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CONNEXION
steering telecom ahead

MOBILE TELECOM SERVICES
REVOLUTIONIZING
LIVES

CONNEXION

Monthly Newsletter of AMTOB
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FROM THE DESK OF EDITOR

Bangladesh being considered as one of the most dynamic countries in the world moves up four ranks in the ICT Development Index (IDI) ladder. According to a report recently published by International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Bangladesh stands in the 135th place in the ranking with a score of 1.73, up from 139th position in the previous year, succeeding Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan respectively.

Mobile technology has completely revolutionized the everyday lives of people all over the world. Likewise, it has been working as a change agent for the people of the country. Apart from voice services which still remain as the dominant service, many other services, commonly known as value added services (VAS) are making people's lives easier.

Cellphones undeniably today, with their robust network, keeps people connected over long distances. Besides, mobile network operators offer various other services with multifarious benefits. Applications including Business, Health Care, Marketing, Education, Entertainment, Utility, Fun and Communication are services which have made people's life easy. Content providers offer some of the services under a revenue sharing scheme with MNOs.

Although Bangladesh lags behind many other countries in the world adopting the Third Generation (3G), but it is probably a paradigm in case of the fastest roll out of the 3G technology within less than a month's time.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the telecom watchdog, on September 8, 2013 has successfully auctioned 2.1 GHz spectrum for GSM operators in order to launch 3G services in the country coveted by the industry.

The licenses were awarded on September 12; BTRC provided the no objection certificate (NoC) to import of equipment on the same day the operators applied for it. Some of the equipment was brought into the country by air shipment respecting the enthusiasm for high speed internet service which people are eager to experience.

For Bangladesh to achieve broader economic benefits, broadband needs to be widely available and affordable. Subscribers would be benefitted from 3G if lower cost devices are widely available in the market.

Spectrum is a scarce resource and a key enabler for any country's broadband development. As per the National Frequency Allocation Plan (NFAP) 2600 MHz has been marked as IMT (International Mobile Telecommunication) band following ITU recommendation for mobile broadband. Hence, exhaustive allocaton (60 MHz out of available 70MHz) of this frequency band and excluding participation of mobile operators would be discriminatory. Also, the Government will be deprived of the fair value of the spectrum both in terms of direct revenue from the spectrum sale and later the indirect revenue from the service.

MNOs welcome Government's forward looking vision to allow technology neutrality in the BWA (Broadband Wireless Access) license but level playing field has to be ensured. Full technology neutrality is a long pending demand of the mobile operators which is yet to be realized from the 2G license and spectrum. If now technology neutrality is given to the BWA licensees with the existing conditions, this will negatively impact mobile operators' broadband business case and distort the market competition.

In order to have a proper functioning market and protect consumers' interest there has to be parity in the license conditions of the mobile operators and the BWA licensees. We encourage the Government to seriously consider removing the artificial barrier created for the mobile operators to qualify for the BWA license and allow fair competition in the broadband supply market.

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 & 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.

AMTOB EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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Member of AMTOB Executive Council &
Managing Director of Teletalk Bangladesh Limited

NUMBERS & ANALYSIS

The number of Internet users in China is over **350 million** as of May 2013, the highest in the world. The second in the rank is USA with **191.51 million** users.
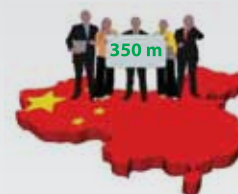
Worldwide mobile health revenue is forecast to be $ **23 Billion** by 2017.

By 2017 Mobile Payment Transaction Volume is expected to be buoyant at $ **721 Billion.**

3G Mobile Device Shipment is expected to exceed **2 Billion** Units by 2020.

Digital Buyer penetration rate by 2017 is forecast to be **45.10%.**

Mobile
Telecom Services Revolutionizing Lives

Mobile technology has completely revolutionized the everyday lives of people all over the world. Likewise, it has been working as a change agent for the people of the country. Apart from voice services which still remain as the dominant service, many other services, commonly known as value added services (VAS) make people's lives easier.

There is no doubt that cell phones are a tool of convenience. Having a cell phone now makes people reachable in almost any location as long as there is good network connection. This makes individuals easier to contact. Ease of access is not the only benefit of cell phones today though, as mobile network operators (MNOs) offer various other services that have many benefits.

MNOs offer various applications including Business, Health Care, Marketing, Education, Entertainment, Utility, Fun and Communication.

They also offer different gaming options e.g. racing, puzzles, and wallpapers and video download services where subscribers can download news, movies and drama clips.

Music download services offer a sea of music with download options. They also offer ring back tone and ringtone based on popular songs, instruments and quotes.

Text or SMS based content is another area where mobile subscribers are serviced via push and pull or through subscription. Text based content includes News alert, Health, Beauty, Fashion news and tips, Islamic Tips and many more.

Different Services Offered by Mobile Network Operators

01. M-Health	10. Sports News
02. Life Style	11. Vehicle Tracking
03. Jokes	12. Buddy Tracking
04. Astrology	13. Life Insurance
05. Bollywood Gossip/News	14. Love Poem/Tips/Quotes/Greetings
06. Hollywood Gossip/Trivia/News	15. Relation Advice
07. Music celebrity News	16. Personality Tips
08. Latest movie update	17. Pick up Lines
09. Funny/Famous Quotes	

Mobile Health Service

A voice-based service that offers health information to pregnant women and new mothers in Bangladesh hit 100,000 subscribers in July 2013 within six months from launching of this innovative service.

