

# 4 IP telephony service providers lose licences

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has recently cancelled the licences of four internet protocol telephony service providers (IPTSPs) after they lost their internet service provider (ISP) licence.

The four IPTSPs are IDEA Networks and Communications Ltd, Digital Connectivity Ltd, Pritty International (Pvt.) Limited and Sadiatec Limited.

According to BTRC rules, an IPTSP cannot provide services without having an ISP licence.

An IPTSP licensee provides international and domestic voice calls over IP-based Internet and/or managed IP-based network(s).

The telecom regulator directed the cancelled licencees to surrender their licences to the commission within 10 days, according to BTRC documents.

The regulator declared all activities of these IPTSPs fully illegal and punishable under the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act 2001.

The BTRC also warned everyone concerned to not enter any deals or carry out any financial transactions with these IPTSPs.

# iPhone gaining market share in India

REUTERS

Apple is expected to gain a larger share of India's smartphone sales, with the high-end iPhone 15 Pro and Pro Max models accounting for more of its shipments.

The company is projected to account for 7 percent of all smartphone sales in the country from July to December, up from 5 percent in the first half of 2023, according to data from market researcher Counterpoint shared exclusively with Reuters.

The tech giant has been touting India as its next big growth driver amid declining sales of its flagship device. Its suppliers have also been ramping up manufacturing operations in the region amid weakening demand and regulatory pressure in China.

Wait times in India for Apple's latest 15 Pro and Pro Max models, that go on sale Friday, are stretching up to late October, mirroring trends seen in China and the US.

Counterpoint estimated the models will account for 25 percent of overall iPhone 15 shipments in India in the fourth quarter, a 4 percent increase from what the previous generation top-range models accounted for a year earlier.

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# Central banks in no rush to cut interest rates

AFP, Paris

Investors were hoping to hear central banks finally signal this week that they were close to being done raising interest rates in their battle against inflation.

Instead, policymakers indicated that high rates are here for a while yet, with more hikes on the cards and few, if any, cuts in the near future.

The US Federal Reserve set the tone on Wednesday when it paused its rate-hike campaign but caused a stir by leaving the door open to another increase before the end of the year. The central bank also unsettled investors by saying that only two cuts were expected next year instead of four as anticipated.

The Fed has more room to keep its "hawkish" stance as the US economy has performed better than feared despite the rate increases.

This firm position is shared by other central banks.

Norway's rate hike Thursday was anticipated, but it also warned further tightening was "likely" in December, while ruling out any easing before next year.

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# EU seeks to put brakes on China without hurting ties

AFP, Brussels

When the EU launched an investigation into Chinese electric car subsidies, Brussels wanted the world to know that it will protect the automotive sector that is the jewel in Europe's industrial crown, even if it upsets Beijing.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was resolute when she announced the probe on September 13, denouncing unfair practices that undercut European competitors, but sparked an angry retort from China.

Beijing warned the investigation would harm trade ties and accused the EU of "naked protectionism", triggering fears of a trade war.

Those tensions will no doubt be there when EU trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis heads to China for a four-day visit starting Saturday to Shanghai, Suzhou and Beijing.

Dombrovskis has sought to mollify Beijing, insisting that Europe wants to "keep dialogue open" with China.

The EU faces an almost impossible balancing act in its relations with China, which the bloc variously describes as a partner on global issues, an economic

competitor and a systemic rival.

On one hand, Brussels wants to maintain ties with Beijing to help resolve issues it believes can only be solved on a global level, such as climate change.

**The EU faces an almost impossible balancing act in its relations with China, which the bloc variously describes as a partner on global issues, an economic competitor and a systemic rival**

On the other, the EU is seeking to reduce its dependence on China, heeding lessons from its past over-reliance on Russia for fossil fuels.

Experts say this latest move demonstrates that the EU is willing to take action in line with its oft-repeated claim that it will "de-risk" but not "decouple" from China.

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## EXPANSION PLAN: AT A GLANCE

- US-Bangla to procure **26** aircraft soon
- To take the size of the fleet to **46**
- Runs flights on all domestic routes, **11** int'l destinations
- To double the number of daily flights on all destinations
- To fly to new destinations

# US-Bangla Airlines eyes expansion

Will buy 26 aircraft, says Managing Director Mohammed Abdullah Al Mamun

RASHIDUL HASAN

US-Bangla Airlines is going to procure a record 26 aircraft soon to expand its routes and capture a major pie of the country's aviation market currently dominated by foreign operators.

"This will be the single highest order for aircraft purchase in the aviation history of Bangladesh," said Mohammed Abdullah Al Mamun, managing director of the largest private airline in Bangladesh, during an interview recently.

At present, US-Bangla Airlines runs one flight to each of its destinations whereas foreign airlines operate four to five flights.

"We will never be able to become a market giant or capture a significant share if we operate one or two flights daily," he said.

Foreign airlines control 75 percent of Bangladesh's aviation market while three Bangladeshi airlines hold the rest.

