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NBR sets fees for first Bangladesh-Bhutan transit trial

STAR BUSINESS REPORT, Cg

The government has fixed a set of administrative fees and charges for customs formalities related to the first trial run of transit and transshipment of goods between Bangladesh and Bhutan via the Chattogram-Burimari route, according to a notification by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) issued yesterday.

The NBR has fixed fees and charges for six types of services, including document processing and scanning containers.

For the document processing fee, it will charge Tk 30 per shipment. In addition, a transshipment fee of Tk 20 and a security charge of Tk 100 per metric tonne will be applicable.

Users will be required to pay an escort charge of Tk 85 per kilometre for each container, truck, trailer, or covered van, where applicable, and Tk 100 per tonne for a miscellaneous administrative charge.

Besides, the authorities will collect Tk 254 for scanning each container, said the NBR, adding that fees for the electronic lock and seal will be based on applicable rules.

Users will need to pay road usage fees, including tolls, at rates determined by the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges, it said.

The NBR said the fees and tolls will be subject to a 15 percent Value Added Tax.

The order comes into effect immediately and will remain applicable only for the first trial run of transit and transshipment of goods under the

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BTRC inspection exposes gap between 4G PROMISE AND REALITY

MAHMUDUL HASAN

A recent inspection by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has exposed deficiencies in mobile network services, highlighting a gap between operators' claims of nationwide 4G coverage and the reality on the ground.

Despite operators publicly reporting 98.99 percent population coverage, persistent dead zones, weak signals and poor connectivity remain widespread.

According to the BTRC documents, four inspection teams from the Enforcement and Inspection Directorate visited remote and urban locations in Tangail, Bogura, Gaibandha, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Sylhet, Cumilla, Noakhali, Chattogram, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, and Sherpur.

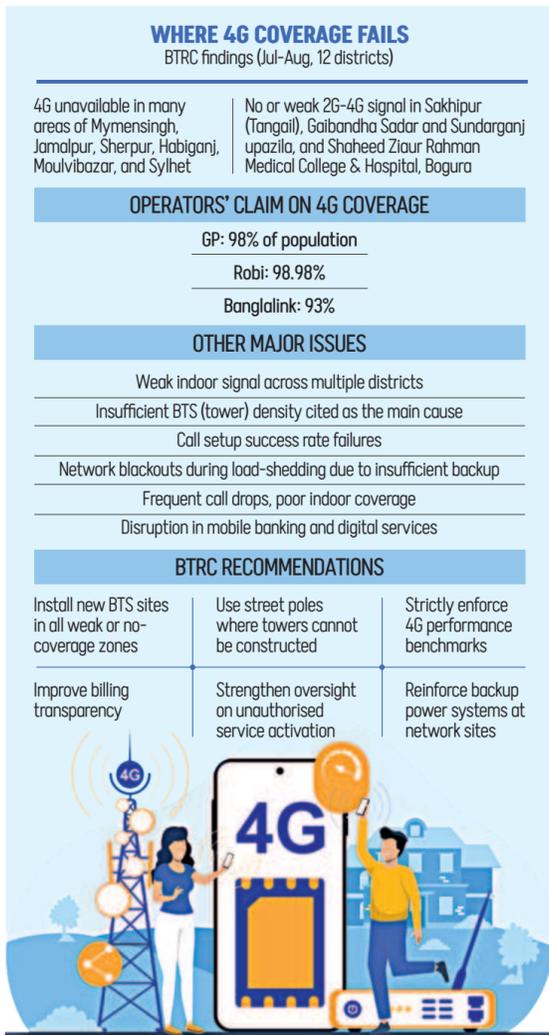
Using advanced service-quality measurement tools, the inspectors found that 4G networks were unavailable in many areas of Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, and Sylhet, according to BTRC documents.

The reports noted instances of no or weak 2G and 4G signals in Tangail's Sakhipur, Gaibandha Sadar, and Kanchi Bazar, as well as at Bogura's Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital.

Inspectors further reported frequent call drops, blurred video calls and no indoor network coverage in several locations.