The service, which is called Aponjon (meaning "trusted one") was launched earlier this year by public-private partnership Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action (MAMA).

The aim of Aponjon is to dispel commonly held misconceptions about child birth, while informing mothers of genuine health hazards and warning signs. The service also offers guidance to local healthcare services and explains the benefits of family planning.

The voice-based service is designed for an audience with low level of literacy.

MAMA was launched in 2011 as a partnership between USAID, Johnson & Johnson, the United Nations Foundation, mHealth Alliance and Baby Center. Aponjon is also supported by the Government of Bangladesh.

The service is accessible for users of five of the country's mobile operators: Airtel, Banglalink, Citycell, Grameenphone and Robi.

Apart from these, individual MNOs have launched mobile health services from where mobile subscribers can fetch support from professional medical practitioners by just dialing a number and get health advice and primary remedies within an affordable price.

Agro Information Service

Bangladesh is an agrarian country and 80 percent people of the country are engaged in agricultural works. Considering the literacy rate and lack of modern knowledge on agriculture, MNOs in collaboration with Agriculture Information Services launched different services for the 'farmer' community of Bangladesh. This basket of services has been introduced to help anyone who is directly or indirectly related to agriculture or agro-business. In fact, this service basket is to support the complete value chain of agro economy.

The agro portal is designed to help the subscribers get weather update, agro information etc. at their fingertips. Through connecting to the portal, the subscribers can get information on Plants, Fisheries, Livestock, Pests and Insecticides, Soil and Fertilizer

information. They can also get themselves updated on weather across national geography.

Availing these services is easy for the customers. All they need to do is dial a short code. As soon as a subscriber dials the short code, he/she will land up on an IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system. According to the need of the subscriber, the live human agent on the other side will provide all the information. The subscriber can also receive the update through SMS simply by sending SMS to the same short code.

Mobile Financial Services (MFS)

MNOs are continuously strengthening their efforts to be true to their promise of "starting something new" for empowering people to make positive changes in their lives. Introduction of mobile financial services is a major milestone in that journey.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently received South-South Award for her outstanding contribution to improving the state of women and children in Bangladesh.
UN Economic Commission for Africa, Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and South-South News jointly introduced the award.
Secretary General of ITU Dr Hamadoun I. Touré handed over the award to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a ceremony in New York.
The ITU Secretary General said Sheikh Hasina was selected for the award for her innovative idea to use Information Communication Technology (ICT) for progress of health of women and children. This year's theme of the award was "Digital Health for Digital Development".

MNOs are relentlessly working to bring financial services at customers' fingertips, so that financial services are convenient and accessible to the mass. Now, subscribers have easy access to the largest mobile financial service portfolio of the country through their mobile phone. At the moment, a customer can pay utility and internet bills, make insurance premium payment, receive remittance, access mobile banking facilities and buy train tickets or even concert tickets with their mobile connections.

While any mobile phone user enjoys the convenience of using a cash point in their neighborhood, subscribers enjoy a little more with the MFS services. Subscribers can access the services using the USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data) which is a Global System for Mobile (GSM) communication technology that is used to send text between a mobile phone and an application program in the network.

MNOs put in place help lines and dedicated MFS care lines can be reached by dialing a predefined short

code or a number, working 7 days a week countrywide to make financial transactions easy and convenient for anyone.

Utility Bill Payment

Until recently, utility bill payment in Bangladesh meant standing in long queue in limited banking hours. To change the idea, MNOs in collaboration with utility companies launched bill payment services for the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), Dhaka Electric Supply Company (DESCO), Water and Sewage Authority (WASA) and Titas Gas Company.

Train Tickets

For the demand of time, MNOs have launched e-ticketing service in partnership with Bangladesh Railway. From now railway passengers do not have to rush to the stations and wait in the long queue for purchasing their train tickets. Through this service, railway passengers can book seats from their own mobile phone by dialing a short code, or from cash points located at different places in the country.

Once the ticket is purchased from either their own mobile or through the mobile cash points, passengers will receive an e-ticket in their mobile phone. Using the e-ticket, customer can take a print out from the source station or from MNO customer care centers.

Book your Tickets through SMS

Remittance

MNOs in collaboration with commercial banks have jointly launched "Remittance" services, the first ever for Bangladesh as well as for South Asia. This service is a highly secured, convenient, reliable, fast and

cost-effective remittance system. Beneficiaries with mobile subscribers will be able to open mobile wallet accounts with a partner bank from cash points, and receive the remittance directly in their mobile wallet account. If the beneficiaries do not have mobile connections, they can still receive the remittance by submitting the transaction details to an agent point. This comes as quite a blessing for a country where over 3.5 million immigrants send money home every year.

Online Shopping

MNOs have launched online shopping and lifestyle sites. Users can buy and sell their products through such sites. These offer Online Radio, Medical Directory (free for users), Web SMS Service and many more.

