

# THE MOBILE RESET

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## SAVING MONEY or buying trouble?

**LANG GUO**, Country Manager, HONOR Bangladesh.

With the government implementing NEIR to curb illegal handsets, we speak with Lang Guo, Country Manager of HONOR Bangladesh. He explains how this move protects consumers and why official devices are the safer choice.

**The Daily Star(TDS):** The government has recently taken stricter steps to curb the usage of unofficial/illegal handsets (NEIR implementation). How do you evaluate this move?

**Lang Guo (LG):** I see this as the beginning of a sustainable 'New Era' - one where innovation, quality and service are the core drivers of growth. With the implementation of NEIR, consumers can know for sure that they're buying genuine, safe devices in a transparent market. It creates a level playing field that enables us to operate properly and contribute to the country's digital growth.

**TDS:** How severely has the grey market impacted your potential growth, and how do you see that changing post-regulation?

**LG:** It's been a real challenge. The grey market has pulled customers away from official channels and created this uneven playing field that has held us back. But with NEIR, we're expecting things to



**"Your smartphone is your identity and your personal security. Saving a bit of money up front just isn't worth the risks - no warranty, potentially fake parts, security threats, and higher repair costs down the line. With NEIR in place, official devices are now the safest, most reliable, and most future-proof choice you can make."**

shift. We are expecting fewer grey devices coming in, more trust and stronger demand in official channels. Overall, we expect a more stable market condition.

**TDS:** How does buying an official device contribute to the national exchequer compared to the unofficial market?

**LG:** Every official device

contributes to VAT, customs duty, and taxes that go straight into supporting national development and the country's digital infrastructure. The government can then invest in connectivity, innovation, and technology. Grey market devices skip all of these. This hurts the economy and local jobs. Compliance creates a healthy ecosystem where brands like us can invest more confidently, partners can grow, and consumers get reliable service.

**TDS:** What are the specific risks they face regarding data security, hardware authenticity, or after-sales support that they avoid by choosing an official unit? How do you ensure after-sales service to the customer?

**LG:** When you buy unofficial, you're risking serious data security issues, potentially fake or tampered hardware, no warranty, no access to genuine parts, and unreliable software updates. All these can seriously compromise your device's safety and lifespan. With HONOR, we have built a nationwide after-sales network with authorised service centres, original spare parts, transparent warranty policies, and continuous OTA updates.

## 8 STEPS TO CHECK IF YOUR PHONE IS LEGAL

TAGABUN TAHARIM TITUN

Bangladesh will use the NEIR system to block unregistered or cloned phones. Here are some quick checks to keep your handset working.

### STEP 1:

#### Find the IMEI

Dial \*#06 → #note the 15-digit IMEI.



### STEP 2:

#### Instant SMS check

Type KVD <space> <15-digit IMEI> → send to 16002. You'll get an instant reply saying if the device is valid.



### STEP 3:

#### Always check first

Before payment, run the SMS check (step 2) or ask the seller to show a valid NEIR confirmation.



### STEP 4:

#### Got a phone from abroad?

Register it online. Go to [neir.btrc.gov.bd](http://neir.btrc.gov.bd) → create an account → choose "Special Registration" → enter IMEI → upload documents → submit. You'll get SMS confirmation.



### STEP 5:

#### Documents to upload

Passport, purchase receipt, customs duty certificate (if applicable).



### STEP 6:

#### Check phones already in use

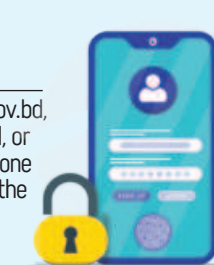
Dial \*1616#, follow prompts and enter IMEI or check via the NEIR portal or your operator's customer care to confirm registration.



### STEP 7:

#### De-register first

De-register via [neir.btrc.gov.bd](http://neir.btrc.gov.bd), your operator's app/portal, or \*1616#. The SIM on the phone must be registered under the seller's NID.



