Star BUSINESS

Starlink seeks nod to export bandwidth from Bangladesh

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Starlink has sought approval from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to supply bandwidth from Bangladesh to neighbouring countries.

In a letter sent recently, the US-based satellite internet provider requested permission for the commercial use of International Private Leased Circuit (IPLC) and unfiltered IP to provide services outside Bangladesh, according to BTRC documents seen by The Daily Star.

An IPLC is a dedicated communication line linking two countries for secure, high-capacity data transfer. Unfiltered IP refers to direct, unrestricted internet routes that bypass national filtering, monitoring, and lawful interception.

"We have received the letter from Starlink in this regard. We are assessing it," said Brig Gen Shafiul Azam Parvez, director general of engineering and operations at the BTRC.

"The final decision on approving Starlink to provide such a service will be taken if the government gives the green light," he added.

Starlink Services Bangladesh Ltd has already completed the installation of four local gateways across the country.

Two have been set up at the hi-tech park in Gazipur, while the others are located in Rajshahi and Jashore, according to recent BTRC inspections.

Although regulators could not confirm full functionality due to the absence of Starlink representatives during site visits, local partners informed officials that commercial traffic began flowing through the Kaliakair gateways from August 9 and through the Rajshahi and Jashore gateways from August 20.

Starlink has developed 80 Gbps capacity at its Kaliakair gateways, 400 Gbps in Jashore, and another 400 Gbps in Rajshahi.

Industry insiders see Starlink's move as a bid to establish itself as a regional service provider, connecting Bangladesh with India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar.

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Teletalk, BTCL sit on Tk 7,000cr dues amid weak oversight

MAHMUDUL HASAN

While private telecom operators consistently meet their financial obligations to the regulator, two state-run entities have failed to do so over several years, with a staggering Tk 7,000 crore left unpaid, raising questions about preferential treatment in the sector.

According to official documents seen by The Daily Star, Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd and Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) have failed for years to clear dues that include licence fees, revenue sharing, spectrum charges, administrative fines, value-added tax (VAT), and social obligations.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) officials said the total could exceed Tk 10,000 crore if VAT and late fees are included.

Private mobile operators, by contrast, regularly pay their dues, sometimes with added interest for minor delays. Similarly, small and medium telecom enterprises face fines, licence cancellations, or service restrictions if they fall behind. Such measures have rarely been enforced against the state-run firms.

Of the outstanding amounts, Teletalk alone owes around Tk 5,800 crore. Of this, licence fees account for Tk 120 crore, revenue sharing Tk 102 crore, spectrum fees Tk 5,506 crore, and other dues around Tk 62 crore.

BTCL's liabilities exceed Tk 1,165 crore. The largest component is revenue sharing from its international gateway operations, amounting to Tk 1,106 crore, which should have been directly paid to the BTRC.

According to the documents, the BTRC has repeatedly requested payment over the years. The latest demand to BTCL was made on June 24, 2025, and to Teletalk on June 2, 2025. The companies are yet to settle their arrears.

BTRC officials said copies of these letters will also be sent to the adviser and secretary of the Posts and Telecommunications Ministry, which oversees the operations of these state-owned firms, for further action.

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Govt to address SME export barriers

Says CA's special envoy

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will take initiatives to address hurdles faced by micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) entrepreneurs in exporting their products, said Lutfey Siddiqi, special envoy on international affairs to the chief adviser.

He gave the assurance at a roundtable titled "Ways to Facilitate SME Entrepreneurs' Exports and Connect Them to Global Markets," organised by the SME Foundation at Parjatan Bhaban in Dhaka, according to a statement issued yesterday.

The roundtable was chaired by SME Foundation Chairperson Md Mushfiqur Rahman.

Entrepreneurs attending the discussion highlighted the challenges they face in exports, including delayed payments from buyers, obstacles in sending product samples, online transactions, and alleged harassment from customs, Bangladesh Bank, payment gateway companies, and commercial banks.

These issues, they said, lead to losses and undermine buyer confidence in timely product delivery.

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Revenue collection rises 21% in July-August

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Revenue collection grew by nearly 21 percent year-on-year in the first two months of the current fiscal year, due mainly to a calmer political climate compared with the same period last year, when mass protests led to the fall of the Awami League government.

While tax analysts have welcomed the rise, revenue officials are more cautious. They say the increase is "nothing extraordinary", and it will take time to gauge the real trend.

In the July-August period of fiscal year (FY) 2025-26, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) collected Tk 54,423 crore, according to the board's provisional data.

All three main revenue streams — income tax, value-added tax (VAT) and customs duties — contributed to the rise. VAT receipts were the standout, beating the monthly target with a 4.80 percent gain.