Web SMS Service

Web SMS Service enables users to send SMS from computers and smartphones to many numbers at the same time creating opportunities for marketers to launch their promotional campaign.

Gift Shop

Gift Shop Portals are another of the popular VAS services of MNOs. Through these gift shops, customers can send out virtual gifts from their cellphones. These gifts can include m-music clips and greeting clips. The portals allow for gifts with regards to special occasions such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries and a variety of personal messages on different emotions such as love, sadness etc. Customers just have to dial a short code and are let access into the IVR System.

News Update

As people, Bangladeshis have attained a knack for staying updated with the latest tidings of the country as well as the entire world. To facilitate the people's right to know, the MNOs have come up with very comprehensive news alert services. The latest news is delivered to the subscribers' cellphones via SMS on an hourly basis or depending on how important the news is. The latest news enfolding politics, domestic and international affairs, commerce, agriculture and sports are delivered to the very palms of people. In addition to this, sports are prioritized even further owing to the public's vast enthusiasm in it. Bangladeshis have always been very passionate about cricket and people's interests have reached its pinnacle with the national team doing quite well in the test cricket scene. Besides regular news, sports updates are exclusively sent to subscribers' cells whenever something significant happens in the stadium, e.g. a wicket is lost or a goal is scored.

Vehicle Tracking Service

Vehicle tracking service is a GPS based vehicle tracking solution that provides instant location information to the vehicle owner/authorized person through web/SMS with other flexibilities.

Through this comprehensive solution, a subscriber can learn the real-time position of his/her vehicle, and apply rules on the vehicles e.g. speed limits, No Go Area, etc.

In addition, subscribers can also secure their vehicles by subscribing to security features like remote immobilization, panic alarm etc. Some of the other features are: Speed Violation Alert/Report (speed of all vehicles can be controlled, monitored, and hence when violated, immediate contact can be made to reduce such violation); Area Alarm--an area can be assigned to vehicles and the owner/authorized person will be notified, if the rule is violated; 'No-Go' area--A 'No-Go' area can be created for the vehicles and the owner/authorized person will be notified, if the rule is violated; in addition, the car owner can find out whether the ignition is on or off; if on, then whether the vehicle is moving or stationary, thus vehicles can be monitored even if they are switched off.

Many of the services have made people's life easy. Some of the services are provided by content providers under a revenue sharing scheme with MNOs.

CSR activities
by Airtel Bangladesh Limited

Airtel Bangladesh Limited, as being a socially responsible company always undertook various activities from corporate and social responsibility perspective.

Following are a few recent activities:

Youth of the Nation Award

Airtel partnered with Jaago Foundation, a local NGO focusing on under privileged children's education to sponsor Youth of the Nation Award for contribution to Voluntary and Development works for the betterment of the society which was supported by the US Embassy.

Ghuri Fest

An event called "Ghuri Fest" (Kite Festival) was organized and sponsored by Airtel with the theme of Bijoy Dibosh

Ghuri Fest in Dhaka

(Victory Day) where BDT 1 lakh was collected by selling new kites and donated to JAAGO foundation to sponsor 500 under privileged children.

Blanket for Cold Affected

Airtel Bangladesh Limited took the initiative to distribute warm clothes and blankets to the destitute population

primarily in northern parts of the country where the cold wave had affected most severely. The Telco giant Airtel distributed 8,500 blankets to the affected people.

Blanket distribution by Airtel among poor people in Dinajpur

Reduction of Power Usage

To reduce pressure of national power supply 75% of Airtel sites in Bangladesh have been installed in the outdoors with installation of new BTS equipment which consumes less power (typical consumption now is 0.7 KW ~ 0.8 KW against traditional BTS that consumes 1.5 KW having same configuration). The company has deployed 380 FCUs (Free Cooling Units), ensuring 25% less power consumed in every site.

Seven sites run completely on solar, which are now on 5.5 hours/day DG, which before implementation were 16 hours per day.

Talent Search

As part of youth community build up, Airtel Bangladesh Limited organized Airtel Rising Stars in 2012 and the second season of ARS has started in August 2013. In the first season, 12 talented young footballers were selected from more than 60,000 participants through rigorous selection process from all 64 districts of Bangladesh. Later these 12 youngsters were taken to the sacred land of football, Old Trafford, UK where they practised in Manchester United Football Club which was a dream come true experience for many. Many of these 12 football players play in under-16 national team in Bangladesh currently.

Airtel Rising Stars displaying the Flag of Bangladesh in the sacred land of football, Old Trafford, UK.

airtel

"Teletalk has made significant contribution to establishing e-Governance, through e-Health, e-Voting, District e-Service, Disaster Management, e-Billing services. We will continue this endeavor in the future."

Md. Mujibur Rahman
Managing Director
Teletalk Bangladesh Limited

Md. Mujibur Rahman, Managing Director of Teletalk Bangladesh Limited shared his views on mobile telecom sector in Bangladesh with "ConneXion".

What is the contribution of mobile ecosystem in sustainable development of Bangladesh?

