

এসআইবিএল সুপার ডিপিএস বিশেষ সঞ্চয় কিম

প্রাকল্পিত মুদাফা:

| | | |
|-------|-------|--------|
| ৩ বছর | ৫ বছর | ১০ বছর |
| ৯.২৫% | ৯.৫০% | ১০% |

ইসলামী শরীয়া'র এর মূদাফা নাতির বিহিনে পরিচালিত।

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Massive cuts in short code tariffs

Charges to drop 77.5pc for govt entities, 50pc for private

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has decided to lower the call charge for public service short codes by 77.5 percent to Tk 0.45 from Tk 2 a minute.

The telecom watchdog also plans to fix the voice tariff at Tk 1 per minute—down from Tk 2—for short codes used by private organisations.

However, seven designated public toll-free numbers were kept out of this list: they would continue to be free like before.

After taking the decisions in two separate meetings, the BTRC has recently directed all mobile operators to implement the new rates.

But the telecom operators have opined that the move will create extra pressure on their revenue basket.

Short code is a three or five-digit number that the government entities or business houses use to deliver their service automatically and in a much hassle-free way round-the-clock.

The BTRC used to allocate this number under the country's number plan.

Currently, there are 72 government agencies that have short code services and only seven of them are toll free, meaning

KEY POINTS

- Public toll-free numbers to remain free
- New rates to squeeze revenue, telecom operators say
- 72 government agencies have short code services
- 3 govt short codes charge at Tk 0.5 a minute, the rest at Tk 2
- Banks, non-banks use 25 such codes at Tk 2-2.34 a minute

they do not charge customers for the calls. Bangladesh Police, the Anti-Corruption Commission, Department of Disaster Management, Bangladesh Election Commission, child helpline service, National Legal Aid Services Organization and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs use the toll-free codes.

Of the rest, three numbers charge Tk 0.50 a minute and the rest Tk 2 a minute. And this revenue is shared with the service providers and other carriers as well under their business agreement.

On the other hand, currently there are 25 commercial short codes allocated by the BTRC, mostly run by banks and some other financial institutions that are also charging Tk 2 to Tk 2.34 per minute.

The telecom regulator moved to cut the short code calling rate after the health ministry sought a reduced rate.

Tax collection off to a slow start

Shortfall stands at Tk 9,317cr in Jul-Aug

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Tax receipts grew only 3.35 percent in the first two months of the fiscal year, leaving a shortfall of Tk 9,317 crore in the National Board of Revenue's annual target of Tk 325,600 crore.

Between July and August, the tax collector logged in Tk 29,620 crore in revenue against the goal of Tk 38,938 crore, much to the annoyance of Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal.

Taxmen blamed the implementation of the new value-added tax law and too many discounts and exemptions extended to various sectors for the slower collection growth.

In the first two months, tax collection from VAT, the biggest source of revenue, grew only 1.02 percent year-on-year to Tk 11,199 crore mainly because of a decline in receipts from cigarettes, the biggest source of VAT and supplementary

duty.

Receipts from customs dropped 1.45 percent year-on-year to Tk 9,572 crore.

"The reasons you are citing for your failure are not a matter to consider," Kamal told a meeting of top NBR officials and commissioners for income tax, VAT and customs at the NBR headquarters yesterday.

The meeting took place three months after Kamal placed his maiden budget, assigning taxmen to collect 45 percent, or Tk 101,708 crore, more than last fiscal year.

Taxmen are responsible for collecting revenue to help the government implement the budget and attain its development goals.

"We have to attain the revenue goals. If we cannot, from where will your salaries come? It is your responsibility," Kamal told revenue officials.

Tax collection was roughly Tk 55,000 crore short of the target in fiscal 2018-19. "How will I recover this Tk 55,000 crore now?" he asked.

Income tax, the second biggest source of revenue, was the bright spot: its collection grew 12.56 percent during the period, according to data from the NBR.

Kamal said the reasons cited behind the sluggish collection growth now cannot be stated in the next meeting.

"Target has to be achieved. You have to come out of the mindset of escape, evade and avoidance. The target we have given is doable," he added.

