notches to 140th

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh slipped six spots to 140th among 169 countries in a ranking of the world's most connected nations brought out by global logistics company DHL.

The Global Connectedness Index 2018, the fifth since it was first released in 2011, was measured by four pillars: international flows of trade, capital, information and people.

Bangladesh's overall ranking fell from the 2015 edition although it improved its position in trade, capital and information pillars, said the report, which was released on Tuesday.

It ranked Bangladesh lower than its peer countries. India ranked 74th, Pakistan 127th, Vietnam 39th and Cambodia 49th. Myanmar is seven notches ahead of Bangladesh. In South Asia, only Afghanistan (167), Bhutan (150) and Nepal (151) were ranked lower than Bangladesh.

COUNTRY	LATEST RANK	CHANGE IN RANK FROM 2015
Bangladesh	140	-6
India	74	-2
Pakistan	127	-2
Nepal	151	+8
Bhutan	150	-7
Vietnam	39	-3
Cambodia	49	+4
China	61	-1
Myanmar	133	+23
Malaysia	12	+1
Netherlands	1	0

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## Local printers get a leg-up in fight for textbook orders



People arrange books brought to a Barishal school for distribution among school students for free.

SOHEL PARVEZ

Local printers are likely to be able to compete with their foreign counterparts in securing orders to make textbooks for schoolchildren using imported paper thanks to a decision by the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

The revenue board in a recent meeting said text books to be supplied to the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) under international tender will be treated as export and no value-added tax would be applicable.

Besides, refund of duties and taxes paid

on inputs to make the products is available for such supply against international tender, revenue officials said.

"Printers will not have to pay VAT duty and taxes if they made payment in foreign currency through the international tender process," said a senior official of the NBR.

The decision came after the Printing Industries Association of Bangladesh (PIAB) at a meeting with NBR Chairman Md Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan last month informed of the 61 percent duty and taxes that the local printers have to pay when they supply textbooks based on imported paper to the NCTB.

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## Green Delta to bring out cattle trackers

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Green Delta Insurance is set to roll out livestock identification and indexing service, a first for Bangladesh, with the view to developing a digital database on cattle population.

The livestock can be tracked by outfitting them with a sensor-filled collar, which the insurer will develop with Singaporean InfoCorp Technologies. The Singaporean fintech has successfully rolled out the technology in neighbouring Myanmar.

Cattle farmers can download a mobile app that would inform on the livestock's activity levels, health, age, location and other key behaviours like reproduction activity, which would enable them to improve their profitability.

The cost of each tag will be about \$1, said Roy Lai, founder and chief executive of InfoCorp Technologies, at the agreement signing ceremony at Spectra Convention Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

The technology will help to build an ecosystem among farmers, insurers, bankers and micro-finance insurance companies to identify the livestock assets, said Farzana Chowdhury, managing director and CEO of Green Delta Insurance.

The system will enable unbanked farmers to take financing by using their livestock assets as mortgage. At the same time, it will help lenders to keep mortgaged livestock asset in their trace. The solution will also create a livestock insurance platform through blockchain.

Its implementation though would be an uphill task given the lack of awareness among farmers, Chowdhury said, adding that Green Delta will take initiatives to educate them about the technology.

## Tourism sector needs policy support to thrive: experts

Food and hospitality expo begins in city



Stall attendants show products to a customer at a "Food and Hospitality Bangladesh Expo 2019" at International Convention City Bashundhara in the capital yesterday.

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The tourism and hospitality sector of Bangladesh needs policy support from the government to boost its contribution to the economy, said sector people yesterday.

"We are ready to provide world-

class hospitality and tourism facilities. We need policy support from the government," said HM Hakim Ali, chairperson of the Bangladesh International Hotel Association (BIHA).

He said people have no idea about the contribution of the sector - it

broadens the country's image globally. His comments were backed by Masud A Khan, chairman of the Better Bangladesh Foundation (BBF).

"At least 13 people directly benefit from a tourist, so it is too easy to calculate the contribution of the sector."

They spoke on the first day of the "Food and Hospitality Bangladesh Expo 2019" at the International Convention City Bashundhara in the capital. The BIHA and the Wem Bangladesh Limited jointly organised the three-day event.

The tourism and hospitality sector directly and indirectly accounts for 8.5 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), according to sector players.

The sector has huge potential to flourish along with other sectors, they said. Ali said only the private sector can bring significant change to the tourism sector through food and hospitality.

He gave the example of Thailand and Nepal where the major revenue for the governments comes from the tourism sector.

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## ADB reaffirms commitment to Bangladesh

The lenders vice president meets PM Sheikh Hasina

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has reaffirmed its plans to strengthen partnership and boost assistance to Bangladesh, said the Manila-based lender yesterday.

Shixin Chen, vice-president of the ADB, reaffirmed the lender's commitment for Bangladesh during a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office on Tuesday.

Chen came to Dhaka on February 11 for a three-day visit. He interacted with the people sheltered in the Rohingya camps, visited project sites and the site office under the ADB's emergency assistance project in Cox's Bazar.

Chen held discussions with Mashiur Rahman, economic affairs adviser to the prime minister, and Monowar Ahmed, secretary of the Economic Relations Division and ADB's alternate governor. Bangladesh has made huge strides in reducing poverty and sustained average growth of more than 6.5 percent over the last decade, achieving a record 7.9 percent GDP growth last year, Chen said in a statement.