Before attempting to link mobile ecosystem to sustainable development of Bangladesh, let us have an outline of mobile ecosystem and what it encompasses. Although the mobile ecosystem consists of many different components, probably the most recognizable and important one is the mobile phone. Mobile phones today fall into one of three categories: feature phones, smartphones, or touch phones. Other gadgets like iPads and tablets are also entering mobile space. All these products should be watched as their market share is on increase, especially considering that higher end models have built-in wifi capabilities. The fastest growing category of phones in the market has been touch phones. Touch phones can be thought of as the next generation of smartphones having larger screens, more robust web browsers, and more powerful applications. Touch phone users are also the mobile web's power users. A recent UK study showed that 93% of iPhone owners use their device to access news and information on the mobile web.

The mobile landscape consists of several other components besides phones. These include carriers, networks, platforms, and operating systems. Carriers/operators provide mobile service to customers. Carriers provide mobile service over a network of cellular towers. Networks are commonly differentiated by generation. Right now, most users browse the mobile web on third generation (3G) technology. The growth of 3G and the rise of fourth generation (4G) technology are improving mobile

browsing significantly. Platforms are the programming frameworks upon which all software for devices are developed. The most ubiquitous platform in mobile right now is Java ME. Blackberry, iPhone and Android, each run their own proprietary platforms.

Also Mobile ecosystem includes mobile application medium types. These are identified as SMS, mobile websites, mobile web widgets, mobile web applications, native applications and games. SMS can be a pricey service, both for message recipients and providers. Mobile web applications provide a more application-like experience through users' mobile web browsers.

Now, with 160 million people in Bangladesh, 140 million telecom users' base is not a far away idea hence. Mobile ecosystem is going to occupy one of the biggest shares in the domestic and global market. It will have tremendous impact and thrust on the national economy. The driving force of the telecom market is its knowledge based power, used and utilized by the huge customer base and providers' group together with all other stakeholders in the scenario. Hence, this will no doubt contribute hugely to the development of the country, probably in the most sustainable way in near future, through deep and diverse economic activities, improvement of standard of living, income generation, influx of FDI and govt. revenue earnings. This will open up a wider horizon of employment generation, social equity through education and uninterrupted broadband communications.

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How do you assess Bangladesh's telecom market and its future?

Let me reiterate the fact that with 160 million people in Bangladesh, 140 million telecom users' base is not a far away idea hence. Telecom sector is going to occupy one of the biggest shares in the domestic and global market. The impact and thrust on the national economy from this industry is quite vivid. Currently with six mobile phone operators and a handful of land phone operators, the market is catering the customer base of nearly 110 million users. Network expansion has almost reached the capability of providing 100% ubiquitous connectivity in the country. Our company, Teletalk Bangladesh Limited has extended its network

to cover even the hill tracts areas, owing to its obligation rising from state owned entrepreneurship. Our telecom market is developing and growing in a disciplined and congenially facilitated environment formed and maintained by both government and all other stakeholders. In near future, the industry will enjoy markets of around 150 million customers. Not only the ubiquitous connectivity is on stage, but also power use of telecom services is on rise through 3G, and 4G technologies. The impact of telecom market will not remain confined in itself only but also will drive and push other sectors directly and indirectly. Nowadays, time is money and knowledge is power. The ability of a knowledge based society can only be utilized through obstacle free high-speed connectivity to better off the economy. This will ensure the smooth functioning and operation of other economic power houses as well.

Do you think that a Telecom Road Map/ long term perspective plan is required to support for achieving the Digital Bangladesh?

In a Digital Bangladesh, we perceive a paradigm when and where all citizens will be able to use and enjoy all services available and realizable online, ubiquitously in an uninterrupted fashion. All the stakeholders in the telecom sectors, including customers, providers (either of network or of content or any service) will be able to enjoy their respective shares of economic pie. The society will be in a better condition. To reach such a goal, a Telecom Road Map/long term plan is required for a smooth transition and transformation to that state. The Government of Bangladesh is rightly doing the needful in this regard, facilitating and expediting a congenial regulatory framework, and a legal atmosphere allowing all players in the field to play their role and draw benefits hassle free. Existing telecom market efficiency in Bangladesh is noteworthy. Implementation of High Tech Park is underway in Kaliakoir. The ICT incubation centre is in operation. Government and public offices are on track of creating IT automated working environment, accelerated through wide area network. Therefore, to ensure a sustainable growth of telecom industry/market, a Telecom Road Map is required to achieve the goal of the Digital Bangladesh.

What are the key opportunities and challenges in Mobile Telecom Industry?

The key opportunities include the adoption of ICT sector as a thrust sector by the Govt. allowing the telecom industry of Bangladesh to observe a future of potential growth, especially for Mobile Telecom Industry. Regulatory and legal framing are being observed to have indications to ensure a fair competition and it will boost an efficient telecom market in the country. Also a prospective large market with huge potential is out there for operation and development in a wide array of products and services like network provision, voice, text, video and Internet communications. Infrastructure sharing and collocation are also seen as opportunity in this business to grow faster.

On the other hand, impact on social aspects, cyber crime and related law enforcement matters, quick obsolescence of technology, intense competition, tax and license issues are apparent challenges being perceived by the operators in this sector.

What is your vision for 2013 to 2015?