According to the BTRC, operators failed to meet regulatory benchmarks for 4G coverage and rollout obligations in Tangail, Bogura, and Gaibandha, violating service guidelines, licence conditions and previous directives.

Operators, however, maintain that their networks reach a wide population. Grameenphone claims 98 percent coverage, Robi



98.98 percent, and Banglalink around 93 percent. Beyond coverage gaps, users reported difficulty accessing services indoors, while Base Transceiver Stations (BTS) – the equipment that allows mobile phones to

communicate with the network – and challenging terrain, such as the hilly Teliabagar Tea Garden in Habiganj, exacerbate the problem.

Inspectors also noted call setup failures in Sylhet, particularly in tea garden areas, as well as call drops, weak indoor coverage, and complete network outages during load-shedding in Cumilla, Noakhali and Chattogram.

These issues have disrupted mobile banking and digital services, affecting students, farmers, and small traders.

The inspections found further issues, including non-compliance with Pay-As-You-Go procedures leading to unauthorised balance deductions, and complications with e-SIM services.

To address these shortcomings, the BTRC recommended installing additional BTS in weak coverage areas, enforcing 4G rollout benchmarks with legal action for non-compliance, and improving oversight of unauthorised billing.

The regulator also suggested forming a joint monitoring cell with operator representatives to expedite resolution of customer grievances, particularly those related to billing and e-SIM services.

Taimur Rahman, chief corporate and regulatory affairs officer, noted that urban construction often blocks signals, and securing new tower sites is challenging as many landlords are reluctant to host them.

"To further strengthen nationwide coverage, we also need more low-band spectrum, which remains among the most expensive in the world. We are urging the regulator to reduce its cost so we can deliver better, more consistent coverage," he added.

Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer at Robi Axiata PLC, defended the

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New logistics policy positions Bangladesh as a 2050 trade hub

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The interim government has unveiled the National Logistics Policy 2025, aiming to position Bangladesh as a leading regional trade and logistics hub by 2050.

It seeks to strengthen the country's capacity for domestic and international trade by developing a world-class logistics system that is technology-driven, integrated, efficient, sustainable and environmentally sound.

Earlier, a similar policy was approved by the ousted Awami League-led government in April 2024. However, after the political changeover in August that year, the interim government has annulled the previous policy and formulated a new one.

The new policy comes as Bangladesh is set to graduate from the least developed country (LDC) status next year, when the country will lose its current duty-free and quota-free market privileges, driving up the cost of its export products in international markets.

The policy has been prepared as a strategic tool to prepare the country for post-LDC and other upcoming challenges, the government said in a gazette on November 19.



As per the gazette, all activities relating to the logistics sector and its sub-sectors will follow this policy. It is expected to support trade growth, attract investment, raise efficiency across the supply chain and help develop a skilled workforce.

The policy provides direction for advancing logistics services, formulating specific strategies for sub-sectors, and introducing measurable performance indicators.

It also aims to reduce the time and cost of logistics by improving efficiency in production, collection, storage, transport, shipping, customs clearance and distribution in line with international standards.

A seamless and uninterrupted logistics ecosystem is envisioned by integrating all service providers under a unified framework. The development of multimodal infrastructure will be prioritised, alongside the optimal use of existing facilities.

The policy also promises advanced, digitalised logistics management, including modern tracking and tracing systems.

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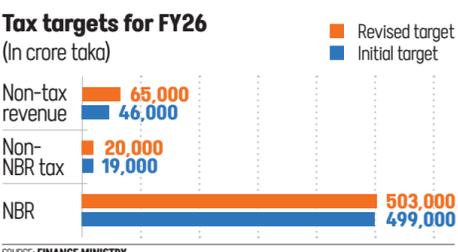
Revenue goal hiked by Tk 24,000cr on strong Q1 performance

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Going against the usual practice and history, the interim government has raised the revenue collection target for the current fiscal year (FY) by 5 percent, or Tk 24,000 crore.

