

BTRC to go tough against GP, Robi

Seeks to ask them to explain why licences won't be cancelled over dues

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The telecom regulator is set to issue two separate show cause notices to Grameenphone and Robi asking them to reply within 30 days why their licences will not be cancelled despite violating the licensing conditions by not paying the telecom regulator's 'dues'.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission has demanded Tk 12,579.95 crore from Grameenphone and Tk 867.24 crore from Robi as per the finding of the audits into the two

operators' books.

On Sunday, the BTRC has sent their recommendations to the posts and telecom division and sought the government's approval on the show cause notices.

As per the telecom act, the BTRC will have to take prior approval from the government to issue show cause notice aiming to cancel any licence or start any licence cancelling procedure.

Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar said they have received BTRC's recommendation and are now working on it.

"We will analyse the related acts and laws in this regard and then we will move for our decision," Jabbar told The Daily Star yesterday. He said this will be a very tough decision and will not be arrived at in a rush.

"As a regulator the BTRC has the right to send this type of recommendation to us and they did it. Now we will consider all the related issues and make our decision," he added.

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Amran Hossain

New notes on sale in the capital's Gulistan yesterday. People have a habit of gifting notes of small denominations to children on going back to their ancestral homes during Eid vacations.

Primark cuts ties with some factories

TERMINATION OF WORKERS

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

British retail giant Primark has suspended business ties with some garment factories in Bangladesh, which had terminated 427 workers for their alleged involvement in agitations during December 2018 and January 2019 demanding a wage hike.

"We have been working hard for many years to ensure that our products are made with great care and respect for workers' rights," Primark said in response to a query made through an email.

"This is why we have been conducting in-depth investigations into a small number of our suppliers' factories in Bangladesh where there were allegations that workers' contracts had been terminated."

"The factories under investigation remain suspended during this process, meaning no new orders can be placed. Our investigations found some breaches of the Primark Code of Conduct, which are now being remediated."

"This includes remunerating any affected

workers the compensation they are legally entitled to, confirmation of the withdrawal of legal proceedings against workers and engaging our suppliers' factories in workplace remediation programmes."

"We have also shared our findings with other stakeholders, as we believe collaboration with key partners, including the Ethical Trading Initiative and the BGMEA, is critical in order to bring about effective industry-wide change."

"Primark remains committed to ensuring workers' right are upheld and protected, and we welcome the BGMEA's independent inquiry into this issue."

Rubana Huq, president of the BGMEA, said the association held a meeting with leaders of IndustriALL Bangladesh Council, a platform working on workers' rights, on July 31 urging to provide names, designations and other details of the sacked workers.

She had sought the same in a letter afterwards.

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CPD to form citizens' commission on banking

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The Centre for Policy Dialogue has decided to set up a "Citizens' Review Commission on Banking" because of the deteriorating health of the banking sector and the 'inertia' of the government to address the problems.

The board of trustees (BoT) of the think-tank took the decision at its 53rd meeting in Dhaka yesterday.

The commission will include eminent economists, experts, private sector representatives and former bankers and government officials, CPD said in a statement.

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Lack of feasibility studies delays ADP

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Most of the ministries prepare projects without proper feasibility study and technical design, which increases the cost of projects and delays their implementation, according to a report of the planning ministry.

The report was placed at the review meeting on the annual development programme (ADP) chaired by Planning Minister MA Mannan at the National Economic Council yesterday.

Some ministries and divisions prepare a report through an internal meeting that they include as feasibility study in the detailed project plan, according to the report.

The projects have to be revised frequently due to changing design, incorporation of new component, lengthy process of land acquisition and cost increase, it said.

Besides, the ministries initially start with a small-scale project and later add new components, which delay the project's implementation.

Mannan expressed resentment that some projects have to be turned back more than twice for revision.

