

Mobile subscriber numbers grow for 3rd straight month

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Mobile subscriber numbers witnessed a solid growth in March, thanks to a strong performance by all but state-owned operator Teletalk.

The three private mobile network operators -- Grameenphone, Robi and Banglalink -- collectively added about 13 lakh customers, taking the total to 18.38 crore. This is the third consecutive month mobile subscriber numbers in Bangladesh have grown.

From July to December last year, the customers subscriber base had declined by over 35 lakh. Subscriber here means a biometric verified subscriber or subscription which was active (voice, data, SMS etc) at least once in the preceding 90 days.

Of the over 18 crore SIMs now in circulation, 12 crore are of unique users, Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar told The Daily Star recently. A person can use as many as 15 SIMs.

Third-placed operator in terms of its share of customers, Banglalink continued to be the top performer in customer acquisition securing 5.5 lakh new customers followed by Robi Axiata with 4.4 lakh and Grameenphone 3.5 lakh.

Banglalink, which crossed a milestone of four crore subscribers in January, had 4.13 crore customers at the end of March.

On a year-on-year basis, the number of customers of the operator grew by 8.68 per cent, the highest among the operators, in March.

Earlier, its officials attributed this uptick to the operator's ongoing investment in network expansion, enabling customers to experience fastest 4G, alongside utilisation of innovative and quality digital services.

With the new 4.4 lakh customers,



second largest operator Robi's subscriber numbers stood at 5.55 lakh in March.

The rate of switching to Robi as primary operator has increased recent times due to our optimised network capacity and enhanced quality of services, Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer at Robi Axiata Ltd.

"We are also seeing the subscribers'

optimism in using our network to consuming digital service such as OTT content, gaming and online news.

Previously user was solely concentrated on social media and YouTube," he added.

With 3.5 lakh new customers in March, top operator Grameenphone took its total number of customers to almost 8.03 crore.

This was the third consecutive month

of growth witnessed by Grameenphone after months of downturn since July last year due to a ban on its SIM sales.

On June 29 last year, the telecom regulator banned Grameenphone's SIM sales until it "improves its quality of service, including bringing down the call drop rate". The ban was eventually lifted on January 2 this year.

Uttara Finance officials

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For instance, the total amount of loans provided by the NBFI was Tk 1,877 crore till December 2019 as per its balance sheet. But the BB found the actual amount to be Tk 3,802 crore.

The company is yet to publish its financial reports for 2020 and 2021. The quarterly report was published up to the third quarter of 2020.

Its net profit dropped 81 per cent year-on-year to Tk 21 crore in the January to September period of 2020. It was Tk 109 crore during the identical nine-month period in the previous year.

Among the top officials allegedly involved with the embezzlement, Uttara Finance's Deputy Managing Director Zakir Hossain's name came up several times in the probe report along with Shamsul Arefin's name.

The KPMG report said Uttara Finance invested in the shares of JMI Hospital, Beka Garments and Rangpur Distilleries where the NBFI made extra payments of Tk 2.29 crore.

"This may be an indication that money laundering has taken place," the auditor said, adding that Hossain, Arefin and some other officials were involved in the case.

Contacted, Hossain told The Daily Star: "Which scam are you talking about? I was not involved in any scam. I only signed some vouchers."

"I am not involved in any scam, so Uttara Finance has not taken action against me yet."

"The new board has had to take some time initially to understand the situation at Uttara Finance," Mohammad Maksudur Rahman, chairman of the new board of Uttara Finance, told The Daily Star, when asked about the delay.

He said 24 top officials have been identified for the scam.

"Three officials have already resigned. We are going to send suspension letters to nine officials on Sunday and five others will be suspended by the middle of May."

"The rest of the officials, including Hossain, will be suspended by June. None of the top officials responsible for the irregularities will be spared," Rahman said.

The new board has already changed its law firm and appointed Attorneys, a legal and management consultancy firm, to get proper guidance so that it can take action against the people responsible for the scam.

"A few officials were involved in the irregularities are now helping

us recover the embezzled funds. So, they have not been punished yet," Rahman said, without disclosing their names.

"Who would have run the company had we removed them instantly?" he said. "We have appointed officials in some posts."

The new board has recouped funds to the tune of Tk 500 crore and is hopeful of getting back 95 per cent of the total funds embezzled.

"The new board is trying to ensure that deposits funds are safe," said Rahman.

The chairman said the central bank has not approved the financial reports of Uttara Finance for 2019.