The revised target for FY2025-26 was approved at a meeting of the Coordination Council earlier this month, chaired by Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed, taking the goal to Tk 588,000 crore from the original Tk 564,000 crore, a finance ministry official told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

The upward adjustment follows stronger-than-expected revenue performance in the July-September



period. Revenue rose by 17.6 percent in the first quarter, far higher than the 4.94 percent growth recorded in the same period a year ago. With the election nearing, officials expect collections to improve further as economic recovery continues, and reform measures gain traction.

Ordinarily, revenue authorities fall short of their initial targets, and the government pares back the goal near the end of the fiscal year. Even then, the reduced targets are often missed, largely due to sluggish performance by the National Board of Revenue (NBR), which generates about 90 percent of state revenue.

Non-NBR tax targets have been increased by Tk 4,000 crore to Tk 20,000 crore, and non-tax revenue by Tk 19,000 crore to Tk 65,000 crore under the revised plan.

In recent years, NBR has even failed to meet the targets set by the International

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NBR logs 16% tax growth in Jul-Oct



MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Revenue collection rose nearly 16 percent year-on-year in the first four months of the current fiscal year, thanks to a turbulent base period last year and a more settled political and business climate now.

Even so, the figure fell short of the four-month target set by the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

A senior NBR official described the performance as "nothing special" at a time when the government, in a rare move, has raised the full-year target.

The NBR collected Tk 119,478 crore in the July-October period of fiscal year 2025-26, according to the board's provisional data.

All three main revenue streams contributed to the rise. Local level value-added tax (VAT) collection reached Tk 46,878 crore, up from Tk 37,567 crore a year earlier, marking around a 25 percent increase.

Income and travel taxes rose to Tk 37,849 crore, a 16 percent rise on the

same period last year. Customs duties from international trade increased 4.53 percent to Tk 34,751 crore, due to higher imports after restrictions were eased.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an NBR official said the July-October growth was "nothing special" because the government has raised the annual target.

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"Every year, the government revises the annual target down. But this year, the target is raised, which will be challenging for the NBR," the official told The Daily Star.

Despite the rise in collection, the NBR fell short of its Tk 136,697 crore target for the first four months by 11 percent. The full-year target currently stands at Tk 499,000 crore.

The official said the gap between actual collection and target may narrow this year as the NBR has

expanded its workforce by increasing tax zones nationwide.

Meanwhile, economists said that the latest growth figures need careful reading because the base period was marked by uncertainty and a shaky business climate.

After the July uprising and political changeover last year, revenue collection in the July-October period was slow. "So, comparing with that base won't give us the real picture," said Prof Abu Eusuf, executive director of Research and Policy Integration for

Development. He added that the return filing deadline in November may bring in some extra to the coffers, though hitting the full year goal will remain difficult.

The economist said that there are ongoing discussions about automation, but the systems in place are not yet able to deliver immediate results.

"So, revenue collection remains a significant challenge."

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ADP spending inches up in Jul-Oct Still lowest in 8 years

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The ministries and divisions of the government spent 8.33 percent of their total allocation in the first four months of the current fiscal year, thanks to a slight increase in expenditure during this period.

Between July and October, Tk 19,878 crore was spent, according to statistics from the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the Ministry of Planning.

Although the spending rate is higher than last year, the actual amount is the lowest in the past eight years due to the interim government reducing the total size of the annual development programme (ADP) to Tk 238,695 crore.

By the same period last fiscal year, Tk 21,978 crore had been spent, accounting for 7.90 percent of the allocation.

In October alone, the implementation rate rose to 3.23 percent from 3.15 percent. Actual spending by divisions and ministries reached Tk 7,720 crore this year, compared to Tk 8,762 crore in the same month last year.

Although stability has returned this year, the expected rebound in project execution has not yet materialised.

IMED officials said that development work nearly came to a halt in July-August of the previous fiscal year, as the student-led uprising and the fall of the government disrupted normal operations.

They added that implementing agencies were instructed to start planning and spending from the very beginning of the fiscal year.

Yet, many projects remain at a standstill because contractors who left during last year's political unrest have not returned, causing delays in several important sectors.

Moreover, the lack of local government representatives has slowed the rollout of new projects.

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