

5G handset production hits 1 lakh again amid rollout

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Local manufacturing of 5G handsets crossed the one lakh mark in October for the second time since June 2024, as manufacturers grew optimistic following the commercial launch of 5G services by mobile operators.

In October, local assemblers produced 1.08 lakh 5G handsets, up from 63,000 units in September, according to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

Earlier, in June 2024, production had also exceeded one lakh units, reaching 1.55 lakh.

Despite the increase, 5G devices accounted for only 4.74 percent of the total 22.81 lakh handsets manufactured in Bangladesh in October. Feature phones dominated production with a 61.21 percent share, while 4G handsets accounted for 34.29 percent.

The rise in local 5G handset production followed the limited commercial rollout of 5G services by Robi Axiata and Grameenphone from September 1, 2025.

Grameenphone introduced 5G across all eight divisional headquarters, though coverage remains limited to selected areas. Robi launched 5G services in parts of Dhaka, Chattogram, and Sylhet.

"5G penetration has started in the country as customers are increasingly looking for 5G handsets. That's why we have stepped up and started manufacturing," said Rezwanaul Hoque, CEO of ISMARTU Technology BD Limited, the local maker of Tecno handsets.

He added that Tecno has already launched four 5G smartphone models locally.

Hoque also said that the global supply chain is now dominated by 5G devices, prompting

MANUFACTURING

22.81 lakh handsets manufactured in October : Feature phones account for over **61%** of October production

5G DEVICE PENETRATION

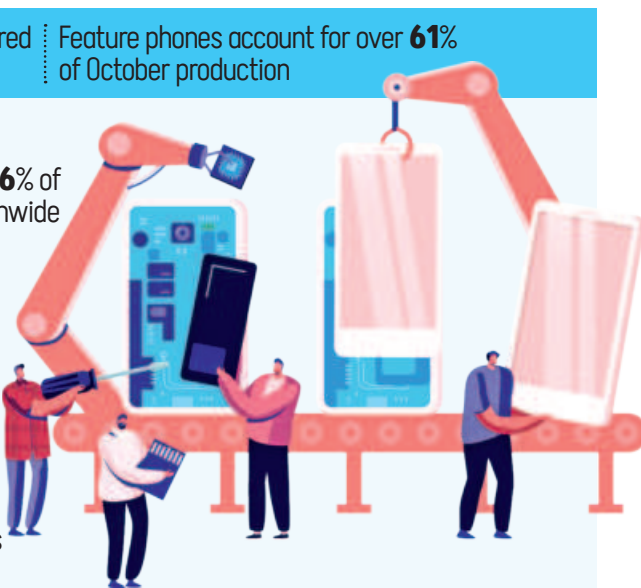
5G devices account for less than **5%** of total handsets : Only about **6.6%** of devices nationwide are currently 5G-capable

DEVELOPMENTS

Commercial launch of 5G by GP and Robi boosted confidence

5G OUTLOOK

5G adoption may take 5-7 years to match current 4G usage levels



many local manufacturers to shift their production. "After the launch of 5G, customers prefer the handset to come with 5G support if the price goes beyond Tk 30,000," he added.

According to BTRC, around 62 percent of devices currently in use nationwide are smartphones, most of which are 4G-enabled. Industry estimates suggest only 6.6 percent of devices can connect to 5G networks.

Imported and expatriate-gifted handsets make up roughly 50 to 60 percent of the smartphone market. Many of these are high-end 5G-ready devices, though a significant portion is refurbished models, industry insiders said.

Robi Axiata said 5G adoption will be gradual. "In 200 areas, 5G penetration among devices is already 12-15 percent, with 120 areas reaching nearly 20 percent penetration. Our initial focus will be rolling out 5G to these areas," said Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory affairs officer of Robi Axiata.

He added that most imported and gifted handsets registered on Robi's network are compatible with 5G.

According to Robi estimates, it may take five to seven years for 5G adoption to reach current 4G levels, as affordability and economic factors remain key challenges.