Referring to the NBR's estimate that there are 4 crore people with taxable incomes, he directed taxmen to take action against those who are not paying tax.

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Stocks slump for fifth day

Dhaka bourse loses Tk 13,031cr in five days

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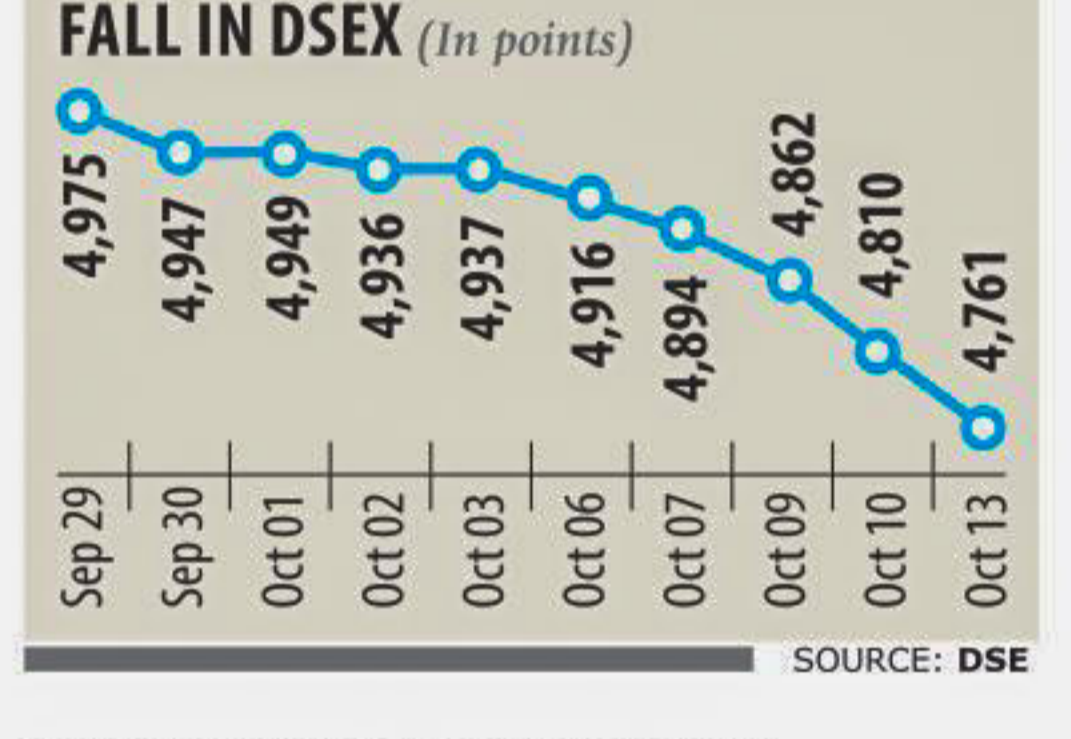
The stock market continued to bleed for the fifth day straight as tension surrounding the regulatory tussles of Grameenphone, the largest company on the Dhaka Stock Exchange, refuses to calm down, affecting the overall mood of the market.

In the last five days, DSEX, the benchmark index of the DSE, lost 175.95 points and Tk 13,031 crore in market capitalisation.

Yesterday, the index lost 48.34 points, or 1 percent, to close at 4,761.87 -- the lowest in three years.

A stock broker upon condition of anonymity said Grameenphone's tug-of-war with the telecom regulator over unpaid dues is a major reason for the slide.

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission has demanded Tk 12,579.95 crore from Grameenphone in unpaid dues after audit into its books since its inception.



announced the matter would be resolved within three weeks.

"But, the tension is still prevailing as the issue remains unsettled. So Grameenphone stock fell in the last few days," the stock broker added.

Grameenphone stocks fell 2.1 percent yesterday to Tk 326. With this fall the index lost about 17 points alone yesterday.

The government's tough decision on the largest listed company impacted the confidence of foreign and institutional investors, said another stock broker.

