



The Global Mobile Broadband Forum 2022 in Bangkok drew mobile network carriers, vertical industry leaders, and ecosystem partners from around the world to discuss how to make 5G a commercial success. Inset, an official of Huawei explains how doctors can perform remote consultations and examine reports remotely using 5G technology.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bangkok broadband forum flaunts 5G might

Huawei demonstrates popular applications

MAHMUDUL HASAN from Bangkok

An unmanned oil drilling site being operated remotely using 5G technology, a live boxing match using a virtual reality headset with ultra low latency and high bandwidth of 5G and control of robots in real time – these demonstrations marked the first day of Huawei's two-day 13th Global Mobile Broadband Forum in Bangkok.

These are prototype usages of 5G technology. But in reality, there has been a lot of advancements.

Thai mobile operator True's smart ambulance can transmit all crucial data such as heartbeat and blood pressure of a patient to the doctor in real-time through 5G once the patient is boarded onto an ambulance, enabling the doctor to plan in advance over what they have to do to take care of the patient.

Experts said 5G technology would rule the roost in the coming days with robust usage in industrial automation, connecting IoT devices, revolutionising healthcare and better user experiences.

And 5G is beating all the expansion records of other generation technology with its emphatic usage cases.

"5G has grown faster than any previous generation of mobile technology," said Huawei's rotating chairman, Ken Hu, at the opening session.

"In just three years, we've seen solid progress in network deployment, consumer services, and industrial applications," he said.

"We need to work together to fully unleash the power of 5G networks and expand into services like cloud and system integration. Together, we can drive leapfrog development in 5G networks, applications, and the industry as a whole," he said.

In just a little over three years of the commercial launch of 5G, there are now more than 230 career networks and 700 million 5G users.

In spite of this, Bangladesh has been lagging behind in rolling out 5G as the government auctioned the 5G spectrum a few months earlier. No operator has launched 5G commercially.

In Bangladesh, operators are still rolling out 4G, with numerous customers claiming they are getting lower data speeds.

The penetration of 5G devices is also low. Although over 90 per cent of the local smartphone devices are met by local

manufacturing, only 3,000 units of 5 mobile phone brands were assembled in the country in July and August, according to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

In those two months, a total of 50 lakh units of feature phones and smartphones were manufactured in the country.

On the contrary, this year in the second quarter, 5G phones made up over 50 per cent of global smartphone shipments.

These networks and users are growing as the market is bigger than ever before. Compared with 4G, 5G networks are 10 times faster. 5G users are already consuming two times more data than those on 4G networks.

In telecommunications, consumer services still account for the bulk of carrier revenue. As 5G becomes more prevalent, its vastly superior experience is driving new shifts in consumer behavior, including a sharp rise in high-definition video traffic.

New mobile applications that take advantage of 5G's greater speeds and lower latency have doubled average user data consumption (DOU) and are increasing average revenue per user by 20 per cent to 40 per cent, contributing

to steady growth in carrier revenue from connectivity.

At the same time, B2B 5G applications are also becoming a new engine for carrier revenue growth, producing considerable value in industries like oil and gas, manufacturing, and transportation.

In 2021, for example, Chinese carriers brought in over \$500 million in new revenue from more than 3,000 industrial 5G projects. These projects also generated 10 times that amount from related data and integrated ICT services.

The business-to-business 5G applications are poised to become the fastest-growing revenue stream for carriers. 5G is enabling new service scenarios, applications, and business models, paving the way for unprecedented growth opportunities in the industry.

The Global Mobile Broadband Forum 2022 is hosted by Huawei, together with its industry partners.

This annual forum gathers mobile network carriers, vertical industry leaders, and ecosystem partners from around the world to discuss how to make 5G a commercial success, as well as other high-priority industry topics like green development, intelligence, and 5G evolution.

Foreign aid disbursement drops 30pc

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The disbursement of foreign aid for development projects in Bangladesh has dropped by 30 per cent year-on-year in the first three months of the current fiscal year.

During this July-September period, Bangladesh's development partners disbursed \$1,349 million for the country, as per data from the Economic Relations Division (ERD) released yesterday.

The government repaid foreign debts amounting to \$526 million in the first quarter, down 11 per cent year-on-year.