ADB gives \$688m for Ctg-Dohazari rail line upgrade

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the government of Bangladesh signed loan agreements worth \$688 million on December 22 to upgrade the 35-kilometre railway line from Chattogram to Dohazari, aiming to strengthen rail connectivity along the country's key southern corridor.

The funding will support the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation-Chattogram-Dohazari Railway Project, which also includes building a 2.5-kilometre railway bypass.

Once completed, the bypass will allow direct train services from Dhaka to Cox's Bazar without stopping at Chattogram station, reducing travel time and improving efficiency.

According to a press release, the project aims to create seamless connectivity along the Dhaka-Chattogram-Cox's Bazar corridor, a vital route for both passengers and freight, boosting regional transport efficiency and economic growth.

The agreements were signed at a ceremony held at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) office in Dhaka by ERD Secretary Md Shahriar Kader Siddiky and ADB Country Director for Bangladesh Hoe Yun Jeong.

ADB officials said the project would make rail services between Dhaka and Cox's Bazar more resilient, reliable, and efficient, encouraging a shift from road to rail transport. Improved connectivity is expected to stimulate economic activity along the corridor, particularly benefiting tourism and fisheries in the Cox's Bazar region.

The Dhaka-Chattogram-Cox's Bazar corridor, part of the Trans-Asia Railway network, currently carries about 32 percent of passenger traffic and 55 percent of freight traffic, showing its strategic importance for national and regional economic integration.

Key project components include elevating tracks, improving drainage, modern signalling, dual-gauging of tracks, and procuring 30 energy-efficient locomotives to cut fuel use and emissions.

The project will also enhance Bangladesh Railway's operational capacity through staff training and upgrade three stations with accessible, user-friendly facilities and spaces for private-sector commercial activities.

NBR allows holiday e-filing for poll aspirants

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has introduced special arrangements to allow individuals planning to contest the upcoming national parliamentary election to file their income tax e-returns on holidays.

Under this initiative, aspiring candidates can submit their income tax returns online even on weekly holidays. This will reduce pressure ahead of nomination deadlines, according to a press release.

To make the process easier, the NBR, through its e-Tax Management Unit, has opened a dedicated help desk at the e-Tax Management Unit office at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) in Dhaka.

The help desk will assist with online income tax return filing and provide both technical and procedural support.

The NBR said the help desk will operate today from 2:00pm to 5:00pm and tomorrow from 9:00am to 5:00pm.

The service will also be available during regular office hours on Sunday and Monday, the revenue authority added.

WB offers \$151m to boost job support

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The World Bank (WB) has approved an additional \$150.75 million in financing to help Bangladesh scale up employment opportunities and improve incomes for low-income youth and microentrepreneurs, with a special focus on women and communities vulnerable to climate change.

The funding will support the Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE) Project, extending benefits to around 1.76 lakh additional young people nationwide, on top of the 2.33 lakh beneficiaries already covered, according to a WB press release issued on December 18.

The expanded programme will provide a range of services, including skills training, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship

development, and access to microfinance.

Besides, new initiatives will promote women's empowerment through access to quality childcare and climate-resilient livelihood options, helping communities adapt to environmental shocks, stated the press release.

The additional financing will also allow the project to reach rural areas, pilot home-based childcare services with training and start-up grants for women, and strengthen job intermediation through fairs, employer linkages, and support in contract negotiations, it added.

With this latest support, total World Bank financing for the RAISE project has reached \$350.75 million, aiming to create wider employment opportunities and strengthen small business growth across Bangladesh.

Prime Bank signs payroll agreement with Fame Group

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC has recently entered into a payroll agreement with Fame Group to provide dedicated banking services and digital payroll solutions to the group's employees.

The agreement was signed at the bank's corporate office in Dhaka, according to a press release.

Under the arrangement, employees of Fame Group will receive a range of banking benefits from Prime Bank, including preferential services as well as access to credit card and loan facilities.

They will also be able to use PrimePay, the bank's digital payroll platform, which offers automated salary disbursement and round-the-clock corporate payment solutions.

M Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of Prime Bank PLC, and Masud Alam, managing director of Fame Group, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.



PHOTO: PRIME BANK PLC

M Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of Prime Bank PLC, and Masud Alam, managing director of Fame Group, pose for photographs in the presence of officials of both organisations at the bank's corporate office in Dhaka recently.

ACI, Deli launch strategic partnership for stationery products



Officials of ACI and Deli pose for photographs at an event at Sheraton Dhaka on December 24 under the theme "Beyond Boundaries, Beyond the Ordinary".

PHOTO: ACI

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Deli, a global stationery brand, and local conglomerate ACI have launched a strategic partnership to expand the range of premium stationery products in Bangladesh, with a focus on creativity, productivity and innovation.

The collaboration was formally unveiled at an event held at Sheraton Dhaka on December 24 under the theme "Beyond Boundaries, Beyond the Ordinary", according to a press release.

The programme was attended by Mars Ma, stationery general manager of Deli

International, and Arif Dowla, managing director of ACI Group, alongside senior officials of both organisations, business partners and guests from various sectors.

Under the partnership, Deli will bring its international expertise in high-quality stationery products, while ACI will leverage its extensive local distribution network and market presence to make the products widely available across the country.

The companies said the collaboration aims to introduce a broad range of world-class stationery solutions designed for students, professionals and creative users. The products are expected to combine functionality, durability and modern design, while aligning global standards with local requirements.

Speaking at the event, representatives of both organisations said they were confident the partnership would set new benchmarks in the country's stationery market and encourage users to think beyond conventional boundaries in learning and work.



Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman of Rangpur Foundry Limited, is seen attending the company's 45th annual general meeting held virtually on December 24, along with other officials of the company.

PHOTO: RANGPUR FOUNDRY LIMITED

Shimanto Bank inks deal with Dhaka Central Int'l Medical College & Hospital

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shimanto Bank PLC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Dhaka Central International Medical College & Hospital at the bank's head office recently.

Under the agreement, all debit and credit cardholders of Shimanto Bank, along with its employees, will be able to avail exclusive benefits and special facilities while receiving healthcare services from Dhaka Central International Medical College & Hospital, according to a press release.

The MoU was signed by Md Sahidul Islam, head of business of Shimanto Bank, and Md Hadiul Karim Khan, head of marketing of Dhaka Central International Medical College & Hospital, on behalf of their respective organisations.

Sharif Zahirul Islam, head of cards and ADC of Shimanto Bank, and Md Musa Ali, senior assistant manager and zonal in-charge of corporate marketing of Dhaka Central International Medical College & Hospital, along with senior officials from both organisations, were present at the signing ceremony.



PHOTO: SHIMANTO BANK PLC

Md Sahidul Islam, head of business of Shimanto Bank, and Md Hadiul Karim Khan, head of marketing of Dhaka Central International Medical College & Hospital, pose with the signed documents at Shimanto Bank's head office recently.

RFL approves 23% dividend

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Rangpur Foundry Limited (RFL) has approved a 23 percent dividend for its shareholders for the financial year 2024-25 at the company's 45th annual general meeting (AGM), held on December 24 through a digital platform.

The AGM was attended by Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman, Rathendra Nath Paul, managing director, Shafiqul Alam, acting chief financial officer, Muhammad Aminur Rahman, company secretary, and shareholders of the company.

Directors Sabiha Amjad, Chowdhury Kamruzzaman, Abu Taher Chowdhury,

Zakia Sultana, and Uzma Chowdhury (finance), Chowdhury Atiur Rasul, director (accounts), also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, shareholders expressed their appreciation for the company's performance over the years and provided suggestions aimed at further strengthening business operations, according to a press release.

The managing director briefed investors on RFL's overall business performance and outlined the company's plans. Concluding the meeting, the chairman thanked participants for their continued support and cooperation.