Moreover, the stock market regulator failed to curb the manipulation on many stocks in recent months, he said, adding that the general investors lost money and big investors lost confidence.

"So, institutional investors are not investing money even after the Bangladesh Bank offered loans to banks to invest in stocks," he added.

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Bangladesh second in South Asia in GDP growth: WB

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The Bangladesh economy is forecast to achieve the second highest growth rate this fiscal year in South Asia, the World Bank said in its biennial regional economic update yesterday.

Bangladesh's gross domestic product is projected to grow at 7.2 percent this fiscal year and 7.3 percent the following year, according to the latest edition of the 'South Asia Economic Focus, Making (De) centralisation Work'.

Bhutan topped the list with an estimated 7.4 percent growth this fiscal year.

"The outlook is clouded by rising financial sector vulnerability, but the economy is likely to maintain growth above 7 percent, supported by a robust macroeconomic framework,

GROWTH FORECAST FOR FY2020

In %

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Bhutan | 7.4 |
| Bangladesh | 7.2 |
| India | 6.9 |
| Nepal | 6.4 |
| Maldives | 5.5 |
| Sri Lanka | 3.3 |
| Afghanistan | 3.0 |
| Pakistan | 2.4 |

SOURCE: WORLD BANK

that ended in June, in the highest expansion in the region.

The fiscal year ends in June in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan, and for India it is in March.

Bangladesh will also clock the highest growth in fiscal 2020-21 too, according to the report.

In India, after the broad-based deceleration in the first quarter of the fiscal year, growth is projected to fall to 6 percent come March next year.

Growth is then expected to gradually recover to 6.9 percent in fiscal 2020-21 and to 7.2 percent in the following year.

Pakistan's growth is projected to deteriorate further to 2.4 percent this fiscal year. In Sri Lanka, growth is expected to soften to 2.7 percent in 2019.

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BASIS recognises ICT icons

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The Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) Saturday honoured 69 companies and individuals in 35 categories for their extraordinary contribution to innovations and business solutions in the ICT sector.

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain and State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak handed over the awards among the winners at the Bangladesh National ICT Awards 2019.

BASIS also declared 29 of the awardee companies as champions in 27 categories for their outstanding performance, at the event held at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden.

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Union leaders urge Sanofi to stay

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The union leaders of Sanofi Bangladesh yesterday demanded the French pharma giant back away from its plan to close its operations in the country as it has been a profitable venture.

In a letter to the Sanofi board recently, Muin Uddin Mazumder, managing director of Sanofi Bangladesh, and Charles Billard, chief financial officer of Sanofi India and South Asia, informed their intent to sell their stakes in Bangladesh for strategic reasons.

Sanofi has been making profits for many years and it proves that the workers cannot be made responsible for any potential winding up of the factory.

Rather, problems at the top level of the company may influence the management to leave the country, Abdur Razzaque, president of the Sramik-O-Karmachari Union, told reporters.

The platform of the workers and employees of Sanofi Bangladesh organised a press conference at the National Press Club in Dhaka.

Razzaque said Sanofi has not served any notice or letter to the workers expressing its intention to close the operations yet.

"However, we were called in a meeting by the managing director who informed

us that the company has been planning to shut its operation in Bangladesh."

The management said Sanofi is going to leave the country mainly because of lower profit, he said. "Sanofi has been making profit but it wants even higher profit."

Razzaque said their principal demand is that Sanofi does not leave the country.

"Let the company continue its business as it has been producing life-saving drugs since 1958."

About 1,100 workers are employed at the multinational company's plant in Tongi.

Nevertheless, if Sanofi leaves Bangladesh ultimately, it will have to pay compensation to employees properly, Razzaque said.

Whatever the tenure of the services, the drug-maker will have to pay the salary and other benefits to the employees for next 10 years, including the current service benefits, he added.

The employees will hold rallies and forum human-chains if the demands are not met as soon as possible, according to Razzaque.

In his written speech, Golam Mostafa, general secretary of the Sanofi Karmachari Union, said the departure of Sanofi would have a bad impact on the foreign direct investment.

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