Apart from operating flights on the country's all domestic routes, US-Bangla flies to 11 international destinations using its fleet of 20 aircraft, which include eight Boeing 737-800s, nine ATR 72-600s and three Dash 8-Q400s.

"Discussions are going on with both Boeing and Airbus to purchase the aircraft," said Mamun.

Once the procurement plan

materialises, the total number of aircraft of the airline will go up to 46.

Asked about using the new fleet of aircraft, Mamun said, "We will double the number of daily flights on almost all destinations where we now operate a single flight."



Mohammed Abdullah Al Mamun

The operator plans to turn the Shah Amanat International Airport its second-biggest hub since 60 percent to 70 percent of Bangladeshis who reside in the UAE, Oman and Qatar are from the Chattogram region.

Using the new fleet of planes, US-Bangla will also spread its wings to new destinations.

Mamun also touched upon the barriers holding back the local aviation industry.

"The main obstruction is our operating cost is much higher compared to our neighbouring countries because of higher aeronautical and non-aeronautical charges, custom duties and jet fuel prices and a

lack of skilled workforce."

He said the customs duty on aircraft is almost zero in India compared to Bangladesh.

Similarly, the price of jet fuel in Dhaka is around \$3.44 per gallon while it is \$2.94 in Kolkata.

According to the managing director, many countries in the region have brought in major changes to their aviation industry in the past 15-20 years on the back of friendly policies.

"If we get such support from the government, we will also be able to reach their status."

He thinks no operators will be able to sustain if the backward linkage for the airline industry doesn't develop in Bangladesh.

In India, a huge backward linkage industry for airlines has been developed. It is not possible for airlines alone to build such a backward linkage sector, he said.

He said Bangladesh urgently needs an engineering school to create qualified professionals. Owing to the absence of such a facility, private airlines are fully dependent on foreign engineers.

There are 35 to 40 foreign engineers at US-Bangla Airlines and they come to work every alternate month.

"You need to provide them with accommodation, air tickets, chefs and other facilities. As a result, a huge amount of remittance goes out of the country," said Mamun.

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# What makes a great workplace?

MAMUN RASHID

In the journey towards professional growth and personal fulfilment, finding the perfect workplace plays a pivotal role. An extraordinary workplace goes beyond the conventional norms, nurturing an environment of productivity, positivity, and progress.

So, what makes an exceptional workplace?

Every great workplace has a vibrant culture at its heart. Employees are empowered to succeed through a strong organisational culture that values open communication, teamwork, and respect.

Strong motivators include a supportive and inclusive work environment that develops a sense of belonging and motivates employees to put out their best. Employee morale is raised and a sense of pride and loyalty are fostered by a work environment that recognises and celebrates successes.

Secondly, striking the right balance between work and personal life is essential for overall well-being. A workplace that encourages work-life integration by offering flexible working hours and remote work options allows employees to manage their responsibilities effectively. This can make it easier for employees with families or other caregiving responsibilities to balance their work and personal lives.

Along with that, investing in employee well-being demonstrates a workplace's commitment to its staff's health and happiness. Wellness initiatives such as fitness programmes and mental health support coupled with work-life balance initiatives, contribute to a healthy work environment.

An outstanding workplace provides employees with challenging and meaningful work. Engaging employees with tasks that align with their strengths and passions ignites a sense of purpose and dedication, driving them to exceed expectations.

When employees feel psychologically safe, they feel they can be themselves at work, take risks without fear of judgement and punishment, and are more likely to share their ideas, collaborate with others and learn from mistakes.

To enable this, it is necessary to provide ample opportunities for skill development and training, and

create a culture of continuous improvement. Clearly defined career paths, internal promotion opportunities, and mentorship programmes also give employees a sense of purpose in their professional journey.

A commitment to employee growth not only benefits individuals but also enhances the organisation's capabilities. Opportunities to take on new challenges and responsibilities and access to training and resources for future skill development ultimately offer a clear journey path to the employees.

Effective leadership is a cornerstone of an outstanding workplace. Supportive leaders who lead by example inspire their teams and provide guidance and mentorship to create a positive work environment and empower employees to reach their full potential. It also encourages employees to share their knowledge and expertise with others. With that in mind, having open and transparent communication is crucial for fostering trust and understanding within the organisation while ensuring that ideas are heard, concerns are addressed, and collaboration thrives.

A diverse workforce brings a variety of perspectives, ideas, and experiences, fostering creativity and innovation.

A great workplace is the product of numerous crucial components that give priority to the health, development, and engagement of its employees.

Ultimately, it is the harmonious interplay of these elements that transforms a workplace into a hub of excellence, where employees are motivated, fulfilled, and eager to contribute to the organisation's success. An organisation that prioritises investment for creating an exceptional workforce is more likely to attract and retain the best talent, boost employee morale and drive innovation.

The author is an economic analyst



This aerial photo taken on September 19 shows a solar photovoltaic power project under construction in Zhangye, in China's northwestern Gansu province.

PHOTO: AFP