As a result, the NBFI is facing troubles. This is because until the financial reports for the year get the regulatory nod, the reports for 2020, 2021 and 2022 could not be prepared.

"We are not being able to hold annual general meetings. The stock has remained in the "Z" category in the stock market."

If a company fails to provide at least a 10 per cent dividend or hold AGM, its stock is downgraded to the "Z" category.

Uttara Finance shares closed at Tk 33.80 on the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday.

New record in e-GP

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The procuring entities and tenderers across the country have embraced the electronic system positively as it has removed all physical and operational hassles, the IMED said in a press release.

There has been an exponential growth in the numbers of invitations, submissions and opening of tenders and contracts through e-GP since 2012, it said.

As of today, a total of 1,05,569 tenderers and 11,174 procuring entity offices registered with the e-GP system since its establishment.

So far, a total of 6,86,703 tenders worth Tk 7,07,104 crore were invited in the e-GP system.

The e-GP is saving \$600 million annually whereas about 1,053 million pages of paper have been saved and carbon dioxide emissions were cut by about 1.53 lakh tonnes, according to the IMED. Besides, the procurement lead time has also come down to 57 days from 100 days, it added.

Margin loan rules for stocks

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saying that customers can get margin loans for the stocks of a company that has a paid-up capital of more than Tk 30 crore.

Paid-up capital is the amount of money a company has received from shareholders in exchange for shares of stock.

The PE ratio is the ratio for valuing a company that measures its current share price relative to its per-share earnings.

All major sectors except RMG suffer export drop

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Industry (MCCI), said high inflation in the western market, particularly in Europe, the main market for Bangladesh's exports, reduced the buying capacity of consumers.

"Leather products and footwear are not essential items. Consumers are cutting back on their expenses. They are tightening their belts," he added.

Islam then said inventories of importers who bought goods to meet the pent-up demand after the easing of coronavirus restrictions are yet exhausted, which has kept their appetite for new products low.

Besides, manufacturing costs have increased for price hikes for electricity, gas and other costs but buyers are not willing to pay higher prices, added Islam, also managing director of Picard Bangladesh Ltd, a leading leather goods exporter.

Apart from leather, export earnings from frozen and live fish declined 20 per cent to \$371 million in the July-April period of the current fiscal compared to the same months of the year prior.

This is mainly because of a slump in shipments of shrimp amid declining demand for locally grown black tiger shrimp and a fall in prices in the international market in the face of oversupply of white-leg shrimp, also called vannamei, exporters said earlier.

Agricultural product exports dipped 29 per cent year-on-year to \$741 million in the first 10 months of

the fiscal year, according to EPB data.

Including fresh vegetable and fruits, shipments of all major products, except tobacco and spices, plummeted.

Debasish Singha, head of business (export) at Danish Foods Ltd, owned by Partex Star Group, said locally made dry foods have become uncompetitive with competing countries in the export market because of the increased cost of raw materials and higher utility cost.

"We are failing to compete," he said, adding that the increased cost for imported goods offset the gains they had for the depreciation of taka against dollar.

In case of jute and jute goods, earnings fell 20 per cent to \$770 million in July-April of the current fiscal year from \$966 million a year ago, showed EPB data.

The global economic slowdown, shrinking demand for the main export item jute yarn from carpet makers in countries including the main buyer Turkey, and the persisting anti-dumping duty imposed by India continued to keep exports lower, industry operators said earlier.

Looking ahead, Islam said it will be difficult to have sustainable growth in overall exports this fiscal year, ending on June 30, 2023.

"If it continues, we may not achieve the export growth target this fiscal year," he added.

Bangladesh aims to fetch \$58 billion through exports during the current fiscal year.

ACI's earnings plunge 65% in Jul-Mar

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

ACI Limited, one of the leading conglomerates in Bangladesh, suffered a 65 per cent drop in earnings in the July-March period of the financial year of 2022-23.

With interests in pharmaceuticals, motors and agri-business to supermarket retailing and consumer goods, the company attributed the drop to spiralling costs for currency devaluation, hikes of energy prices and a rise in import prices.

ACI Ltd recorded an earning of Tk 25.9 crore in the nine months. In the same period a year ago, it was Tk 74.8 crore.

The company sold Tk 8,557 crore-worth products during the period, which was 23 per cent higher year-on-year. However, its cost of sales increased at a higher pace. Its cost to produce the goods sold soared 28 per cent.

The company said its cost of business rose owing to higher import costs for devaluation of the taka against the US dollar and increase in energy prices and financing costs.