Since its inception, TBL has made significant contribution to establishing e-Governance, through e-Health, e-Voting, District e-Service, Disaster Management, e-Billing services. Its success in expanding high-speed communication network is noteworthy. Number of customers of TBL has increased to 24 lakh. TBL has introduced various value added services. Information of about 2 crore students have been archived in TBL server, so far. This can be used to support preparation of national ID card. There is a target of providing medical info service through mobile phones to 434,000 mothers each year.

Apart from this, the progress of TBL's own funded 2nd Expansion Project is 95%. The implementation of the network of 65 lakh customer capacity is progressing on full swing through the project titled 'Introduction of 3G Technology and Expansion of 2.5G Network'. After completion of this project, the number of BTS will be 1768 in TBL Network. 3G service has already been introduced in the country for the first time. The project is being implemented with the financial aid from the People's Republic of China and TBL own fund. Sixty five percent of the work has been implemented already. With its completion, TBL customer base will have 95 lakh users. Shortly, the 3G network will be expanded over whole of Bangladesh.

Minister for Posts and Telecommunications Advocate Shahara Khatun, MP, inaugurating a new customer care center of Teletalk Bangladesh Limited at Azimpur in front of New-Market in the capital Dhaka. MoPT Secretary MD. Abubakar Siddique and Md. Mujibur Rahman, Managing Director of Teletalk are also seen in the picture.

3G
Fever Grips Bangladesh

Bangladesh has been lagging behind in adopting recent technologies like Third Generation (3G) technology but Bangladesh is probably the only country in the world which has set a rare example by launching 3G network within less than a month's time.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the telecom watchdog, on September 8, 2013 has successfully auctioned 2.1 GHz spectrum for GSM operators in order to launch 3G services in the country long cherished by the industry.

3G network becomes live
within less than a month

The licenses were awarded on September 12; mobile operators applied for no objection certificate (NoC) from BTRC for import of equipment and the regulator provided the NoC on the same day. Some of the equipment was brought into the country by air shipment considering the huge enthusiasm for the high speed internet service, which people were eager to experience.

Bangladesh's endeavor towards 3G

Bangladesh's journey for 3G started long before when a European vendor conducted the first ever trial of 3G/HSPA (High Speed Packet Access) network titled "Alokito Bangladesh" in August 2008 with the patronization from the BTRC through allocation of appropriate spectrum. Subsequently, another leading Chinese vendor conducted the same technology trial in the country paving the path for state-of-art technology which has been adopted already by many neighboring countries.

Some of the highlights
of the 3G auction:

BTRC offered a total of 40 MHz spectrum of 2.1 GHz band, divided into 8 blocks of 5 MHz each of the offered spectrum. BTRC was able to sell 25MHz, while 15 MHz remained unsold.

The base price was earlier determined at USD 20 million/MHz. Grameenphone bought 10 MHz at USD 21 million/MHz while Airtel, Banglalink and Robi bought 5MHz each for the same rate. The 3G license includes 4G/LTE (Long Term Evolution) provisions. State-owned Teletalk was offering 3G services since last year under a commercial trial project while the lone CDMA operator Citycell is offering high speed data service via EVDO (Enhanced Voice-Data Optimized).
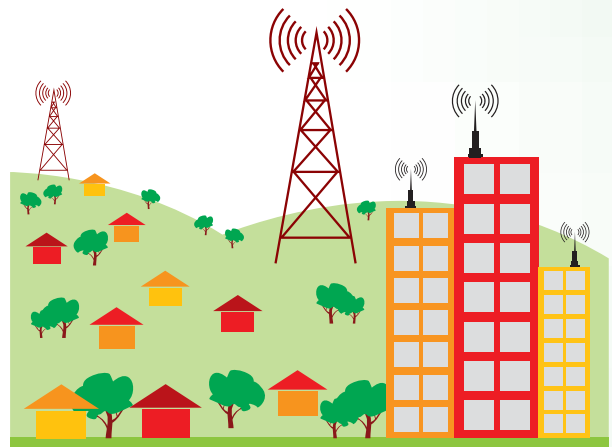
From the auction the government got USD 525m (BDT 40.82 billion) as spectrum price and additional 5% VAT (Value Added Tax). The operators had to deposit BDT100 million each as license fee.

Bangladesh's six mobile network operators have around 110 million active mobile phone subscribers at the end of August 2013.

A view from the 3G auction organized by Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) where four Mobile Network Operators; Airtel, Banglalink, Grameenphone and Robi participated. AMTOB Secretary General was present at the auction as an observer.

Bangladesh's 3G auction date have been deferred several times since 2008 when telecom equipment vendors launched campaign for 3G/HSPA and ran live trials several times to drum up support for the technology. 3G was much sought after technology by both public and private sector in absence of a robust fixed network.

With the advent of new technology, enthusiastic tech savvy youths would stride into new ventures.

Bangladesh is probably the **only country** in the world which has set a rare example by launching **3G network** within less than a **month's time.**

With the advent of new technology, enthusiastic tech savvy youths would stride into new ventures.

Chris Tobit, CEO and MD, Airtel Bangladesh Limited speaks at 3G inuguration ceremony at Airtel Experience Center, Banani on October 2, 2013 in presence of Telecom Minister Advocate Shahara Khatun, MP and other dignitaries.

