



A wide variety of flowers arrive at the wholesale flower market in Shahbagh, Dhaka from different parts of the country. This market caters to the demand for flowers in the capital and surrounding areas. Prices fluctuate based on demand.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

IGW operators seek permission to handle int'l SMS traffic

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

International Gateway (IGW) operators yesterday demanded permission to route both international text messages and incoming calls under the newly proposed licensing policy.

In Bangladesh, IGW operators handle international incoming calls, while international short messaging services (SMSs) are routed through mobile operators.

Asif Rabbani, president of the IGW Operators Forum (IOF), said the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission should issue a directive in this regard, as the current policy has already given the go-ahead to IGWs to route international SMSs.

Additionally, IGW operators should be allowed to migrate to the international

layer under the proposed reform policy," he said at a press conference in Dhaka.

Earlier, mobile operators terminated international calls.

But in 2008, the government introduced an additional layer to combat illegal Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) operations.

Under the International Long Distance Telecommunication Services (ILDTS) policy, a specific network topology was established with a three-year framework for services such as IGWs.

The international gateways would receive calls from foreign telecom operators and then route them to local users through another set of operators called Interconnection Exchanges (ICXs).

In 2014, a group of IGW operators proposed an experimental model called the IGW Operator Switch, giving

them control over a common network switch used for call termination and interconnection.

That same year, the BTRC approved the model without amending the ILDTS policy, thereby violating existing regulations.

The government endorsed the model in 2015, allowing cartel members to dominate the market and enjoy higher revenues. Though the approval was initially experimental, the arrangement continued for years.

After Md Emdad Ul Bari was appointed BTRC chairman in September last year, the commission moved to reform the system.

According to BTRC documents, the IGW Operators Forum had unilaterally amended a commission-approved agreement without authorisation and

violated several directives.

There were also serious concerns about transparency in handling funds collected under the Market Development Expenses (MDES) head.

The IOF collected Tk 631 crore in MDS from IGW operators, of which over 95 percent was routed and spent through a single account under Beximco Computers.

Citing the lack of transparency in managing such a large sum, the BTRC referred the matter to the Anti-Corruption Commission for investigation.

In light of these issues, the commission has revoked approval for the operational agreement between the IOF and IGW operators concerning call exchanges under the government-sanctioned network topology.

NBR officials call off shutdown

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at key ports and interruptions in tax-related services nationwide.

In its latest statement, the finance ministry said it would finalise the new institutional framework through consultations with the NBR, the Revenue Reform Advisory Committee, and other stakeholders. Amendments to the ordinance are expected by July 31. Until then, the government will not enforce the law.

The ministry said that it hopes the announcement would calm tensions within the NBR and encourage staff to return to duty and focus on revenue collection.

Customs, VAT, and tax officials had been observing work stoppages for several days, leading to backlog at Chattogram Port, which handles about 90 percent of the country's international trade.

Yesterday, 17 container ships carrying around 500,000 tonnes of goods were waiting at the outer anchorage due to slow clearance. While export processing was exempted

from the work stoppage, customs officers refrained from inspecting imports and issuing clearances between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm in the past two days.

Prior to that, NBR officials observed a daily five-hour strike for five consecutive days till May 19.

The demonstration also hit field offices, delaying services for taxpayers. "Hearings related to tax disputes are not taking place due to the work abstention," said a senior official at a private company yesterday.

Meanwhile, exporters reported knock-on effects.

Syed M Tanveer, managing director of Pacific Jeans, said delays in clearing imported raw materials were slowing production.

"Several export shipments need to be sent before Eid. Significant losses will occur if they don't reach their destination on time," Tanveer said.

To avoid this, he added, they might be forced to resort to air freight, which could increase costs by 15 to 20 times.

Chattogram Port data

show that in the five days to May 19, about 4,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of import containers had piled up. Storage at port yards rose to 44,000 TEUs—well above the optimal operational level of 35,000 but still below the maximum capacity of 53,518 TEUs.

Since customs officers resumed work on May 19, the situation has gradually improved.

Muntasir Rubayat, a director of the Bangladesh Shipping Agents Association, said although export documents were being processed, customs officers at port gates were still refusing to sign off on import container exits.

As a result, prime movers transporting containers to inland depots (ICDs) were stuck at the port, creating delays in export movements from ICDs, he added.

Ruhul Amin Sikder, secretary general of the Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association (BICDA), feared an acute backlog during the upcoming Eid holidays if deliveries did not resume at full pace.

Chattogram Port data

Gas crisis

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Although the government is inviting foreign investors, he believes that foreign investment will not come since even local investors are struggling to survive.

Many businessmen are seeking exit plans as they are suffering and cannot find ways to survive, Russell lamented, adding that most mills are running at 50 percent of their capacity due to the crippling gas crisis.

Russell also said he met the energy adviser yesterday but did not get any response about improving gas supply.

Many have no choice but to run their mills by purchasing diesel, which increases costs fourfold.

