

Robi makes Tk 42cr profit in Q1

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Robi Axiata Ltd, the second largest mobilephone operator in Bangladesh, made Tk 42.03 crore profit in the first quarter of 2023.

The profit stood at Tk 39.83 crore in the January-March quarter of 2022, the unaudited financial statements showed.

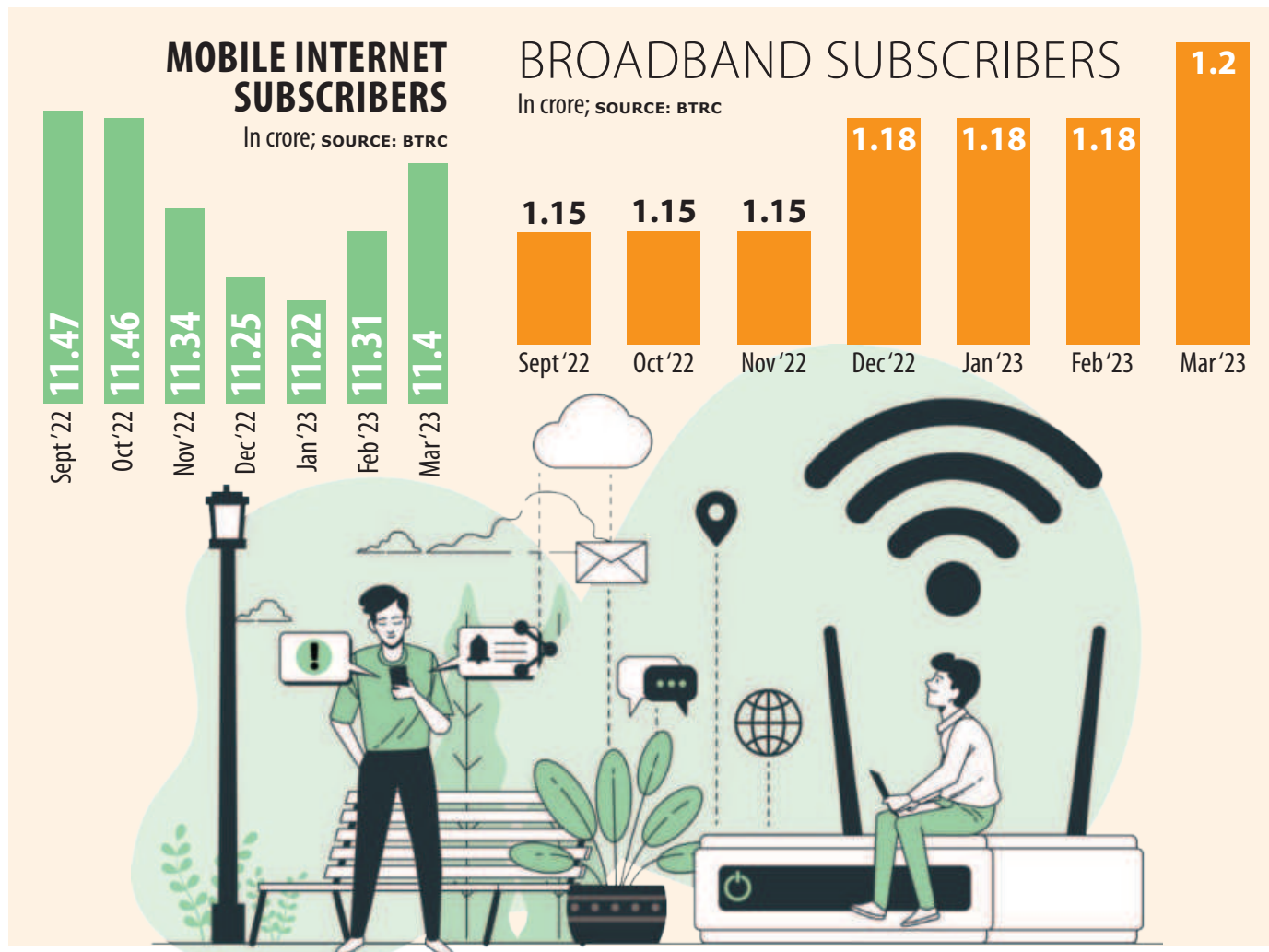
The board of Robi Axiata approved the financial statements at a meeting yesterday.

