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GSMA flags risks in draft telecom licensing rules

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA) has raised concerns about Bangladesh's draft telecom licensing guidelines, cautioning that several proposed conditions could deter investment, restrict market participation, and contradict the objectives of the Telecommunications Network and Licensing Policy (TNLP) 2025.

In a recent letter to Md Emdad Ul Bari, chairman of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the association praised the regulator's reform agenda but cautioned that some parts of the draft guidelines could undermine the new policy framework.

The letter was also sent to Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, the chief adviser's special assistant for Post, Telecommunications, and ICT, who led the development of the new policy.

The GSMA's letter follows BTRC's invitation for public feedback on four draft regulatory and licensing guidelines for issuing licenses to Cellular Mobile Service Providers (CMSP), National Infrastructure & Connectivity Service Providers (NICSP), Fixed Telecommunication Service Providers (FTSP), and International Connectivity Service Providers (ICSP) under the new policy.

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With bad loans at 30%, boardroom feud erupts at Standard Bank

Clash over hiring, firings and the fate of the MD turns directors against each other, pitting son against father

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Standard Bank is mired in internal conflict as its bad loans rise to nearly a third of total lending, exposing governance problems at the shariah based lender already under scrutiny by the central bank, show documents.

At a time when the country's banking sector is facing a fragile confidence and a growing pile of bad debt, the 16-member board at the private bank has apparently split into two camps over the fate of its managing director.

Chairman Mohammed Abdul Aziz leads one faction. The other is steered by his son and Vice-Chairman AKM Abdul Alim.

The Alim group has accused the Managing Director Md Habibur Rahman of corruption and sought his removal, alleging involvement in loan irregularities during his previous tenure at Union Bank. The faction has written twice to the Bangladesh Bank (BB) asking for Rahman to be placed on forced leave.

The central bank rejected the request, saying the allegations are yet to be proven, and instructed the board to continue with Rahman.

Meanwhile, Chairman Aziz's group has defended Rahman and accused the opposing camp of obstructing the bank's work and attempting to place their preferred candidates in key roles, including its exchange houses in London and the United States.



"The managing director is innocent and has done no wrong," said Chairman Aziz, adding that the central bank would not have allowed him to continue if there were proven irregularities.

In a letter to the central bank governor on November 5, Aziz alleged that the vice chairman's group was disrupting the bank's operations.

The Alim-led group responded with another letter four days later, reiterating that its demand for Rahman's removal and claimed that "numerous corruption cases" are pending against him at the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The Daily Star has seen at

least four such letters.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, bank officials said the feud has paralysed decision making. Board meetings often end in arguments over staffing and management matters.

BALANCE SHEET LEFT BLEEDING

Standard Bank began operations on June 3, 1999. In January 2021, it became a full-fledged shariah-based Islamic bank after receiving central bank approval.

Now the current boardroom quarrel comes as the bank's balance sheet weakens. At the end of 2024, non-performing loans (NPLs) stood at Tk 5,968 crore, or 29.3 percent of total lending, up from 4.8 percent four years earlier.

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EBL CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION AWARDS 2026

Bangladesh outpaces China in RMG export growth to EU

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh has outpaced China in apparel export growth to the European Union (EU) in the first nine months of 2025, as demand for competitively priced Bangladeshi garments continues to strengthen in the bloc.

From January to September, Bangladesh's garment exports to the EU rose 13.17 percent year-on-year to €15.26 billion, up from €13.48 billion a year earlier, Eurostat data show.

The country retained its position as the second-largest apparel supplier to the EU after China, which posted a 9.86 percent value growth, reaching €19.77 billion during the period.

However, in terms of volume, China still has the top position. In the first nine months, China posted a 17 percent rise in volume, compared to Bangladesh's 15.55 percent growth.



However, Bangladesh offered a much more competitive unit price than the East Asian superpower. Eurostat data show that China experienced a 6.10 percent decline in unit prices, while Bangladesh posted a 2.06 percent decrease. This indicates that the South Asian country gained EU market share through a combination of competitive pricing and sustained buyer interest.

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