However, the commitment of development partners also increased by 331 per cent year-on-year from \$94.03 million in the past three months.

Among the country's development partners, Japan disbursed the highest amount of foreign aid, \$450 million, for a number of mega projects, including the Matarbari coal-fired power plant, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib railway bridge, and a third terminal at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

China disbursed the second highest, \$270 million, while World Bank \$190 million and Asian Development Bank \$160 million.

3-day US trade show begins tomorrow

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A three-day trade show will begin in the capital from tomorrow to showcase American products and services in Bangladesh and give a boost to bilateral trade.

The 28th edition of the show jointly organised by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) and the US embassy in Dhaka will be held at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka.

The show is open from 10:00am to 8:00pm and entry free has been fixed at Tk 30 per person. Students in uniform or with identity cards will be allowed free entry.

The show will exhibit more than 100 US products, represented by 44 exhibitors from home and abroad, Syed Ershad Ahmed, president of the chamber, said at a media briefing yesterday when US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter D Haas was present.

Ahmed said this year's trade show was of particular significance because it was the first US trade show in Dhaka being held in person since the pandemic emerged.

The participating companies represent sectors including energy, banking, financial services and food and beverage.

At the briefing, the US ambassador said this trade show would be an opportunity to showcase high-quality products provided by the US companies in Bangladesh. It will help build up a good relationship between Bangladesh and the US, he said.

The US is ranked as the top export destination for Bangladeshi products, and two-way trade between the US and Bangladesh totalled \$10.64 billion in 2021, which is remarkable as 30 years back bilateral trade was very poor, he said.

IDRA spots nine problems

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secure business, which hurt their profits, industry insiders say.

With this backdrop, the IDRA had issued a circular in 2012 barring insurance companies from paying more than 15 per cent of the premium as commission to their agents.

However, most insurers disregarded the directive, prompting the regulator to issue another notice in late 2019 instructing them to comply for the sake of the sector's welfare.

Subsequently, in a meeting with the Bangladesh Insurance Association that same year, insurance companies collectively agreed to follow the order in a bid to keep the sector alive.

However, most of them are still paying high commission rates through several ways, the IDRA said.

Besides, some of the companies allow deferred payments for premium, which is another big problem for the sector.

Also, several insurers show lower premium income that what they actually get and spend the funds on paying commission and other costs.

To address these issues, the IDRA previously ordered non-life insurers to launch an e-receipt system to ensure that the proper amount of premium

is deposited to their respective bank accounts in a timely manner.

The IDRA went on to say that several insurers do not settle claims on time and sometimes even show fraudulent settlement papers without fully making payments in order to spend it on their agent's commission.

Meanwhile, some of the companies are spending more on operating costs than what is allowed by regulations in this regard.

Another major problem for the sector is that some of the insurers do not reinsure their policies, which places a bigger burden on the company as the risks are unshared.

The IDRA had ordered insurers in the country to reinsure their policies with Sadharan Bima Corporation and a foreign company, which would each take 50 per cent of the burden.

A number of insurers do not maintain the proper premium rate in opening policies while some are not recruiting employees following the IDRA rules and regulations.

Several insurers do not maintain bank accounts as per the IDRA circular in this regard, which states that each insurer can open a maximum of three accounts with three separate banks to deposit their

premium income.

Not only are some insurers flaunting the IDRA rules and regulators, they are even engaged in malpractice that is denting the whole industry, said SM Azizul Hossain, managing director and chief executive officer of Peoples Insurance Company Limited.

"Due to their foul play, good businesspeople are facing problems in the market. So, it is becoming difficult to do business," he added.

Hossain then said that competition has become harder in this situation and so, the business of good companies has fallen.

"If every company complies with the laws, then the whole insurance industry will be benefited," he added.

BSEC to probe

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The two-member committee comprises Mohammad Rakibur Rahman, additional director of the BSEC, and Foysal Islam, assistant director.

The committee was ordered to complete the inquiry and submit the report to the commission within 20 working days.

EU countries look to map out path to gas price cap

REUTERS, Brussels

European Union energy ministers will discuss a bloc-wide gas price cap on Tuesday, attempting to navigate their next steps although it is likely to be weeks before any final decisions.