The energy adviser said that he prefers diesel imports rather than liquefied natural gas (LNG) since customers clear the dues promptly.

Russell also said many are not getting gas from supplying companies although they have paid large amounts in deposits.

"We need support at this moment. We have passed through the Covid-19 pandemic and a mass

uprising, and we have been facing a gas crisis and banking crisis. We need support. It would not be right to choke us," he said.

A n n a r - U - A l a m Chowdhury (Parvez), president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI), said a lot of seminars have been held about the energy crisis, but there can be no remedy without increasing the prices.

The government is failing in its commitment to supply gas, but businessmen are sent to jail if they cannot comply with their commitments, he said. Due to the government's failure to supply gas, mills cannot operate at full capacity.

He also said the Chattogram Port is not functioning now because of the protests being staged by National Board of Revenue officials.

Hossain Mahmood, chairman of the Bangladesh Terry Towel & Linen Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BTTMEA), said five to six terry towel mills have already closed down because of the gas crisis.

Four more companies

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He added that the commission would determine its next course of action after Army

Transmission Company Limited's application is received through the dedicated channel.

Currently, there are six NTTN operators in Bangladesh, with 148,000 kilometres of optical fibre collectively laid out, according to BTRC

documents.

The country's first

Railway 3,800 kilometres, and the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh about 8,500 kilometres.

Additionally, the government has laid around 35,000 kilometres of optical fibre under projects such as Info-Sarker 3 and Connected Bangladesh.

Mobile operators have around 8,200 kilometres of optical fibre infrastructure.

Helicopter rides

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Helicopters are also becoming increasingly common for political events, high-profile social functions, and even as a quick escape from traffic snarls during Eid rush. Many wealthy families have been using them as a time-saving alternative to congested road travel.

Helicopters are also becoming a popular choice for media coverage of urgent news, as well as for film and drama shoots.

According to the AOAB, more than a dozen private firms currently offer commercial helicopter services.

Among others, these include Square Air Limited, Meghna Aviation, Impress Aviation, Bashundhara Airlines, South Asian Airlines, BCL Aviation, R & R Aviation,

Reforms

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"Our fear is that if we appoint a local expert for reforms, they might be bought off by a vested group. And we won't be able to oversee that. That's why we are insisting on foreign experts," he said.

They also offered a tour service of Chattogram City for just Tk 4,999 per passenger, though the service was later discontinued.

Customs officials say Bangladesh mainly imports two categories of helicopters — military-grade models and commercial ones that vary by weight.

Lighter helicopters, usually under two tonnes, come with a single engine and four seats, while the heavier models have dual engines and can carry up to six passengers, he said.

Customs duty

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Importers say that they currently must pay 10 percent import duty, 15 percent value-added tax (VAT), 5 percent advance tax, and 5 percent advance income tax for 16- to 40-seat buses.

Japanese buses, known for their technological superiority, are expensive, and the existing tax burden significantly increases their import cost, they added.

Abdul Haque, president of the Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers and Dealers Association, told The Daily Star that reducing customs duty on public bus imports is a timely and rational step.

Many buses currently operating in Dhaka and other major cities are in poor condition, with some lacking fitness certification altogether. This poses serious safety risks for passengers, he said.

Haque added that lowering import duties would help modernise urban transport fleets and ensure safer, more reliable services for the public.

Mohammad Rahmat, a Mirpur resident employed at a private company in Dhaka, said he frequently relies on public buses for his daily commute. However, the dilapidated vehicles and the chaotic state of the public transport system cause immense suffering.

"Travelling is especially difficult for the elderly, women, and children. It is crucial to devise and implement effective solutions to this problem without delay," he added.

More than one in five buses operated by private companies in the capital have no valid fitness certificates, according to a 2023 document from the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

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Dated: 25.05.2025

Invitation for e-Tender

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

Invitation Reference No.	70/e-GP/BRD/PMP-Road Major/2024-25
Tender ID	1114636
Name of works	Periodic Maintenance Program (PMP) for partial strengthening by Aggregate Base Type-1, DBS Base Course & DBS-Wearing Course from Ch. 00+000 (Bakerongj Bus Stand) to 11+765 (Tin Ghor) of Bakerongj-Padrishipur-Kathaloti-Subidkhali-Barguna Road (R-872) under Barishal Road Division during the year 2024-2025.
Qualification criteria	As stated in Tender Notice & Tender Data Sheet (TDS) of the Tender Document.
Tender document price	Tk. 4,000.00 (four thousand) only.
Tender security amount	Tk. 27,50,000.00 (twenty-seven lakh fifty thousand) only.
Tender document last selling	Date: 25 June 2025, Time: 16:00
Last date and time for tender security submission	Date: 26 June 2025, Time: 11:30
Tender closing date and time	Date: 26 June 2025, Time: 12:15
Tender opening date and time	Date: 26 June 2025, Time: 12:15

- This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will 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 branch.
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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