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HC extends status quo on Nagad's internal affairs

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The High Court (HC) has extended an order that directed the authorities concerned to maintain the status quo in the internal affairs of beleaguered Nagad Ltd until January 30 this year.

The HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Debashish Roy Chowdhury extended the status quo, according to a certificate issued by Supreme Court Advocate Md Jamilur Rahman on January 15.

The HC issued a rule after a director of Nagad filed a writ petition challenging the appointment of an administrator to it by Bangladesh Bank on August 21 last year.

"The honourable High Court has issued an order maintaining status quo on administrative activities concerning Nagad," Barrister Muhammad

Nawaz Jamir, who represented Nagad, was quoted as saying by news agency UNB.

"This restricts any new decisions from being implemented until the final judgment is rendered," he said.

"The court also observed that Bangladesh Bank has engaged in several illegal actions. Once the final judgment is delivered, these actions will be reversed, and appropriate legal measures will be taken," he added.

The interim government had directed to appoint the administrator to investigate alleged irregularities in the mobile financial service provider.

The court initially issued a rule nisi—a court order that will become final unless someone shows the court why it should be changed—to the government and the banking regulator.

On December 18, the HC directed the authorities to maintain a status quo on Nagad's internal affairs until January 2.

The order of January 15 extended the status quo to January 30.

Bangladesh Bank

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ATAGLANCE

BTRC enforces stricter quality standards to protect user interests

Operators performed poorly in BTRC's drive test last year

MAJOR CHANGES

- ① Call drop limit reduced from 2% to 1%
- ② VoLTE call setup time capped at 3 seconds
- ③ Mobile data upload speed increased from 2Mbps to 4Mbps
- ④ Mobile data latency capped at under 50 milliseconds
- ⑤ ISPs must deliver 75% download and 50% upload speeds

Transmission networks and broadband services included in 'quality of service' rules

Operators dispute BTRC results

NONCOMPLIANCE

Will lead to administrative fines under regulations



BTRC tightens rules for telcos to improve services

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The telecom regulator has drafted stricter quality of service (QoS) benchmarks for mobile operators to better protect users' interests through the companies fared badly in previous metrics.

For the first time, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has also included transmission networks and broadband service providers under the QoS framework.

Key changes in the draft include lowering the call drop rate ceiling from 2 percent to 1 percent and raising the call setup success rate standard from 97 percent to 98 percent. The voice call setup time has also been tightened from 8 seconds to 7 seconds.

Additionally, a new benchmark has been introduced for call setup time in Voice over Long Term Evolution (VoLTE) and beyond, setting the limit at no more than 3 seconds. VoLTE is a technology that enables high-quality voice calls over 4G LTE networks instead of traditional voice networks. It offers faster call setup, clearer audio quality, and the ability to use voice and data services simultaneously, enhancing overall mobile communication efficiency and user experience.

While the standard for mobile internet download speed remains unchanged, the upload speed requirement has been increased from 2 Mbps to 4 Mbps. Also, for the first time, mobile data latency has been capped at under 50 milliseconds, enhancing real-time communication quality.

In the broadband sector, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) must now ensure 75 percent of the subscribed download speed and 50 percent of the upload speed.

According to the draft regulation, beyond safeguarding subscriber interests, the updated standards aim to create an environment that encourages competition, drives innovation, and fosters trust among stakeholders. The regulatory objectives also aim to improve subscribers' satisfaction, uphold service quality, ensure consumer protection, promote

competition, and enhance trust within the telecommunications sector in Bangladesh.

Additionally, the BTRC may verify and assess the performance of services to determine whether service providers comply with the defined benchmarks for QoS parameters outlined in these regulations. This assessment may occur randomly or in response to complaints about QoS issues in specific zones or areas. It can be conducted through inspections, drive tests, sample tests, or other measurement methods by officers, employees, or agencies appointed by the BTRC or jointly with service providers.

The BTRC may also instruct service providers to conduct additional specialised QoS assessment tests, surveys, and submit subsequent reports as deemed necessary. Any

standards, fostering consumer trust and driving competitive growth in the sector.

"While the regulation accounts for 4G, VoLTE, and fixed internet, provisions for satellite broadband (e.g., Starlink) and IoT connectivity should be added, given their growing relevance in the evolving telecommunications ecosystem," he added. Hussain noted this draft guideline aligns with ITU standards and offers actionable insights to further enhance the customer experience.

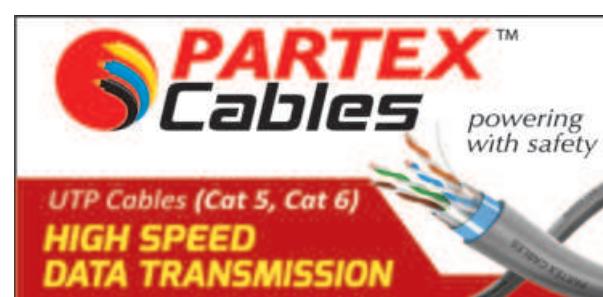
Although the BTRC has implemented more stringent regulations, mobile operators are failing to even maintain the current standards. Grameenphone, head of public and regulatory affairs at Grameenphone, said they were included in the consultation process and received a new version of the QoS regulation.

"We are assessing this version and will provide our response accordingly. We look forward to continuing the consultation process to be able to conclude on an industry-aligned QoS regulation, making it rational and sustainable," he said.