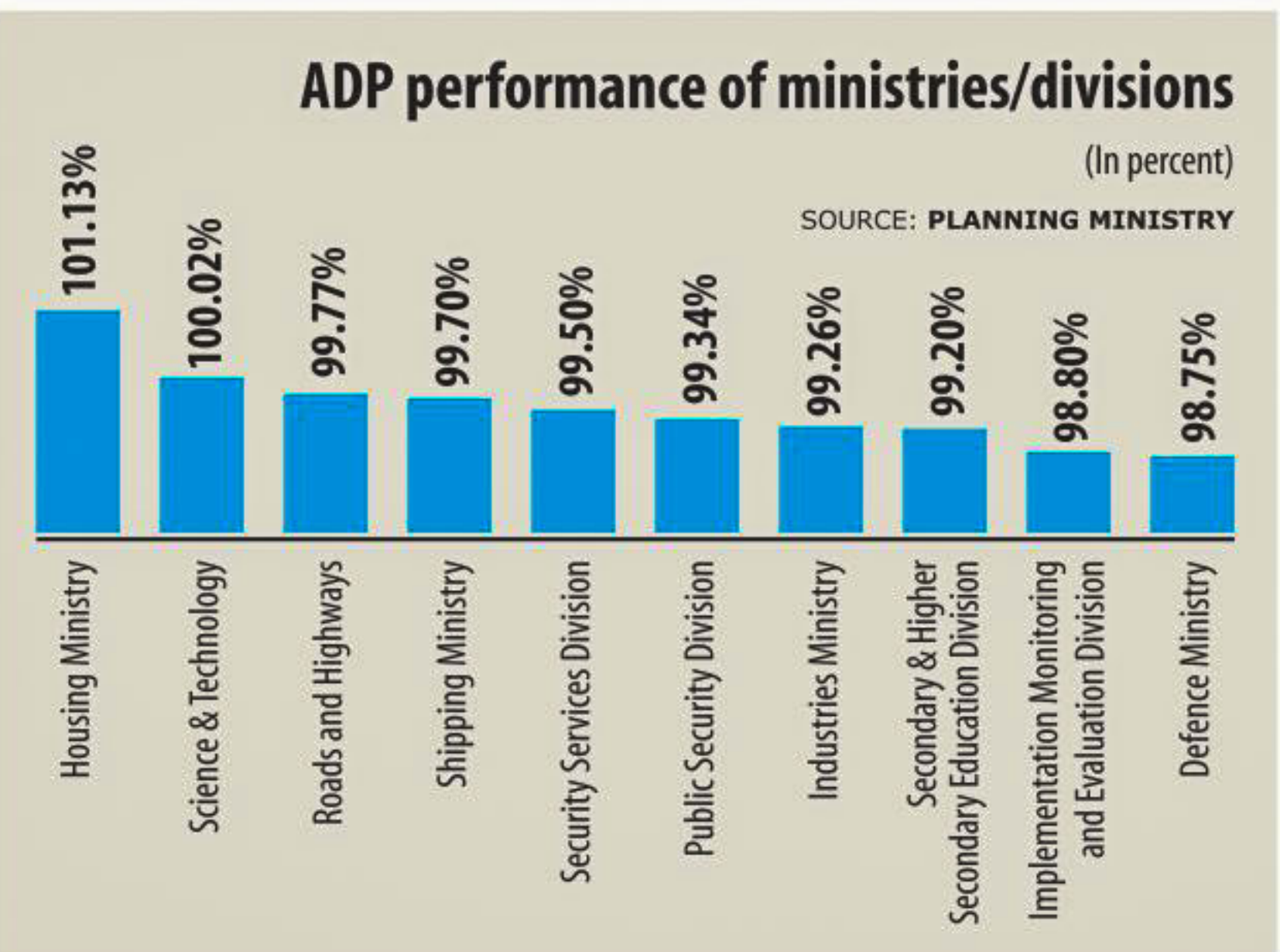
"It is not really a healthy practice to revise a project for thrice," he said, while calling for a list of the frequently revised projects.

Mannan said project activities will now be monitored by way of closed circuit cameras in project sites.

"We will closely monitor the activities regardless of whether the project director is present or not."

A quarterly review meeting will be organised to ensure cent percent implementation of ADP, he said.