Europe has been scrambling to tame high energy prices after Russia slashed gas supplies following its invasion of Ukraine – sending gas prices skywards and pushing European power prices to record levels in August.

With no legal proposal for a price cap on the table yet, ministers meeting in Luxembourg are expected to debate the principles of how an EU gas price limit could work, as well as possible drawbacks.

But gas costs have tumbled in recent days, amid mild weather and as countries have filled storage tanks. Some EU diplomats

suggested this could dampen momentum to cap energy costs, but others said a cap was still needed to guard against potential price spikes as Europe heads into winter.

The European Commission last week asked for countries' approval to draft a proposal for a price limit on trades at the Title Transfer Facility (TTF) Dutch gas hub, which could be triggered if prices spiked.

A few days later, EU country leaders requested "concrete decisions" from their ministers and Brussels on this idea.

EU diplomats said Tuesday's talks could give the Commission the green light on that proposal, but some countries were seeking more details on how a price cap would work.

"I'm missing a lot of things within the proposal... the Commission should deliver the remaining parts

of the puzzle," said Czech industry minister Jozef Sikela, who chairs Tuesday's meeting.

"I am slightly disappointed that we are not going as fast forward as possible," he added.

Ahead of Tuesday's talks, the EU Commission shared a document with countries that cautioned against another type of price cap, for gas used to generate power, which it said could cause an increase in gas use.

One senior EU official said it was not yet clear when Brussels would make a firm proposal on a price cap. Any proposal would need to be negotiated by EU countries, possibly with the aim of approving it at an emergency meeting of energy ministers in November.

The benchmark Dutch front-month gas contract traded at a low of 93.35 euros/MWh on Monday, its lowest level since June, although still far higher than prices in 2021.

Agri-tech startup Agroshift

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need for high-quality and fresher food. Agroshift is poised to solve this critical problem at the right juncture in the country's growth.

"Our unique model eliminates the need for traditional retail touchpoints, instead leveraging a combination of digital ordering kiosks and lean drop-off points within factory premises. This plug and play digital grocery solution for workers is getting appreciation from factory management due to savings, access to quality food, and overall improvement in worker wellbeing," said Rameez Hoque.

Omer Zabit, principal at Shoroq Partners, said: "We're excited to back

Agroshift in their vision to serve millions of people working in the agriculture and textile sectors across Bangladesh. Agroshift's customers are the driving force behind these sizable economic sectors and we're humbled to support the team's ambition."

"Agriculture is one of the cornerstones of the Bangladeshi economy—with over \$40 billion of output—and Agroshift's micro-logistics model is the most effective we have seen in helping drive value for both producers and consumers—especially those in one of the country's most valuable sectors: garments workers," added Rahat Ahmed.

Cyclone Sitrang damages Aman crops, fish farms

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"Overall losses are estimated to be Tk 68 crore," he said.

Dhirito Sundar Roy, a fish grower in Batiaghata upazila in Khulna, the southwest coastal division, said the cyclone caused a loss of around six maunds of shrimps and two maunds of fish for him.

Bipradas Bairagi, another fish farmer in the upazila, had a semi-intensive shrimp farm in two ponds, which have been washed away.

The farmer, who borrowed Tk 200,000 from an NGO and Tk

50,000 from a relative, was uncertain about how he would repay the loans.

District Fisheries Officer Joydeb Kumar Paul said Paikgacha and Koyra are two other upazilas in the district that have been affected by the tidal wave resulting from the cyclone.

"Providing incentives to crop producers who suffered losses from the cyclone is under the consideration of the government," added Chowdhury.

Our Barishal correspondent Sushanta Ghosh contributed to the report.

US consumer confidence ebbs

REUTERS, Washington

US consumer confidence ebbed in October after two straight monthly increases amid rising concerns about inflation and a possible recession next year, a survey showed on Tuesday.

The Conference Board said its consumer confidence index fell to 102.5 this month from 107.8 in September. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index at 106.5.

Consumers' 12-month inflation expectations rose to 7.0 per cent

from 6.8 per cent last month. The survey's present situation index, based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions, declined sharply to 138.9 from 150.2 in September.

Its expectations index, based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business and labor market conditions, fell to 78.1 from 79.5 last month.

The expectations index remains below a reading of 80, a level associated with a recession and suggests that the risks of a downturn could be rising.