The Honorable Minister for Posts & Telecommunications, Advocate Shahara Khatun, MP and Banglalink CEO Ziad Shatara are observing Banglalink 3G demonstration at its commercial launch celebration ceremony.

Minister for Posts and Telecommunications Advocate Shahara Khatun, MP, inaugurating Grameenphone's 3G network along with MoPT Secretary MD. Abubakar Siddique, Jon Fredrik Baksaas, CEO of Telenor Group and Vivek Sood, CEO of GP at a ceremony.

Advocate Shahara Khatun, MP, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications making the first official 3G video call in Bangladesh. Robi Axiata Ltd. launched its 3.5G network simultaneously in Dhaka and Chittagong on September 28, 2013.

Eun-Ju Kim Ph.D.
Regional Director
ITU Regional Office
for Asia & the Pacific

> **Opportunities in Bangladesh outweigh the challenges, which is credible from the impressive track record of the Bangladesh telecom Sector.**

Eun-Ju Kim Ph.D., Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific shared her views on the development of telecom sector and vision of ITU with "ConneXion."

Where would you like to see telecommunications as an enabler for the human society?

Telecommunications/ICTs in the converged digital era have an enormous impact on virtually all aspects of our lives, while being globally recognized as a critical enabler for creative economy, socio-economic development, empowerment of people, women inter alia, and local communities in all countries with different phases of development.

However, many people cannot take advantage of this resource because of financial impediment, disabilities, low-literacy, remoteness, cultural and language barriers. Here, the strength of telecommunications/ICTs to reduce many traditional obstacles, especially those of time and distance, makes it possible to use their potential to achieve digital inclusion through enhanced access to telecommunications/ICTs - Internet in particular - for all walks of life in the world including the Asia-Pacific.

It is indeed critical to extend the benefits of telecommunications/ICTs to ALL of society, and the economy including SMEs and micro-businesses, in order to build a truly inclusive and sustainable information and digital – but, more human-oriented society.

What is ITU's vision for the next decade?

International Telecommunication Union (ITU), as a UN specialized agency for telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICT), has been serving its members in such main areas as radiocommunication, standardization and development of telecommunications/ICTs through its three Sectors - Radiocommunication (ITU-R), Telecommunication Standardization (ITU-T) and Telecommunication Development (ITU-D). ITU founded in 1865 has 193 Member States as well as over 700 Sector Members and Associates, while having its Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, as well as 4 regional offices and 7 area offices worldwide.

ITU is committed to connecting the world, where virtually every facet of modern life – in business, culture or entertainment, at work and at home – depends on telecommunications/ICTs in digital age.

Today, for instance, there are billions of mobile phone subscribers, close to five billion people with access to television, and tens of millions of new Internet users every year. Hundreds of millions of people around the world use satellite services – whether getting directions from a satellite navigation system, checking the weather forecast, or watching television from isolated areas. Millions more use video compression every day in mobile phones, music players and cameras.

ITU, which has been evolving together with technologies over 150 years, is today or even tomorrow expected to be at the very heart of all the ICT applications and beyond with the cross-sectorial convergences from agriculture, health, education to labour, which in turn will facilitate the overall socio-economic, cultural and even political development.

With the fundamental mandate and functions trusted by its public-private membership, I can envision the Union to lead toward smarter society with a huge potential in the next decade i.e. more demands from its membership are expected due to enormous potential of innovative ICT applications and services enabling and empowering human regardless of genders – men and women alike, ages – young and old, cultures, races, and persons with disabilities, while supporting them to enjoy independent life, fully participate in and contribute to society, as well as improve their accessibility and affordability for the overall socio-economic development with creative jobs, health care, education and many more.

But, at the same time, it may also face more

challenges due to negative and dysfunctional effects in ICT as well as from different policy, regulatory and technological environments: i.e. cyber space. Thus, ITU should be a – if not, the - trusted global platform or mediator through its public-private membership to connect the interdependent world through closer cooperation and partnership for safer and smarter society for ALL.

What is your impression regarding Bangladesh's development in telecommunications ?

According to the ITU's ICT Development Index (IDI) in 2013, not only in infrastructure/access, but also in use and skills, Bangladesh moved up 4 ranks, which is considered as one of most dynamic countries in the world.

Thus, I commend the commitment of leadership of Bangladesh with a vision to establish a resourceful and modern country by 2021 through effective use of ICT: i.e., a "Digital Bangladesh" Vision 2021. I was very fortunate to be in Bangladesh during its launching! Moreover, the mobile telecommunication sector is yet another example of success of the country. I firmly believe that Bangladesh would witness significant growth in telecommunication sector in the days ahead.

Moreover, Bangladesh was elected as one of the 48 members of the ITU Council among 193 Member States at the Plenipotentiary Conference 2010. It implies as one of the very important and active players within the ITU too.

How ITU can help Bangladesh for further development in telecommunication sector?

In order to develop the overall telecommunication/ICT sector in general, human and institutional capacity in particular, embracing the fast changing telecommunication/ICT sector and its policy-regulatory landscape, ITU has been committed to provide its member countries with continued support in various areas from telecommunication/ICT infrastructure, applications, policy and regulatory frameworks, to human and institutional development.

As for Bangladesh in particular, ITU has implemented various projects from National Telecommunication Policy, Cyber Security Framework, Interconnect Costing, Significant Market Power, Management Information System and Spectrum Pricing to Migration from Analog to Digital Broadcasting, while having organized many trainings for policy maker, regulator and industry to enhance skill development and encourage enabling environment for all concerned, while these activities would continue in the future.

Moreover, Bangladesh is expected to lead and launch several projects such as 'Partnership between telecommunication and labor sectors using ICT for creative and innovative jobs', 'National broadband service network using social obligation funds' and 'Strengthening ICT/Telecommunication sector through capacity development of stakeholders' at the ITU Connect Asia-Pacific Summit, Bangkok, Thailand, 18 November 2013.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of Bangladeshi human resources working in telecommunication sector?

As mentioned about the IDI 2013, one of three important sub-indexes is human skills when measuring the information society. Bangladesh is still low in its ranks, the sub-index of skills in particular.

Bangladesh is yet a very fortunate country to have a good potential of workforce with necessary competence: i.e., human skills. The people in the telecommunication/ICT sector inter alia are talented and hard-working. I hope and believe that Bangladesh would be able to utilize this skilled workforce by proper resource management for its development and economic emancipation. Many Bangladeshis working abroad especially in the telecommunication sector have brightened the face of the country through their expertise and accomplishments. I am sure they will continue to excel in their specific areas and contribute to the development of global telecommunication/ICT industry.

As telecommunication/ICT sector has ever been fast evolving and innovating, it is important to upskill the human resources for enabling environment, with transparent and consultative process establishing policy and regulatory certainty to spur growth, promote competition, ensure technology neutrality and attract much needed investments in the telecommunication/ICT sector.

With effective competition especially in mobile sector, launching mobile broadband (3G) in particular may pave a way for repeating the success story of mobile into broadband in Bangladesh with most affordable tariffs and innovative applications for empowering people of Bangladesh, for which ITU is proud to be an active partner in its journey to achieve vision 2021 of Digital Bangladesh.

I Thank yoU = ITU!

Bangladesh
Evolving into an Information Society

Bangladesh has made significant progress in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Bangladesh stands in the 135th place in the ranking up from 139th position in the preceding year, according to a report recently published by International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The country succeeds three South Asian countries-Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan respectively in the ICT Development Index (IDI) list with a score of 1.73 improving from 1.62. The IDI evaluates the progress of ICT development in both developed and developing world on a scale of 1 to 10.
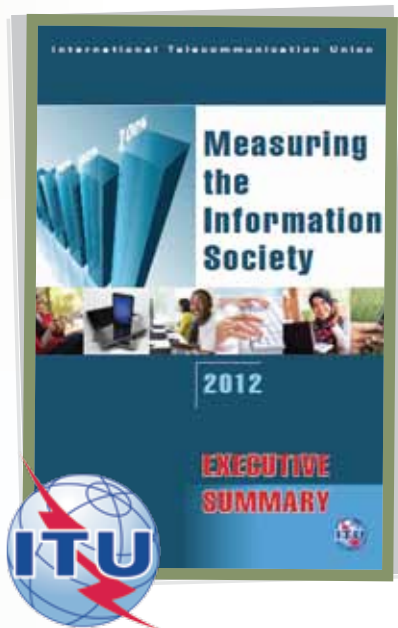
Positions in ICT Development Index of Regional Countries

	2012	2011
Sri Lanka	107	107
India	121	120
Pakistan	129	128
Myanmar	134	132
Bangladesh	135	139

Source: International Telecommunication Union

Experts commended the achievement of the nation but also accentuated on the progress of development at a brisk pace. Despite the ICT boom, there remains a lot undone from the government's end especially pertaining to infrastructural development. The government in a very recent move has endorsed contract of connecting thirty (30) and fifty-five (55) government offices in each upazilla and district respectively under the same network.

ICT Bonanza: Mobiles the Driving force

The world lately has witnessed the upsurge of the Information and Communication Technology complemented by the ubiquity of mobile internet. Cellular subscription has augmented by more than 600 million in the developing world from 2010 to 2011. The increasing number of service providers vying for the market share, reciprocating the plummeting price of the service has vitalized the proliferation of mobile technology by 11% worldwide.

Back in 2011, Universal Internet accessibility was embodied in the "Millennium Development Goal" and enunciates four ambitious but achievable targets for all the countries purporting to bridge the digital divide all the across the world. The targets as depicted below are:

- Making Broadband Policy Universal
- Making Broadband affordable
- Connected homes to broadband
- Getting People online

Cellular broadband services manifested a growth of 40% between 2010 and 2011 to a number of 1.1 billion. Mobile broadband subscriptions all over the world are roughly twice as that of fixed broadband connections.

High growth of smartphones in tandem with the technological evolution (3G, 4G and LTE), is cradling the voice driven market to a data driven one. Developing countries reflect 16% rise in internet users in contrary to 5% of the developed world.

The ubiquity of mobile phones has been an impetus to the profusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) across all the regions of the world. Despite the constraints of skilled resources in the ICT sector, Bangladesh has maneuvered laudable solutions which are simple, low cost and innovative in nature.