Brac Bank sees 32% profit growth


STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Brac Bank achieved a 32 per cent year-on-year growth in net profit in 2022.


The private bank and its subsidiaries recorded a profit of Tk 612 crore in the last financial year, up from Tk 465 crore in 2021, Brac Bank said in a press release. Brac Bank's standalone net profit after tax was Tk 576 crore, representing a 3.90 per cent increase from the previous year's earnings.

Despite the stressed industry conditions, the bank delivered strong balance sheet growth, with customer deposits growing 24 per cent and loans and advances increasing 28 per cent, it said.

Brac Bank Managing Director and CEO Selim RF Hussain said the growth in deposits and loans is well above the industry average and this, is a testament to the customer's trust in the bank and its long term sustainability.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Chattogram City Corporation
Tigerpass, Chattogram
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উন্নয়নের গণতন্ত্র
শেখ হাসিনার মন্ত্রণালয়

Memo No. 46.11.1600.002.14.23.0031

Date: 03/05/2023

e-Tender Notice-DRIIDARP/2022-23/07

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works:

Package/Lot No.	Tender ID	Identification of lot	Tender document last selling date and time	Tender closing & opening date and time
APP ID No. 184813(48)	826563	Development of Colonel Jones Road, Amanat Ullah Shah Para Road, Sagonika Shilpo Area Road at 10 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(47)	826562	Development of Borda Boswas Road bylane, Mojumdar Bari Road, Ghosh Bari bylane, Pudbo Das Para Road, Choto Kali Bari Mohasomshan & Seba Khola Mandir Road, Kalir Hat Road last part with drain at 10 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(46)	826556	Development of Proshanti R/A and Mostafa Hakim College Road at 10 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(37)	825615	Development of roads and drains of Riaz Uddin Bazaar and development of Station Road with RCC drain in 31 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(38)	825613	Development of Islamia College culvert to Homeopathic College Road, CDA Bhaban to New Market Circle Road & Abdul Aziz Road (p-2)	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(36)	825612	Development of DC Road, Ahmadr Rahman Road and Shantinagar Iqbal Mosque adjacent road at 17 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(35)	825611	Construction of Abhaymitra Ghat (in front of Sehok Colony) culvert, RC Church Road culvert, Yakub Nagar Road culvert and Mahim Das Road culvert at 33 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(39)	825610	Development of a) Boddho Mandir Road, b) Love Lane Road drain, Pioneer Road drain, Naval Avenue road and footpath, c) Batali Road Bodir Kha Goli, d) Batali Road Goalpara Oniket Club Goli drain and road, e) Tulatuli byland road and drain slab construction, f) Sayod Ahmed Chowdhury lane road up to Puja Mandir (1 st Part) at 22 No. Enayet Bazar Ward.	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(41)	825608	Development & construction of Chowdhury Nagar R/A Road and Culvert, Ershad Nagar Road, Road from Marine City to Mezbah Ulom Madrasa & Culvert construction, Bayezid R/A Road, Banglabazar Road at 2 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(40)	825609	Development of Hamid Shah Mazar Road, Munsef Ali Road, Dali Para Abdul Malek Road, Sharif Uddin Awalila Mazar connecting road (Khalifa Para), Abdur Rahman Soudagar Bashir Saudagar Road in Bepari Para, Kabir Shah Majar Road, Hazrat Sultan Shah Mazar connecting road, Mawlana Mozammel Haque Huzur house road, Eshak Shah Majar road (Shamshepara) at 04 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(42)	825607	Development of Abdul Nabi Chowdhury Road, Islam Mistry Bari Road, Hamidchor Shahji Majar Road, Afjol Majhi Road, Barishal Bajar & Bisik Industrial area road, Brammonsaipara Road, Samsul Alam Contractor Bari bylane at 05 No. Ward.	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(45)	825605	Development of Majhirghat Road at 29 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(45)	821438	1 No. Supariwala, West Suariwalapara & TNT Goli Road development, Dewanhat bypass road development (Dewanhat to Postar Par) at 23 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00
APP ID No. 184813(34)	825606	Construction of South Para main road VIP part to Konar Doka to Chinese Ghat & west side Molla Bari drain at 41 No. Ward	07-June-2023 12:00	07-June-2023 14:00

The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and offline hard copies will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches up to particular date and time specified on the tender notice.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

CCC/PRD-155/22-23
Size: 12"x4Col
GD-779

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"Different Roads and Important
Infrastructural Development including
Airport Road under
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