Revenue grew more than 16.25 per cent to Tk 2,347.74 crore in January-March. It was Tk 2,018.92 crore in the same quarter a year earlier.

The net asset value per share of Robi improved to Tk 12.90 on March 31 this year from Tk 12.72 on the same day a year ago.

The net operating cash flows per share rose to Tk 1.83 in the first quarter of 2023 from Tk 1.61 in the identical three-month period of 2022.

Shares of Robi closed unchanged at Tk 30 on the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday. It had 5.55 crore subscribers as of March.



Number of internet users rises in March

Focus on digital services other than social media

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The number of internet subscribers rose in March as mobile network operators and broadband service providers both bagged new customers due to increased usage of different digital services other than social media.

The number of internet users jumped by over 11 lakh to 12.61 crore in March compared to that in the previous month, according to data of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

Earlier in February, the number of internet subscribers in Bangladesh saw its first rebound after six months thanks to a jump in mobile internet users. But in March, broadband user numbers also underwent growth.

Mobile operators fetched about 9 lakh customers in March to reach 1.14 crore.

"We are now observing a new trend among customers," said Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer at Robi Axiata Ltd.

"They are now using the internet for different types of digital services such as over-the-top media, gaming etc. This is

giving a boost to the subscriber number base," he said.

"Earlier, mobile internet subscribers generally used our service for social media and YouTube," he added.

The rise in internet subscriptions in March is a breath of fresh air for the mobile and broadband operators in the country.

User numbers have been on the decline from August last year to January this year as people had tightened their belts amid skyrocketing inflation.

Besides, a SIM sales ban on Grameenphone in the last six months of 2022 also contributed to a drop in the overall internet subscriber base.

Officials of mobile network operators say their massive network expansion drives ensured a better quality of service, boosting data usage at the same time.

For example, market leader Grameenphone recently completed the deployment of an additional 2,000 base transceiver stations, bringing its total to over 20,000, which is the highest among all operators.

Optical fibre connectivity covers over 35 per cent of its network, up from 17 per cent a year ago. Banglalink has also undergone

massive network expansion.

"We attribute this uptick in customer preferences to our ongoing investment in network expansion," said Taimur Rahman, chief corporate and regulatory affairs officer of Banglalink recently.

The rise in internet subscriptions in March is a breath of fresh air for operators as user numbers had been on the decline from August last year to January this year

"...enabling our customers to experience Ookla certified fastest 4G while utilising our innovative and quality digital services," he said.

It recently completed the deployment of 4,000 base transceiver stations, taking its total to more than 14,500. The expansion resulted in a roughly 40 per cent expansion of its total coverage.

Robi Axiata also deployed hundreds of new towers throughout last year, taking its

total number of towers to nearly 15,500.

However, customers of mobile and broadband, especially those who live outside Dhaka, have complained of experiencing low quality of services in recent times.

Meanwhile, broadband internet subscribers rose by 2 lakh to 1.20 crore in March.

The BTRC provides internet subscriber information on a quarterly basis.

"We have seen the inflow of new customers in January and February, which mainly contributed to the quarterly growth," said Md Aminul Hakim, chief executive officer at Amber IT, a top broadband internet service provider.

"January particularly saw a surge in new customers acquisition as the educational institutions opened after a month of closure," he added.

Md Emdadul Hoque, president of the Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh, said the ISPs have faced difficulty in importing equipment after the war started in Ukraine.

"For that we have struggled to expand our networks. Now this problem has been solved and we are expanding the network in the rural areas," he added.

Dilwar H Choudhury re-elected board audit committee chairman of Bank Asia

STAR BUSINESS DESK



Dilwar H Choudhury has been re-elected as the chairman of the board audit committee of Bank Asia Limited at a meeting of the Board of Directors recently.

Choudhury had been a career banker with 35 years of experience in eight countries in Asia, Africa and Europe.

In the last leg of his career, he was the managing director (current charge) of City Bank Limited, said a press release.

Previously, he managed three full-fledged banking operations as the chief executive officer in Turkey, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

He was also a banking consultant for KPMG Bangladesh, a global network of professional firms providing audit, tax and advisory services, in 2004-2005.