141 140 139 138 137 136 135

Bangladesh Progresses in ICT Development Index (IDI)
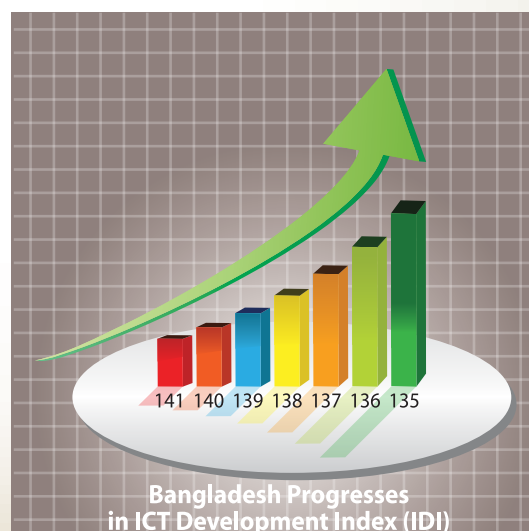
Connect Asia-Pacific Summit 2013

The Connect Asia-Pacific Summit will be hosted by the Royal Thai Government and co-organized with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in close partnership with the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT), Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD), World Health Organization (WHO), the UN system and other stakeholders on 18 November 2013 at the IMPACT Challenger Hall in Bangkok, Thailand. Its theme is Asia-Pacific: Smartly DIGITAL (Digital Inclusive Green Innovative Transformative Affordable Living).

This is the fifth in a series of regional Summits. Four "Connect" Summits have been organized before in collaboration with regional and global partners in 2007(Africa), 2009(CIS), and 2012(Arab States, the Americas). The Connect Asia-Pacific Summit will bring together the countries of the region, key global and regional players in the ICT sector and seek to provide a platform for mobilizing human, financial and technical resources needed to support sustainable and inclusive ICT growth.

For further details of the summit: http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/connect/Asia-Pacific/Pages/default.aspx

ITU Telecom World 2013

ITU Telecom World will be held from 19 to 22 November 2013, back-to-back with Connect Asia-Pacific Summit 2013 at the same venue. ITU Telecom World 2013 is the platform for high-level debate, innovation showcasing and networking for the global ICT community. The prominent issues which will be addressed include the way people communicate with each other, the dominant players in the ICT sector, business models, technological capabilities, standardization and regulatory regimes to accommodate new technologies and industry dynamics, and government policies to provide security and avoid deepening the digital divide.

For further details of the event: http://world2013.itu.int/

Jon Fredrik Baksaas becomes the Chairman of GSMA

Jon Fredrik Baksaas, Chief Executive Officer of Telenor, has recently been elected as the chairman of GSMA till December 2014. Baksaas will be overseeing the strategic direction of the organization, which represents nearly 800 of the world's mobile operators.
"I look forward to working closely with the rest of the board, the GSMA team and our entire membership to advance important industry issues," Baksaas said.
Baksaas is a Norwegian citizen and has worked in the telecom industry for 25 years.
GSMA also represents 250 companies in the broader mobile ecosystem, including handset and device makers, software companies, equipment providers and internet companies, as well as organisations in financial services, healthcare, media, transport and utilities.

DID YOU KNOW?

Scott Jones at the age of 26 in 1986 invented **voicemail** for mobile devices.

The concept of **allocating telephone numbers** to individuals was invented when an epidemic fever plagued a small town in Massachusetts.

World's first **GSM call** was made in 1991 by the Prime Minister of Finland, Harri Holkeri.

AMTOB MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

Airtel Bangladesh Limited signed agreement with Signature Technology BD Ltd, on September 22, 2013 at thier office. Md. Abdul Mannan, Chairman, Md Sherazam Munir, Managing Director of Signature Technology BD Ltd and Rajnish Kaul, Chief Operating Officer, Adil Hossain, Head of Corporate and SME Sales, Raihan Faiz Osmani, Head of SME of Airtel were present during the agreement signing.

Jan Edvard Thygesen, Deputy CEO and Group Chief Operating Officer of Vimpelcom Limited and Ziad Shatara, CEO of Banglalink Digital Communications Ltd. are talking to the media during the 3G test launch ceremony on September 24, 2013 in Dhaka.

Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Muhammad Enamul Bari, Chief Change Management Officer and Acting Chief Financial Officer of Citycell Md. Tarikul Hasan, Human Resources Director of Citycell Suman Bhattacharjee are seen with the winners of Citycell Captain Cup GOLF TOURNAMENT 2013 at Kurmitola Golf Club on October 25, 2013.

Grameenphone selected two representatives from Bangladesh for Telenor Youth Summit, which will be held at Oslo, Norway on December 2013 through an Idea contest. Safa Tasneem and Sami Tahsin of IBA, Dhaka University won the contest with their idea of a Safety SMS solution Bipod Barta.

Robi organized countrywide primary health checkup sessions for the employees.

Minister for Posts and Telecommunications Advocate Shahara Khatun, MP, inaugurating Teletalk's 3G network in Southern Faridpur district. MOPT Secretary MD. Abubakar Siddique also attended the function.