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Maintaining steady economic growth a big challenge: ICCB

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Maintaining steady economic growth and reducing inequality are two big challenges for Bangladesh now, Mahbubur Rahman, president of the International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh, said yesterday.

The government has to ensure the equal distribution of the benefits of the economic growth among all and for that more importance should be given to delivery of social services, he said.

Rahman spoke while presenting the ICCB's executive board report at its annual council at a local hotel in Dhaka.

Businesses face regulatory uncertainty on various fronts. Regulatory predictability matters because it makes property rights insecure, thereby constraining investment, he said.

"This leads to uncertainty for businesses - medium-size firms seem to bear the brunt more than large or small firms - and with inconsistencies in policy implementation, it can adversely affect employment growth."

Bangladesh's regulatory system needs the establishment of a technical regulatory oversight body at the centre of government to oversee, lead and report on regulatory reforms, he said.

Attaining the target depends on how quickly Bangladesh can resolve the challenges, Rahman said.

Experts suggest that foreign and local investments should be increased and the activities of economic zones should start immediately, he said.

In order to become an upper middle-income country by 2031 and achieve high-income country status by 2041, Bangladesh will require huge investment in physical



Mahbubur Rahman, centre, president of the International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh, presents ICCB Executive Board Report at its Annual Council 2018, at a local hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

capital, human capital, and innovation enabled by reforms in areas such as financial sector and business regulation, according to the council report.

The council adopted the executive board report and audited financial statements of the ICCB for the year 2018.

In the development update, the World Bank has noted that private sector investment in Bangladesh remains weak. Initiatives are needed to address several challenges, particularly in boosting private sector investment and diversifying exports, Rahman said.

In the development update, the WB expressed concern over the rise of non-performing loans (NPLs). Directed lending, poor risk management and weak corporate governance lead to the rise in NPLs.

The practice of loan rescheduling and write-offs also increased, putting more stress on banks, the ICCB chief said.

To bring stability and discipline to the financial sector, Bangladesh has to ensure Bangladesh Bank's autonomy on regulation, integrate risk-based supervision in the central bank's supervisory framework, tighten rescheduling guidelines and stop

ad-hoc rescheduling, he said.

ICCB Vice President Rokia A Rahman; DCCI President Osama Taseer; Bangladesh Insurance Association's President Sheikh Kabir Hossain; BKMEA former vice president Mohammad Hatem and FICCI Vice President Francois de Maricourt also attended the event.

ICCB board members—Aftab ul Islam, AK Azad, Tapan Chowdhury, Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury (Parvez), Kutubuddin Ahmed and Md Fazlul Hoque—along with ICCB members were also present at the council meeting

Rawhide prices unchanged this Eid

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has kept the prices of different types of rawhides of sacrificial animals during Eid-ul-Azha unchanged from last year.

Tanners would buy per square feet salted cowhide and buffalo rawhide at Tk 45-50 in Dhaka and at Tk 35-40 for outside capital, as per a decision made after a meeting between Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi and leather traders at the secretariat in Dhaka yesterday.

The price of salted skin of castrated goats has been fixed at Tk 18-20 per square feet, while the price of salted skin of un-castrated goat has been fixed at Tk 13-15.

Munshi ordered everybody to play a responsible role in the trade of rawhide during and after Eid-ul-Azha.

He urged the authorities concerned to take effective measures so that the rawhides are not smuggled out of the country.

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Find out reasons behind rod, cement price hike

Ministry asks tariff commission

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The commerce ministry has asked the Bangladesh Tariff Commission to enquire the reasons behind the recent price hike of rod and cement, two essential construction raw materials.

The directive came at the monthly meeting of the commodity price analysis and forecasting cell early last week. The commerce ministry asked BTC to submit a report on the matter.

Yesterday, the prices of 60-grade rod or the better quality ones were Tk 67,000-Tk 70,000 per tonne in Dhaka, up 6.2 percent from a month earlier.

The 40-grade rod was trading at Tk 58,000-Tk 60,000 per tonne in Dhaka yesterday from Tk 56,000-Tk 58,000 a month ago, according to Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

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