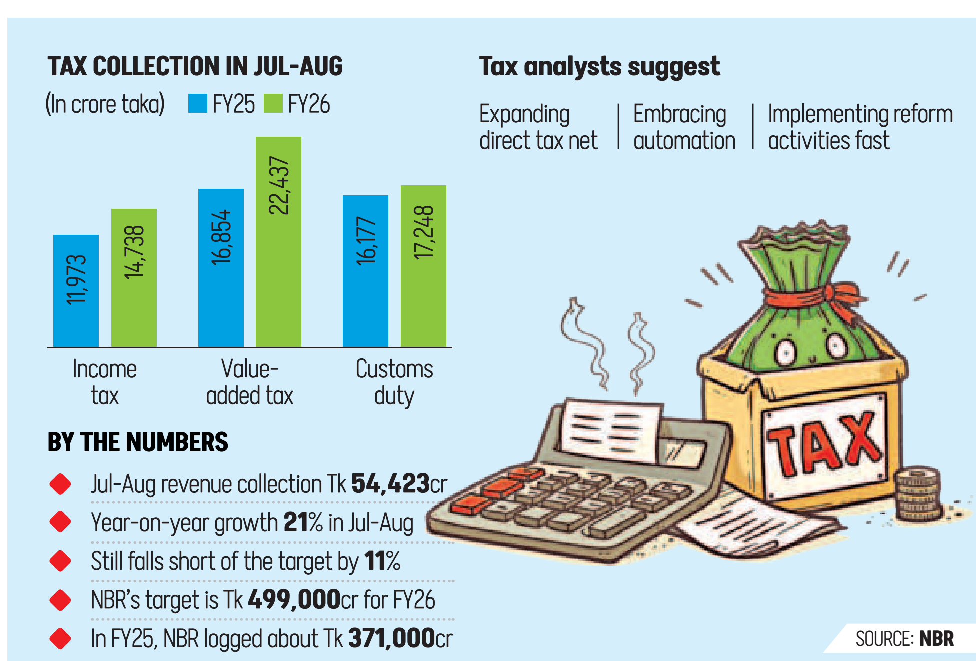
Local-level VAT collection amounted to Tk 22,437 crore, up from Tk 16,854 crore a year earlier, marking a 33.13 percent increase.

Income and travel taxes rose to Tk 14,738 crore, up 23 percent on the same period last year. Customs duties collected from international trade rose 6.61 percent to Tk 17,248 crore due to higher imports after restrictions were eased.

"NBR's growth is simply satisfactory," said Prof M Abu Eusuf, executive director of local think tank Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID). "Better political environment, and higher revenue collection efforts might have contributed to the growth," he said.

Since the comparison is point-to-point, collections now appear stronger as instability depressed revenues a year ago. Early filing of returns and higher source taxes may also have helped, he added.

Prof Eusuf said the active role of the current tax administration and recent reforms, including recommendations by the White Paper committee, had created a positive



impact. "So overall, things are moving in a more positive direction," he said.

An NBR official, however, told The Daily Star that July-August revenue growth is "nothing extraordinary".

"We have to wait a few more months to understand the real trend. Last year, many overdue payments were cleared in September, so the next month's data may reflect lower growth," the official said, preferring anonymity.

Despite the increase, the NBR missed its two-month target by 11 percent, collecting Tk 54,423 crore against a goal of Tk 61,000 crore. The board has set a full-year revenue target of Tk 499,000 crore.

Prof Eusuf suggested the NBR should accelerate revenue growth by expanding direct taxes, broadening the tax net and investing more in automation.

At a seminar at the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry last week, NBR Chairman Md Abdur Rahman Khan talked about the country's low tax-to-GDP ratio.

"Last year, our tax collection was around Tk 3.70 lakh crore, more precisely Tk 3.71 lakh crore. But in percentage terms, that is still very low," he said.

"When compared with GDP, the trend has been declining over the past decade. The absolute numbers may look impressive, like a big flower in the statistics, but the reality is different. At one point, our tax-to-GDP ratio had reached 12 percent.

"In the fiscal year before last, it was said to be around 7.3 percent. This year, according to rough calculations and our development partners, it has fallen further, to around 6.6 percent," said the NBR chief.

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Businesses urge local production of auto, agro machinery

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The interim government needs to implement a long-term policy requiring manufacturers to locally produce key components of automobiles and agricultural machinery, said businesspeople at an event yesterday.

Such a policy is essential to reduce import dependency, strengthen backward linkage industries, and position Bangladesh as a competitive manufacturing hub in the region, they added.

They made these remarks at the closing ceremony of the "Road to Made in Bangladesh and Agro Machinery Fair 2025" in the capital's Tejgaon.

> **A policy is essential to reduce import dependency, strengthen backward linkage industries, and position Bangladesh as a competitive manufacturing hub, businesses say**

The Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI), with support from the Bangladesh Automobiles Assemblers and Manufacturers Association and the Agricultural Machinery Manufacturers Association Bangladesh, organised the two-day fair at the BCI office.

Taskin Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said after years of effort, a motorcycle industry development policy was successfully formulated in 2018.

It attracted major global brands like Honda, Yamaha, and Suzuki to invest around Tk 3,000 crore in Bangladesh, he said.

This led to the development of local manufacturing for components such as wheels, chain sprockets, and seats in regions like Pabna and Bogura, he said.

Highlighting the example of Southeast Asian countries, where up to 80 percent of car components are locally made, he expressed confidence that Bangladesh could achieve similar success, especially in the automobile and agro-machinery sectors.

Ahmed emphasised the importance of supporting small and medium enterprises in this endeavour, noting that strengthening local industries

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