"The main challenges ahead are to increase investments—both public and private—to close infrastructure gaps and to invest in human capital with a focus on boosting skills of the labour force."

Chen assured officials of ADB's commitment to remain a dependable partner of Bangladesh, responding flexibly to the country's evolving needs.

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## DEFAULT LOAN

### All talks, no action yet

Govt to form another committee to give recommendations

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The finance ministry has taken several moves to bring down the mounting default loans and strengthen the banking sector's corporate governance.

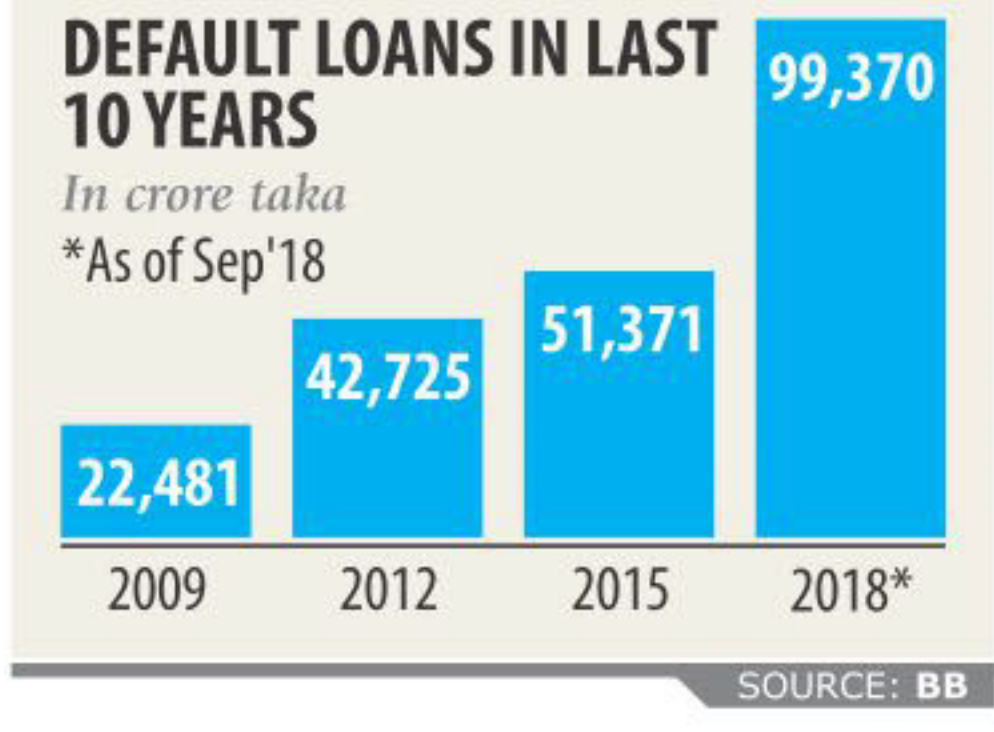
A high-powered committee will be formed within the next week -- led by Bangladesh Bank Deputy Governor Ahmed Jamal -- to provide recommendations for reforms in the banking sector.

"The government will not form any banking commission or taskforce to restore discipline in the banks," said a finance ministry official.

Rather, the Ahmed Jamal-led committee will explore the ways to reinstate corporate governance.

The government will implement the proposals given by the committee after vetting them, he said, adding that the default loans will come down once the proposals are implemented.

Last month, the ministry formed a three-



member committee, led by Md Rizwanul Huda, joint secretary of the financial institution division.

Loopholes in Artha Rin Adalat Ain 2003 (Money Loan Act) are the main barrier to bringing down the default loans, according to the report submitted by the committee last week to the Financial Institution Division Secretary Md Ashadul Islam.

As of September last year, default and written-off loans together stood at Tk 137,236 crore, of which nearly 85 percent is pending with the money loan courts because of the drawn-out process to settle the cases.

There is an urgent requirement to revise some provisions of Artha Rin Adalat Ain as defaulters are frequently exploiting the loopholes of the act to not repay their loans, the report said.

Some notices that were issued by the central bank regarding loan classification and provisioning should also be revised.

There is no need to reform the Bank Companies Act 1991 as it covers sufficient provisions to ensure a disciplined banking sector, the report said.

The committee will arrange a meeting with the managing directors of state-run banks within the shortest possible time to seek their opinion on how to reduce the default loans, a finance ministry official said.

After taking suggestions from the MDs of the state banks, the committee will finalise the report and hand it to Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal.

The government has also taken a decision to follow a more cautious approach when appointing directors to state banks.

Many central bank probe reports indicated that directors of state banks were largely responsible for the financial scams in the institutions.

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Advertorial

**Mutual Trust Bank Ltd. and Agrani Bank Ltd. have jointly arranged a "Syndicated Term Loan of BDT 3800 Million" for JMI Group's LPG projects.** "Syndicated Loan Closing Ceremony" was held on 10th February 2019 at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel. Mr. Nasrul Hamid, MP, Honorable State Minister, Ministry of Power, Energy & Natural Resources, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was the chief guest. Mr. Hedayetullah, Chairman of Mutual Trust Bank Ltd. & Mr. Md. Abdur Razzaq, Founder Managing Director of JMI Group jointly presented a crest to the Honorable chief guest. Mr. Md. Shams-Ul-Islam, Managing Director & CEO of Agrani Bank Ltd. & Mr. Anis A. Khan, Managing Director & CEO of Mutual Trust Bank Ltd. were also present in the ceremony.