Local mobile operators performed poorly in the telecom regulator's latest drive test to assess service quality, reinforcing users' claims of experiencing substandard services. The drive tests were conducted between February 14 and June 5 last year across Dhaka city corporations, Narayanganj, Keraniganj, and Savar upazilas with the BTRC's newly acquired system from Germany, purchased for 1.5 million euros.

Robi performed the best, failing in only five key performance indicators (KPIs) out of 40 across four areas. Market leader Grameenphone failed in six KPIs, Banglalink in 14, and Teletalk in a staggering 26, according to the test results.

For internet services, only state-owned Teletalk failed to meet the BTRC's benchmarks, with Robi performing the best. However, officials of the operators have expressed disagreement with the findings, claiming that the BTRC's results do not accurately reflect the network's performance and could lead to public confusion.



service provider that fails to maintain the QoS standards, submit the required reports, or comply with any provisions outlined in these regulations shall be liable for breaching these regulations. The submission of inaccurate, misleading, or incomplete information shall also be deemed a violation. Breaching any of these regulations shall constitute an offence, and the person responsible shall be liable for administrative fines under the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act, 2001.

Mustafa Mahmud Hussain, a telecom expert, said the draft guideline is a significant step toward enhancing the telecommunication services landscape in Bangladesh. With fine-tuning and an expanded scope, it has the potential to align Bangladesh's QoS framework with global

Ex-secretary still chairman of Sonali's UK subsidiary

This violates rules

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Md Asadul Islam, former senior secretary of the Financial Institutions Division of the finance ministry, is still serving as chairman of Sonali Bangladesh UK Ltd, a subsidiary of state-run Sonali Bank, despite retiring from government service in 2021.

This violates the rules of the ministry.

The government can appoint officials as directors of the boards of subsidiary companies of state-run banks and financial institutions, as per the circular of the Ministry of Finance dated March 19, 2017.

The post of the director concerned will be considered vacant immediately if the director nominated by the government for the subsidiary company retires or is no longer employed, mentions paragraph "chha" of the circular.

However, Islam is still the non-executive chairman of Sonali Bangladesh UK, a UK-based financial institution providing trade finance services to Bangladesh.

The government appointed Islam as senior secretary in 2019 and posted him to the Financial Institutions Division for two years on a contractual basis.

He was then nominated as the director of Sonali Bangladesh UK and became the chairman of the company on February 3, 2020.

Sonali Bank documents show that Islam is still holding the position of chairman of the company, although his tenure at the Ministry of Finance ended in 2021.

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STOCKS	
DSEX ▼	CASPI ▼
0.17% 5,133.92	0.2% 14,351.91

COMMODITIES	
Gold ▲ \$2,707.66 (per ounce)	Oil ▲ \$80.25 (per barrel)

ASIAN MARKETS			
MUMBAI 0.42% 77,042.82	TOKYO 0.33% 38,572.60	SINGAPORE 0.76% 3,801.13	SHANGHAI 0.28% 3,236.03

Labour leaders call for easier union rules

Seek 20-worker threshold, not 20% of workers

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Labour union leaders yesterday suggested that the government amend the labour law, easing the condition of a 20 percent workers' participation threshold to only 20 workers to facilitate freedom of association.

Currently, 20 percent of workers' signatures are required to form a union in factories under the labour law, said Nazma Akter, president of Sammilito Garment Sramik Federation, after a meeting.

But the union leaders demanded only 20 workers' signatures instead of 20 percent, said a union leader after the second tripartite consultative committee meeting held at the Bangladesh Secretariat in Dhaka.

The factory owners agreed to reduce the threshold to 10 percent from 20 percent, in tune with demands from international communities, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Union (EU).

The tripartite consultative committee members include representatives of the government, factory owners, and union leaders.

The discussion was held on proposed amendments to the labour law, as the government has a target to amend the law

by March of this year.

At the meeting, the union leaders also demanded that workers be eligible for a basic salary of one month (30 days) when they resign after serving for one year, not 10 years.

Currently, a worker is given 14 days' basic salary when they leave or resign from the job once they have served there for five years in a row.

Currently, 20 percent of workers' signatures are required to form a union in factories under the labour law

If any worker leaves or resigns from his or her job even a day before the completion of 10 years' tenure, they are given 14 days' basic salary with other benefits.

The workers' representatives also demanded that the government offer maternity leave to female workers for six months with full payment.

The international community has been putting pressure on the government also for ensuring uniform labour laws for factories both inside and outside export processing zones (EPZs).

Inflation biggest concern for Bangladesh: WEF

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Inflation has been identified as the biggest risk to Bangladesh in 2025, according to a World Economic Forum (WEF) report released on Wednesday.

In its Global Risks Report 2025, the WEF, an independent international organisation, stated that extreme weather events — such as floods and heatwaves — and pollution are two other significant risks to the economy of South Asia.

Bangladesh is one of the 10 countries where pollution has been identified as one of the top three risks, according to the report.

Particularly in densely populated countries such as Bangladesh and India, pollution has become one of the most critical challenges to tackle, the report said.

"A pollution conscious green transition is needed," it added.

The WEF's latest report also noted that unemployment and economic downturn are two remaining challenges for Bangladesh, which has been grappling with stubbornly high inflation, devaluation of its currency, falling foreign exchange reserves, and slowing investment and business growth.

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Bangladesh has long been grappling with stubbornly high inflation, as the 12-month average inflation rose to 10.34 percent in 2024 from 9.48 percent a year earlier.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS