CONNEXION

steering telecom ahead

Jul-Aug 2014

THE FUTURE OF BANGLADESH
MOBILE TELEPHONY

Editorial

FROM THE DESK OF EDITOR

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL BOARD

Mobile telecommunication is a significant contributor to the national economie development. Mobile services stimulate activities in the wider economy, further boosting GDP. It provides sustainable employment opportunities to millions, improves productivity of employees and businesses. It has many other benefits and social benefits e.g. mobile money is one of the emerging services creating huge impact on commoners' lives.

Mobile telephony has been described as 'the single most transformative technology development' of recent times and there is no exception of the technology implication in Bangladesh.

The Mobile telecommunication sector is one of the brightest areas which have immensely contributed in the socio economic development of the country.

It has emerged as the most preferred method of connectivity, providing to over 116 million people of the country. Despite all positivity the sector is over burdened with sector-specific taxes which is harmful and prevents consumer take-up of mobile, services discourages consumer usage and hinders investment in networks and services.

MNOs are enablers as they have the geographic reach and provide access to voice and data to 99% of the population. During the last 20 years Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) have invested over BDT 71,870 crore for huge infrastructure development all over the country.

Only in 2013, the industry has invested over BDT 11,438 crore for procuring spectrum and rolling out of 3G network. The telecom industry is capital intensive thus requiring high CAPEX. Even after 19 years of investment, four companies out of six remain in negative profitability. This is due to high taxation which hinders the growth of the industry.

Mobile Network Operators are contemplating to invest further, however, a conducive regulatory environment and sustainable taxation policy is a must to attract these investments. Mobile communication is the future of Bangladesh but there are many road blocks e.g. the country is yet to have proper telecom policy and roadmap.

If the government would like to use technology as a means for graduating the country to a middle income country then the industry needs nourishment, technology neutrality, spectrum roadmap, needs consistency in taxation and regulatory policies.

The sector needs more attention from the government to continue its growth and support the government agenda for national development for being technologically savvy.

Publication of the current issue of Connexion coincides with the joint seminar from GSMA and AMTOB "Realizing mobile's potential in Bangladesh".

In view of that Connexion has focused on the cover story with the theme and also incorporated two articles from GSMA.

T I M Nurul Kabir

ABOUT AMTOB

Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh (AMTOB) is a national trade body representing all mobile telecom operators in Bangladesh. AMTOB has emerged as the official voice of the Bangladesh mobile industry to interact with relevant government agencies, regulators, financial institutions, civil society, technical bodies, media and other national and international organizations. It provides a forum to discuss and exchange ideas between the stakeholders and the industry actors for the development of mobile telecom industry through public private dialogue. AMTOB facilitates an environment which is conducive for its members and industry stakeholders with a view to establish a world class cellular infrastructure for delivering benefits of affordable mobile telephony services to the people of Bangladesh to bridge the digital divide.

DID YOU KNOW?

91 percent of adults have their mobile phone within arm's reach 24/7

90 percent of text messages are read within **3 minutes** of being delivered

More people in the world have mobile phones than **toilets**

Mobile phones will eventually **replace** our **wallets, tickets** and **keys**

1 in 4 online searches are conducted on **mobile devices**

AMTOB EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Ziad Shatara
Chairman of AMTOB &
CEO of Banglalink Digital Communications Limited

Vivek Sood
Vice - Chairman of AMTOB &
CEO of Grameenphone Limited

T I M Nurul Kabir
Secretary General of AMTOB

P D Sarma
Member of AMTOB Executive Council &
CEO of Airtel Bangladesh Limited

Mehboob Chowdhury
Member of AMTOB Executive Council &
CEO of Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited (Citycell)

Supun Weerasinghe
Member of AMTOB Executive Council &
CEO of Robi Axiata Limited

Gias Uddin Admed
Member of AMTOB Executive Council &
Managing Director of Teletalk Bangladesh Limited

NUMBERS & ANALYSIS

1 in 8 mobile subscribers will use **m-ticketing** in 2015 for **airline, rail** and **bus travel, festivals, cinemas** and **sports events**

In the next five years, the majority of **brick-and-mortar retail transaction** will **take place** via mobile phones

By 2015, the number of mobile **app downloads** will reach 98 billion

Mobile internet access enabled by smartphones and tablets has nearly **doubled the amount** of time spent online since 2010

There are **5X** as many cellphones in the world as there are **PCs**

THE FUTURE OF BANGLADESH
MOBILE TELEPHONY

Mobile telephony has been described as 'the single most transformative technology development' of recent times and there is no exception of the technology implication in Bangladesh. The Mobile telecommunication sector is one of the brightest areas which have immensely contributed in the socio economic development of the country.

It has emerged as the most preferred method of connectivity, providing to over 116 million people of the country. The sector needs more attention from the government to continue its growth and support the government agenda for national development for being technologically savvy.

During the last 20 years Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) have invested over BDT 71,870 crore for huge infrastructure development all over the country.

Only in 2013, the industry has invested over BDT 11,438 crore for procuring spectrum and rolling out of 3G network. The telecom industry is capital intensive thus requiring high CAPEX. Even after 19 years of investment, four companies out of six remain in negative profitability. This is due to high taxation and obstacles to the growth of the industry.

Most of the Internet users of the country access data via mobile devices, 95% of internet, subscribers use mobile devices for data connectivity. Over the years, mobile operators have invested to build the network to ensure data and broadband connectivity. Broadband is the key to the implementation of the government vision of Digital Bangladesh. Digital Bangladesh can be achieved if the appropriate roadmap and sustainable taxation is in place, the regulatory environment is conducive and if technology neutrality can be ensured.

Back in 1998, this government introduced the National Telecommunication Policy (NTP). Since time has moved and technology has progressed this far that a new telecom policy incorporating the vision of Digital Bangladesh by 2021 is required.

The country desperately needs the revision of its 17 years old National Telecommunication Policy (NTP). In terms of the nation's vision and objective,

we are looking ahead of Vision 2021. In terms of technology, we are now in 4G/LTE era. But our telecommunication policy dates back to 1998. While we can have a separate discussion about how much we have achieved from the 1998 policy, a matter of fact is that it is technologically irrelevant and objective-wise redundant. Just an example -- In fixing the target, the 1998 Policy states that "Tele-density is to be 10 telephones per 100 population within the first quarter of 21st century". However, it is common knowledge that the tele-density is over 71% now.

The current telecom policy was formulated in 1998, with a vision mainly to liberalize the sector and bring Bangladesh under the coverage of basic telecommunication services as well as a few Value Added Services (VAS). In the policy, data services have been described as VAS which has now emerged as very basic services. Over the past years, mobile communication has been established as the basic means of communication for many Bangladeshis. At the same time many of the VAS, as used to be considered in previous days, have now been offered as basic telecom services. Experts working in the sector believe that many of the objectives of the policy have already been achieved so it is not possible to move forward with the policy.

Back in 1998, the policy might have been appropriate but now, by no means, could the country go forward with it as it focuses neither on the mobile sector nor on broadband Internet penetration. Therefore, it is urgently required to have a revision and revisit of the policy. The objectives of the new NTP is to put Bangladesh on the right track for maximizing the benefits of a next generation communication technology and build a knowledge-based middle income economy by 2021.

MNOs are highly enthusiastic to take part, facilitate, contribute and uphold the spirit of the Digital Bangladesh vision. At the outset of the new Government, this is the opportune moment to re-energize the sector with a new policy which will provide guidance. The telecom sector has an expectation that the revised NTP will incorporate provision so that broadband and data can propel the new economy as these are the next growth frontiers.

The revised NTP shall cover convergence of technology, network and services, technology and service neutrality, maximize utilization of the deployed assets and increase competitiveness of local businesses through adoption of the communication technology. It is also urgently necessary for policy integration between telecom, banking, commerce, health and education, so that the interdependences are clearly defined and policy does not become a barrier for uptake of such services.

The key policy issues are needed to be taken into consideration e.g. licensing regime. Under the licensing regime the following areas are to be considered - remove inefficiencies, simplification, neutrality and unification, provision meant to encourage private and foreign investment.

It also requires focusing on regulatory regime built on transparency, accountability, trust, healthy competition, level playing field and commercial freedom. Nonetheless, consumer benefit and welfare, affordability, Quality of Service (QoS), complaint handling and innovation also need to be considered.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Act (BTRA) Rules formulation under the Telecom Act has been overdue and regulator's cooperation is necessary to initiate the process. The Telecom Act is one of the very few laws in Bangladesh that does not have any rules under the Act. The rules will benefit Regulator, Government, consumers and operators equally by giving the much needed clarity in execution of the Law.

Formulation of the rules would increase the certainty and predictability of the regulatory regime significantly, ultimately contributing for a better investment climate. MoPT & IT is given the right through the provisions of the Act to take on the task of Rule formulation and there can't be any other time better than now to do it. This would be a monumental achievement by the Government which would be appreciated for long time in the future by all parties.

Spectrum Roadmap- NTP is expected to set some guiding principles regarding allocation and assignment of spectrum, but it is important to start working on Spectrum Roadmap on a national level to secure spectrum for mobile broadband.

Network CAPEX investment has direct relationship with the availability of spectrum. Without a proper spectrum release plan, which ought to be time bounded, the mobile industry runs into the risk of over investment in the network. This will ultimately increase the price of the services, reduce QoS and slow down the growth of broadband penetration in Bangladesh.

National Frequency Allocation Plan (NFAP) was revised and updated as per ITU recommendation in 2010. After the publication of the revised NFAP, it was anticipated that assignment of spectrum will follow the plan.

The spectrum roadmap proposal will give explicit direction about the specific bands that need to be reserved for the mobile industry and the spectrum release time plan with proper analysis and recommendation. Anomalies in the existing allocation and probable re-arrangements needed to free up some of the valuable spectrum would also be highlighted and suggested. Broadly the proposal will include the following: Spectrum demand forecast for the next 10 years through a proper forecasting model, recommended spectrum bands for the mobile industry

and re-arrangement/re-allocation plan of the existing valuable bands.

The current telecom law was formulated in 2001 in line with the telecom policy. The law was amended in 2010, but it still holds the old vision. The current policy reads that the government would establish a telecommunication regulatory commission. But a regulator has been in operation for the last 12 years.

One of the objectives of the policy was to establish a robust private sector, as it was beginning to boom at the time, but the situation is quite different now. The country also needs a telecom roadmap to complement the NTP. Nonetheless, the revision of International Long Distance Telecommunication Services (ILDTS) policy is also necessary to infuse competition among the interconnect operators.

> **Mobile Telecom Industry Remains the Largest Contributor to Foreign Direct Investment**

In order to continue current rate of growth of the country's mobile telecommunication sector which has been working as a change maker by contributing immensely in the national exchequer, bringing foreign direct investment and creating jobs for the millions, it is urgently necessary to revise the NTP. MNOs recommend harmonizing telecommunications policy with that of education, health, ICT, broadband, broadcasting, media and electronic commerce to materialize the vision of Digital Bangladesh.

Mobile Telecom Sector and Tax Regime- Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) have been working relentlessly in line with the government's vision of Digital Bangladesh to connect the unconnected as an enabler at grass root level and contributing immensely in the economic development of the country. The sector is also playing an important role in realizing Government's vision of Digital Bangladesh. The sustainability and growth of this sector are very vital for the overall development of the country. Telecom industry especially mobile phone industry is one of the major drivers of the economy in Bangladesh. The industry has been significantly contributing to the country's GDP growth. It is one of the largest employers, direct and indirect, the largest

contributor to the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as well as the biggest source of government's tax revenue in the country.

Unfortunately, while the telecom sector is a catalyst for the implementation of the government vision of Digital Bangladesh via providing connectivity-the high taxation-on the already overburdened MNOs-will definitely impact adversely on the Digital Bangladesh vision.

On one hand the industry is now providing lowest call tariff in the world; on the other it is burdened with heavy tax. Mobile operators are paying about BDT 55 to government for every BDT 100 they earn.

Tax on mobile connection is counterproductive as the tax on SIM connection increases the total cost of ownership of a mobile phone and effectively reduces total tax collection by the government exchequer. The proposed Tk. 100 tax on SIM replacement is another hurdle placed in the way of the industry's growth. The customers are asked to pay when they are not getting any additional advantage nor does MNOs get any commercial benefit. This would only make MNOs cost of service to customers more expensive.

This is again against the spirit of Digital Bangladesh and will hamper the growth of mobile penetration in the country. Mobile Network Operators are contemplating to invest further, however, a conducive regulatory environment and sustainable taxation policy is a must to attract these investments. Mobile communication is the future of Bangladesh but there are many road blocks e.g. the country is yet to have proper telecom policy and roadmap.

If the government would like to use technology as a means for graduating the country to a middle income country then the industry needs nourishment, technology neutrality, spectrum roadmap, needs consistency in taxation and regulatory policies are a few prerequisite for the further development of telecom sector.
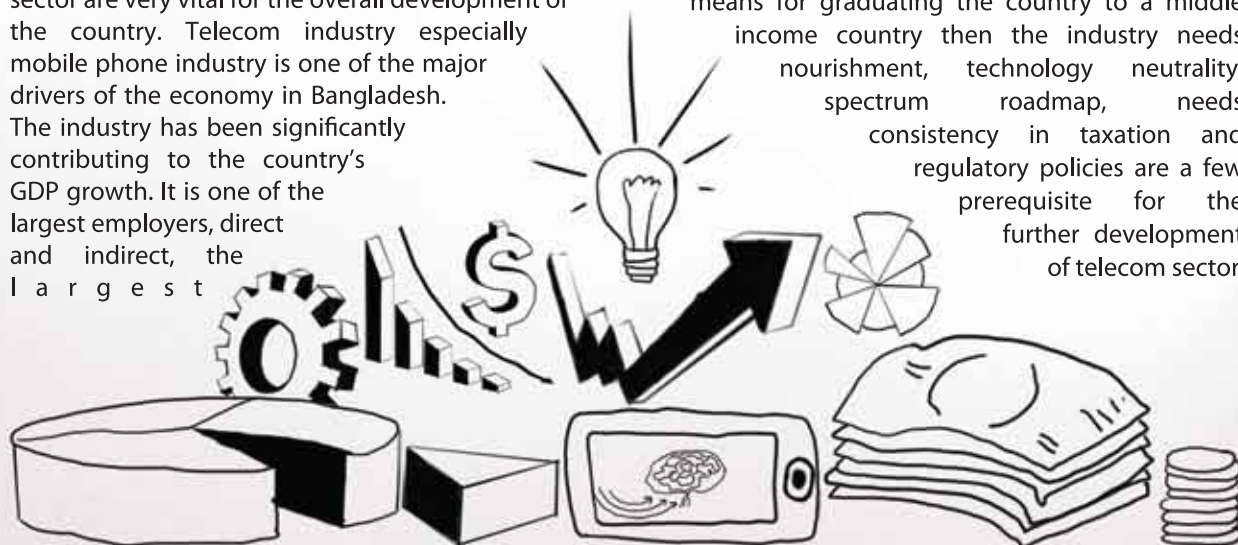
THE STATE OF MOBILE IN
BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is, in many ways, a country ahead of its time in terms mobile access. Despite being ranked as a low income country, over 50%[1] of the population subscribes to mobile services and has outpaced all its peers in terms of network coverage. The combination of limited disposable income and more mature mobile usage means the customers of Bangladesh are more discerning. Mobile network operators are looking to innovative Value Added Services (VAS) to remain competitive and respond to the slowing growth in core mobile services. Services that add value to and improve on the livelihoods of the consumer are more likely to support these goals.

1. Bangladesh is one of the most populous and most densely populated countries in the world. Mobile penetration levels are relatively high, even in rural areas (something not seen in most other emerging markets). However, consumer spending levels are among the lowest in the world. Given the reality that there will be less reliance on growth from new subscribers over the next 4–5 years, mobile operators will need to develop new revenue streams beyond core mobile connectivity – services that support basic human needs around agriculture, education and employment provide a key opportunity.

Bangladesh has a myriad of social challenges, including low literacy rates, child malnutrition, poor access to electricity and a significant urban-rural divide. However, mobile penetration is higher than would be expected given its low-income status. Subscriber penetration reached 40% at the beginning of 2014 and it is expected to grow to 50% by 2020. Bangladesh has a unique pedigree given the transformative impact of the Grameenphone Village Phone programme – a pioneering initiative started in the 1990s to empower rural women through mobile services – and subsequent rapid roll-out of network infrastructure.

[1] Excluding youth under 16

Between 1997 and 2002 mobile coverage swiftly spread to the majority of the country, many years ahead of other emerging markets. While 3G auctions have only recently been conducted, the provision of basic 2G coverage is widespread. However, the prepaid nature of the market and low incomes of new subscribers means that ARPU levels are low (among the lowest in the world). This underlines the need to develop new revenue streams, we believe the key opportunities are in mobile data and VAS services that have both a commercial and social impact.

2. Bangladesh is predominantly a prepaid and 2G market, as 3G has only recently been deployed following delays in the auction process (3G today makes up just 2% of connections). However, mobile internet penetration is over 20%, mostly from 2G feature phones. In other words, there is a latent desire for internet access that is growing. The only question is how fast this occurs, which will depend on affordability and tariff structures.

Bangladesh is a prepaid and 2G market; 97% of connections are prepaid and 98% are 2G. In the first half of 2013, smartphones accounted for only 6% of total handset shipments (a local brand, Symphony Mobile, is the largest vendor with a 37% handset market share of which 92% are feature phones and 8% smartphones). The low 3G penetration is due to the late release of 3G spectrum in 2013. However, mobile internet has reached 20% penetration by delivering mobile data services using 2G networks. The combination of 3G spectrum now in play, solid existing

site coverage, and consumer appetite for internet use in urban and rural areas means this trend is accelerating (we expect 3G connections to surpass 2G by 2020). The only question is pace: this could very well occur faster than expected, if the number one challenge of affordable access (both airtime and handsets) can be overcome.

3. The use of mobile in driving socio-economic improvement is on the rise. From its pioneering roots in microfinance 30 years ago, the country now has a relatively solid mobile consumer base, much of which are underserved in core life needs. Mobile operators are demonstrating the potential for social VAS, and while we expect this to continue to grow, it will take time. There is still an opportunity for public and private investment in providing seed capital for the innovation that is not yet 'market-led', with a key role for government in facilitating this process.

While it is true that the majority of unconnected individuals reside in rural areas, this is due to the fact that the majority of population are in rural areas. The opportunity to address the underserved in urban settings is far from insignificant – we estimate six million city dwellers are yet to own a mobile. There are a host of sector opportunities that result from the widespread access to mobile phones yet the lack of access to basic services — including responding to natural disasters, driving gains in agricultural productivity, improving educational and employment outcomes, or increasing financial inclusion. So, how should the various players in the Mobile for Development ecosystem respond to this opportunity?

Mobile operators are increasingly involved in leading commercial VAS services that carry social impact and, although there are challenges, we expect this to continue over the next two to three years. This is, on its own, a positive story given the implicit commercial value of such services attributed through operator investment. However, in order to drive increases in ARPU, new approaches to marketing and pricing these services would help, particularly as personal incomes rise. For

example, use of flexible credit scoring techniques; experimenting to include VAS as part of bundle packages alongside traditional access services (voice, SMS and data); or using VAS as a more defined tool for customer retention (e.g. brand loyalty).

Donors and NGOs have a growing presence providing seed capital for services that have not yet scaled and are not market-led (BRAC is a notable example). However, we believe there is still an important untapped opportunity for the venture capital (VC) and impact investor community. Dhaka is not yet an innovation hub on the scale of regional peers such as Bangalore, Colombo or (further afield) Nairobi. However, this is not due to a lack of entrepreneurs. There are clear challenges faced by private investors seeking to place capital in Bangladesh ICT, including the market operating environment and the lower likelihood of exit opportunities. To accelerate the process of these barriers being overcome, we believe it is important investors play a direct role by fostering an enabling environment of education and mentorship in addition to capital. This is not a short term game, but the long term rewards for early entrants are attractive.

Government also has an important role to play. Bangladesh has an opportune landscape for Mobile for Development services – high mobile penetration and a number of social challenges that can demonstrably be helped through mobile technology. The government set out laudable and ambitious goals around expanding digital empowerment to the mid and low income underserved population as part of its flagship 'Digital Bangladesh' vision. In order to execute this successfully, public policy priorities should be focused on ensuring investment security (particularly for foreign capital), and liquidity in public markets, both of which would help would-be investors (and indeed mobile operators) with more reliable decision making.

Barbara Arese Lucini and Tim Hatt
GSMA Intelligence

> ## Subscriber penetration reached 40% at the beginning of 2014 and it is expected to grow to 50% by 2020

MOBILE ACCESS:
REACHING THE LAST MILE

1. Despite the growth and increasing pervasiveness of mobile networks over the last decade, there is still a section of the population with minimal or no coverage. While there are real geographic and economic reasons for this, it raises questions in the wider debate on the ways and means of providing 'universal' access to mobile and the internet.

Mobile networks are pervasive. 2G coverage now reaches more than 90% of the population in most mature markets and in many emerging ones, and while 3G coverage is generally lower (60-70%) we expect this to rise to similar levels off the back of continued investment by the mobile operators of around $250 billion per year to 2020. However, there remains a section of the population — perhaps 10–15% — that still has little or no coverage. These individuals are largely distributed in emerging markets and based in rural regions, in many ways representing the final frontier of connectivity. This is a result of an unfavourable cost- benefit equation faced by the mobile operators in which geographic impediments, vast distances and the lack of electricity grid access collectively create a significantly increased cost base for the rollout and maintenance of networks which is not compensated for by incremental revenue from a predominantly low income customer base.

We expect an additional 1.1 billion people across emerging markets to subscribe to mobile services for the first time over the 7 year period to 2020. While the majority of these are in rural regions, there is also an opportunity to connect non-adopters in cities who are covered by mobile networks but lack the income to use them. The increasing desire of governments to mandate 'universal' access to mobile and the internet therefore raises the question of how to extend network coverage to the population tail and help to improve affordability. And,

who should bear the financial and operational responsibility given the positive socio-economic impact of bringing mobile connectivity to the previously unserved or unconnected? These are fundamental challenges in realising a digital future whose benefits are felt up and down the income ladder, and it is clear that collaboration between government and private sector players is necessary to achieve this.

2. The final frontier has also become the most publicly visible platform for a raft of experiments with alternative connectivity technologies backed and promoted by big internet players, with aerial networks and the use of white space in the TV spectrum most prominent. So far, these alternative technologies appear to be targeting potential use cases to expand connectivity beyond existing mobile infrastructure to help drive socio-economic impact in emerging markets — such as expanding internet access to remote rural regions and disaster response zones.

However, their viability and disruptive potential on a wider commercial scale in the short to medium term is harder to see. Short of heavily subsidising the cost of internet service and end-user devices (such as handsets or laptops), the significant outlay and increased ongoing cost base of a full-scale network present the risk that access through such means could become more, rather than less, expensive as a share of income than it already is. This matters because affordability is often a larger hurdle to adoption than coverage – a reality seen in many emerging markets where 2G mobile coverage (itself capable of handling low speed internet access) is well above ownership, particularly for low-income rural regions. In addition, there are several operational and technical challenges, and regulatory uncertainty.

Expanding networks to the sky through balloons, drones and satellites has the advantage of providing a wider range of ground coverage, which can help in serving remote rural communities, supplementing efforts to aide disaster responses, and in some cases facilitating backhaul capacity. The use of TV white space (TVWS) has a limited rural use case, with some (albeit very limited) application in urban centres at lower capacity. However, the increasing public visibility of these technologies and promotion from their formidable backers — principally Google, Facebook and Microsoft – prompts the question of whether these could cause disruption at the wider connectivity layer of the mobile sector value chain.

On their merits, we believe this is unlikely, at least in the medium term. Rolling out a scaled network entails an outlay and cost base that is much higher than the current pilots in localised areas and, while the business models to monetise this are not yet clear, it is hard to see how these solutions would not make the cost of accessing the internet more, rather than less, expensive as a share of income than it already is. Second, the technological characteristics make their scaled use in cities very difficult. Finally, they appear to rely on the use of unlicensed models for connectivity and lack of regulatory frameworks, raising questions around quality of service and the risks of planning and investing both for their principal backers and for the ecosystem that would need to form around them to catalyse scale beyond experimentation.

3. We see the more likely intent as part of a wider campaign by the large internet players to gain greater public policy influence. Alternative connectivity strategies are indicative of the increasing pace of innovation in the wider mobile ecosystem. If the first phase of this centred on the service layer (challenging SMS in particular), it now appears to be expanding to target the access level. This time, however, operators are in a stronger position given existing network scale, continued investment and demonstrable innovation of their own.

It is, of course, a difficult and often fruitless task attempting to predict the next move of a serial innovator, and from this the question of whether Google or Facebook harbours ambitions to become a full-scale connectivity provider will likely continue to circle regardless of viability. Indeed, for Google it is not the first foray into telecoms access, with it having laid high-speed fixed fibre broadband networks in three US cities and plans for nine others, as well as a local fibre build in Uganda's capital. However, we believe the real intent here is more pragmatic, with alternative access trials being used as a tool of influence with policy makers and the mobile operators, and potentially to strikelicensing partnerships (as Google's recent public indications suggest). While innovative business models can play a role, the fundamental economics of network deployments to more marginalised populations that are primarily shouldered by the operators cannot be ignored.

It is in this space where a lot of innovation is coming from the mobile operators at the network level in an effort to expand coverage and lower the cost of access. Network share agreements at the passive level (sites, towers and power) have grown over the last several years, with early adopting markets such as India and Pakistan now being joined by wider-scale engagements – the recent infrastructure agreement between eight operators accounting for 551 million mobile connections (or 46% share) across Africa and the Middle East being a prominent example targeting mobile broadband access to unserved rural communities. This sharing has also started to deepen into the Radio Access Network, underpinning savings from build out capex and maintenance opex that can be re-harvested into investment. Finally, where operators have reached remote rural communities, their presence has increasingly attracted energy service companies (or ESCos) through a symbiotic micro economy.

Operator demand for powering base station sites incentiviseESCos to build distributed small scale power plants serving the telecom tower and local communities either through a minigrid or energy hub model, which in turn allows consumers to charge mobile phones (among other things). All of these are win- wins for consumers and a positive influence on the take-up of mobile given that coverage expands and investment rises (it is investment, not the number of competitors, most closely linked with lower unit prices for voice and data).

Tim Hatt and David George
GSMA Intelligence

> **We expect an additional 1.1 billion people across emerging markets to subscribe to mobile services for the first time over the 7 year period to 2020**

Mobile for Development Impact

OMIDYAR NETWORK

The MasterCard Foundation

BANGLADESH TO HOST 54th CTO COUNCIL MEETING & ANNUAL FORUM

COMMONWEALTH TELECOMMUNICATIONS ORGANISATION FORUM 2014

8 - 10 SEPTEMBER 2014, DHAKA, BANGLADESH

ICTs FOR DEVELOPMENT

FROM ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE AND INNOVATIVE SERVICES

Bangladesh will be hosting the 54th Council Meeting and Annual Forum of Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) on 8-10 September 2014 for the first time in the history. The government of Bangladesh will host the event facilitated by the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology (MoPT&IT) and Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

Ministers, decision makers and high level officials from the Telecommunications and ICT sector from the across the Commonwealth and beyond will take part at this event. Regulators, private sector companies and operators consisting of 250-300 delegates are expected to attend in this two day conference. The Inaugural function and all others technical sessions would be held from September 8 to September 10 this year at Radisson Blu Water Garden hotel.

Minister for Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology Abdul Latif Siddiqui is expected to inaugurate the event as the chief guest while Zunaid Ahmed Palak, State Minister, Ministry of Posts Telecommunications and Information Technology will attend the function as the special guest.

Key topics of the event include: Building a sustainable ICT Infrastructure: challenges and opportunities, Evaluating the benefits of e-Commerce in emerging markets, Mobile technologies, applications and VAS, Creating an efficient e-Governance system Transparency and Open Government: The role of Open Data, Cloud-Based Business Process Outsourcing and Financing technological developments in the Commonwealth.

Many speakers from home and abroad will deliver their speech including Md. Faizur Rahman Chowdhury, Secretary, Post & Telecommunication Division, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology (MoPT&IT); Sunil Kanti Bose, Chairman, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission; Dr Eugene Juwah, Executive Vice Chairman, Nigerian Communications Commission; Shirin Hamid, Chief Technology Officer, United Nations Development Programme; Nabil Eid, Regional Community Coordinator, Middle East and North Africa, Telecentre.org Foundation; Nazneen Sultana, Deputy Governor, Bangladesh Bank; Dr Akram H. Chowdhury, Executive Vice Chair, Bangladesh Internet Governance Forum; Gias Uddin Ahmed, Managing Director, Teletalk Bangladesh Limited; Delower Hossain Azad, Head of Mobile Financial Service, Grameenphone Bangladesh Limited; Sandipan Chakraborty, Chief Technology Officer, Airtel Bangladesh Limited; Somnath Mahalanabis, Executive Vice President, Head of Planning, Technology Division, Robi Axiata Limited; Taimur Rahman, Regulatory Affairs Senior Director, Banglalink Digital Communications Ltd; Sonia Bashir Kabir, Country Manager, Microsoft, People's Republic of Bangladesh; Srinivas Nidugondi, Vice President, Mobile Financial Solutions, Mahindra Comviva; AHM Bazlur Rahman, Chief Executive Officer, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication; Professor Tim Unwin, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation; Abu Saeed Khan, Senior Policy Fellow, LIRNEasia; Luna Shamsuddoha, Chairman, Dohatec New Media; Sameer Sinha, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Indus Towers; Shameem Ahsan, President, Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services; Cris Seecheran, Chief Executive Officer, Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad & Tobago; Tenzin Dolma Norbhu, Lead ICT Policy Specialist, The World Bank; Shazia Omar, Head of Advocacy and Communications, The Economic Empowerment of the Poorest Programme; Richard Lace, Head of Project (English In Action), BBC Media Action and T I M Nurul Kabir, Secretary-General, Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh are the keynote speakers at the event.

A two member advanced delegation of the CTO comprising Lasantha De Alwis, Director of Operations & Corporate Secretary and Robert Hayman, International Events Manager visited Dhaka to inspect the progress of the preparation.

They had separate meetings with representatives of Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh (AMTOB), which will act as a supporting partner. The delegation also met Mobile Imports Association of Bangladesh (MIAB), Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Bangladesh Telecommunication Company Ltd (BTCL), Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Limited (BSCCL), Telecom Infrastructure Organization of Bangladesh (TIOB), Internet Service Providers Association Bangladesh (ISPAB), Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Service (BASIS), Bangladesh Association of Call Center & Outsourcing (BACCO), Cyber cafe Owners Association of Bangladesh (CCOAB), Bangladesh Computer Society (BCS), Nationwide Telecommunication Transmission Network (NTTN), Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) and International Terrestrial Cable (ITC) and other stakeholders on various issues and matters relating to ICT & Telecom. The CTO team also had meetings with their Bangladesh counterparts, particularly the organizing committee and sub-committee.

CTO, based in London, UK is an international organisation of 53 member commonwealth countries working to promote telecom and ICT related cooperation, It is the oldest and largest Commonwealth organisation engaged in multilateral collaboration in the field of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), and uses its experience and expertise to support its members in integrating ICTs deliver effective development interventions that enrich, empower and emancipate people within the Commonwealth and beyond.

The CTO's international events and seminars are a fine balance of knowledge sharing, influencing policy and networking, and are designed to reflect all of the organisation's niche focus areas, as well as more generic topics. These events are often organised in conjunction with our members including governments and regulatory authorities. They are based in all countries of the Commonwealth, across the continents of Africa, Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific region. As well as one-off events and those that we convene in partnership with other oganisations, the CTO runs six annual events every year, which bring together Heads of Government and Regulatory Authorities as well as senior decision makers from global private sector companies and civil society organisations. Most of the events run by CTO have been running annually for more than five years.

Panellists to include...

Abdul Latif Siddiqui, MP
Minister
Post & Telecommunication Division,
Ministry of Post,
Telecommunications
and Information Technology

Junaid Ahmed Palak, MP
State Minister for ICT,
Ministry of Post,
Telecommunications
and Information Technology

Md. Faizur Rahman Chowdhury
Secretary
Post & Telecommunication Division,
Ministry of Post,
Telecommunications
and Information Technology

Sunil Kanti Bose
Chairman
Bangladesh Telecommunication
Regulatory Commission (BTRC)

Professor Tim Unwin
Secretary-General
Commonwealth
Telecommunications
Organisation

Shirin Hamid
Chief Technology
Officer, United
Nations Development
Programme

Luna Shamsuddoha
Chairman
Dohatec New Media

AMTOB
Members' Activities

Airtel Bangladesh Limited has telecasted its 9th telefilm "Vitamin-T", on 31st July on NTV as a part of Eid and friendship day celebration. The story of the telefilm revolves around five friends who chanced upon a huge chunk of money in a CNG that eventually takes an interesting twist later. Appreciated by viewers by large, the telefilm received highest social media response in the history of telefilms in Bangladesh as evident in Facebook

Banglalink organized Iftar and Dowa Mahfil for orphans during the holy month of Ramadan

AMTOB
Members' Activities

Citycell joined hands with Bangla Mountaineering & Trekking Club (BMTC) to organize a photo exhibition of M. A. Mohit, Onu Tareq and Enam Ul Haque at Drik Gallery, Dhanmondi to celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. The exhibition focused on the vibrant lives of indigenous people

Dr. AAMS Arefin Siddique, Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University shook hands with Mr. Tanveer Mohammad, Chief Technology Officer of Grameenphone following inaugural of a state of the art Computer Lab sponsored by Grameenphone at Tourism and Hospitality Management Department of the univesity

AMTOB
Members' Activities

Robi Axiata Limited distributed Eid clothes among destitute children on the occasion of the holy Eid ul Fitr

Teletalk distributed recently free SIM cards among Secondary School Certificte (SSC) examinees scoring GPA 5

AMTOB
Associate Members' Activities

Mr. Rajendra Pangrekar, Country Manager of Ericsson Bangladesh Limited speaking to the State Minister for ICT Junaid Ahmed Palak, MP at a function

Mr. Baker Zhou, CEO of Huawei Technologies Bangladesh Limited conducted core value sharing session with all local key staff

ZTE team at a planning meeting held at its office recently

AMTOB
ACTIVITIES IN PICTURES

A delegation of AMTOB met Mr. Imran Ahmad, MP, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Infoirmation Technology

A view from the AMTOB Iftar Mahfil organized on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan

AMTOB
ACTIVITIES IN PICTURES

Mr. Abdul Latif Siddique, MP, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications & Information Technology (MoPT& IT), State Minister for Information Technology Mr. Junaid Ahmed Palak, MP among others seen at the Iftar Mahfil organized by AMTOB on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan

AMTOB member representatives pose for a photograph during a farewell organized in honor of outgoing Airtel CEO and former Chairman of AMTOB Mr. Chris Tobit