Currently, Choudhury offers freelancing service in the areas of merger and acquisition, organisational development and credit portfolio audit of banks.

10% cashback on Nagad recharge for flyover toll payment

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Nagad offers a 10 per cent cashback on the recharge of RFID tolling tags using its gateway with a view to encouraging digital toll payments for traveling on the Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover in Dhaka.

To avail the hassle-free toll payment service, customers first need to get registered and open an account, said a press release.

Orion Infrastructure Limited signed an agreement with Nagad last year to digitalise toll collection for Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover, reducing traffic congestion at the toll plaza of the country's longest flyover.

"Vehicles can directly cross the flyover by availing this cashless service, which will make toll payments hassle-free. This will also save time for customers and give an added boost to the economy as a whole," said Md Shihab Uddin Chowdhury, chief commercial officer of Nagad.

"We have introduced the digital toll collection system, which will ease hassles at toll plazas and save time for both drivers and passengers. I think Nagad's 10 per cent cashback will encourage more people to use the RFID-based toll payment system," said Wing Commander (ret'd) Md Erfanul Azim, vice president of Orion Group.



Md Humayun Kabir, deputy managing director of Walton Hi-Tech Industries, and actor Amin Khan, brand ambassador of Marcel, inaugurated a showroom named "Tamim Electronics" at Kathgara Bazar in Ashulia, Savar on Saturday. Among others, Md Shakhawat Hossen, in-charge of Marcel Distributor Network (North Zone), Shafiqullah Liton, divisional sales manager of Marcel, comedian Abu Hena Rony, and Abu Rayhan, proprietor of Tamim Electronics, were present.

PHOTO: WALTON HI-TECH INDUSTRIES

Unions demand Tk 23,000 minimum wage

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In 2018, each dollar cost between Tk 75 and Tk 76 and it is Tk 106 for exporters. In some cases, it is Tk 115 in informal markets. So, if the dollar rate is considered the amount is valid, said Amin.

Moreover, if inflation had been a minimum of 5 per cent over the last five years, the amount is logical, he added.

"So, we have already proposed the amount to the labour ministry for fixing it as the minimum monthly payment to garment workers," Amin told The Daily Star over the phone.

Echoing him, Nazma Akter, president of Sammilite Garment Sramik Federation, also said the wage of Tk 23,000 per month has been

considered based on the needs of a four-member family.

Many workers suffer from malnutrition because of deficiency in calorie intake as their purchasing capacity is low because of high prices of basic commodities, she said.

With the current monthly salary, after paying the house rent, the workers can spend a low amount for buying basic commodities and can hardly save for the future, she added.

Md Towhidur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Apparel Workers Federation, echoed the views.

Some studies were conducted by different trade unions and finally they came to the decision to fix this amount as the monthly salary, he said.

The current minimum wage of Tk 8,000 per month is low if the living wage is considered, said Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM).

And at the same time there is an inflationary pressure in the markets for which the purchasing power of the workers has declined, he said.

The international retailers and brands should also contribute a fair share in the wage upgradation of the workers, he said.

Faruque Hassan, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association declined to comment, saying a separate board would fix the amount in consultation with the stakeholders.

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Maximum Age limit: 57 years
Required Experience: 22 years banking experiences.
- Deputy Managing Director (DMD)**
Maximum Age limit: 55 years.
Required Experience: 20 years banking experiences.
- Zonal Head/Head of different Divisions (Card, Remittance & Priority Banking, etc.)/ Branch Manager/Operation Manager/Desk Officials for General Banking/ Investment/ Foreign Exchange Department. (Officer to Executive Vice President)**
Maximum Age limit: 55 years.
Required Experience: 02 years to 18 years banking experiences.
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Maximum Age limit: 30 years for fresher.
Age limit may be relaxed for experienced candidate and they will get preference.
- Social Officer (Contractual) for SIBL Micro Finance Program**
Maximum Age limit: 30 years.
Age limit may be relaxed for experienced candidate.
- Call Center Executives (Contractual)**
Maximum Age limit: 30 years for fresher.
Age limit may be relaxed for experienced candidate and they will get preference.

For detailed job description and instructions to apply for the position, please visit our website: www.siblb.com/career.

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