### STEP 8:

#### Lost phone? Block it fast

Block or unblock a device anytime through the NEIR portal or call your operator's helpline.



## The Crackdown That Could Rewrite the Phone Market



**"Official imports ensure quality, safety, and reliable after-sales support. They increase the local demand for packaging, transportation, retail infrastructure, and other supplier services, keeping a meaningful share of the value chain within the domestic economy."**

Md Asaduzzaman  
Director of Marketing  
Xiaomi Bangladesh

FROM PAGE S1

### CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGAL IMPORTS

Under NEIR, any phone without a valid IMEI (identity number) will be deactivated after a grace period. This is intended to stop unauthorised, cloned and refurbished phones from flooding the market. Without this, prices of large volumes of illegal and refurbished sets enter the country. NEIR will help detect these devices and protect domestic manufacturers.

Consumers have been reassured that phones already active on networks will stay on, and even expatriate workers get relaxed rules: those with BMET registration can bring in up to three phones tax-free (one personal plus two new). In short, the government is phasing in enforcement and easing some import rules to prevent a sudden supply shock.

### TAX AND DUTY REFORMS

Simultaneously, officials are preparing sharp duty cuts on legal imports. Smartphones through official channels currently carry about a 58%-61% tax burden.

Crucially, the cuts will be coordinated with local industry: any duty reduction on imported phones will be matched by lower VAT and other taxes for the 13-14 domestic assembly plants. As Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser for the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology, explained, the aim is "fair competition" - protecting the Dhaka factories that build phones for brands like Samsung, Walton, Vivo, Oppo and others. In fact, the government has already instructed that tariffs on handsets assembled locally be lowered in step with import cuts. This alignment is meant to keep foreign investment coming into Bangladesh's budding phone-making industry.

### ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF LEGAL IMPORTS

"The most important phenomenon is that official imports generate broad, measurable economic value far beyond the product itself," said Md Asaduzzaman, Director of Marketing in Xiaomi Bangladesh. "They contribute directly to government revenue through customs duties, VAT, and income taxes, while also creating formal, salaried employment across logistics, sales, finance, compliance, and after-sales services." At the same time, they increase local demand for packaging, transportation, retail infrastructure, and other supplier

services, keeping a meaningful share of the value chain within the domestic economy. Official brands also invest significantly in nationwide spare parts and technical training, which improves consumer protection, skill development, and service-sector growth. Collectively, these factors support business formalisation, strengthen investor confidence, and lay the groundwork for future local manufacturing and higher foreign direct investment.

In contrast to the informal grey market, this is stable employment with benefits. Beyond factories, official imports support a wide network of distributors, retailers and service technicians. Bangladesh had around 38 lakh of total handset sales in the first half of 2024, and each legal sale involves logistics, retail staff, and warranty support.

Official phones come with valid warranties and certified quality. Illegally imported sets often lack any warranty and can be substandard. By contrast, legally imported smartphones must meet regulatory standards and can be repaired or exchanged locally.

### CONSUMER ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

A key concern is whether clamping down on grey phones will make handsets unaffordable. For example, an iPhone 17 Pro Max is officially around 220,000-250,000 taka, but in the grey market, the cost decreases to 180,000-190,000 taka. "While illegal phones may appear cheaper, they evade taxes and provide no warranty or consumer protection," Asaduzzaman added. "To keep phones affordable, we are expanding locally assembled models and strengthening entry-level offerings, and many brands are providing financing and instalment plans so consumers can access reliable devices at fair and comfortable prices."

In practice, companies are also looking at ways to keep prices competitive. On balance, authorities say, consumers will gain safer, guaranteed phones at gradually lower net prices once the policy changes settle in.

Overall, in the long term, these measures will strengthen Bangladesh's digital ecosystem. Greater formal imports mean more tax revenue for infrastructure, more jobs in tech and retail, and higher-quality devices for users. Once the NEIR is fully enforced and duties are adjusted, the expectation is for sustained growth in smartphone adoption, which will serve as a key driver of the country's digital economy.

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