Bangladesh

Bangladesh has achieved widespread telecommunications coverage through wireless solutions and is now moving towards greater mobile-broadband coverage.

Mobile services: There are five mobile operators, the top three controls 90 per cent of the market. GRAMEENPHONE, a subsidiary of the Telenor Norwegian mobile group, is the largest. The other two are BANGLALINK a subsidiary of the Global Telecom Holding and ROBI, a subsidiary of the Malaysian mobile group AXIATA. Currently, the 2G population coverage is more than 99 per cent. Mobile broadband using 3G technologies was deployed in 2013 and with government active initiatives the 3G network expanded countrywide very rapidly which impacted the mobile broadband subscriptions (28.7 million 3G data users in December,2016). The government is in the process to award spectrum for mobile LTE with tech neutrality. Existing Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) or WiMAX operators BANGLALION, BIEL and QUBEE are in process to deploy LTE technology.

Fixed services: Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited (BTCL) is the incumbent, state-owned fixed telephone service operator, tracing its roots back to the formation of the Posts and Telegraph Department in 1853. Besides the incumbent, there are few fixed line operators but their penetration is very low like the world trend. Fixed broadband Internet penetration is also low comparing to mobile broadband Internet service. Various fixed Internet services like ADSL, FTTH etc. are available. There is an extensive network of Union Digital Centers (UDC) which is around 4500 throughout the country. To provide seamless telecommunication services, the Government has issued Nationwide Telecommunication Transmission Network (NTTN) license in 2009 to lay optical fiber throughout the country. At present, around 79,000 km optical fiber has been laid by the two private NTTN operators (Fiber @ home Ltd. and Summit Communications Ltd) and three incumbent NTTN operators (BTCL, Power Grid Company of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Railway). Bangladesh is connected with two submarine cables: SEA-ME-WE-4 in 2005 and SEA-ME-WE-5 is going to start its commercial operation in 2017. It has also Six (06) International Terrestrial Cable (ITC) operators which are linked to India. Besides this, two National Internet Exchanges (NIX) are in operation to provide local peering.

Key indicators for Bangladesh (2017)		Asia & Pacific	World
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	0.4	9.5	13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	88.1	104.0	103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	30.0	60.3	61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	92.6	91.3	87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	65.0	86.9	76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	*18.0*	44.3	48.6
Households with a computer (%)	*11.1*	38.9	47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	*19.4*	49.0	54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	15.3	61.7	76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	4.4	13.0	13.6
Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution			
-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s	15.0	2.4	4.2
-2 to 10 Mbit/s	65.0	7.6	13.2
-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s	20.0	90.0	82.6

Note: Data in italics are ITU estimates. Source: ITU (as of June 2018).

Government policy: Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) was established in 2002, under the *Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act 2001* as telecom regulator. BTRC works independently. However, there are certain areas where BTRC performs its function under the supervision of the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology (MoPTIT). The *National Broadband Policy* was formulated in 2009. The policy called for ensuring the availability of affordable, advanced and secure broadband services with a target of 30 per cent broadband penetration by 2015. 'Digital Bangladesh' is the ICT vision set out by the present Government of Bangladesh in its 2008 election manifesto. Its goal is to turn the country into a fully digitized nation by 2021. The spirit of Digital Bangladesh has been enshrined in the country's *Seventh Five Year Plan* (FY2016 – FY2020), which devotes an entire chapter to ICT. The plan features detailed strategies for applying ICT across ten areas: i) Economic growth; ii) Education; iii) Youth empowerment; iv) Equity; v) Governance; vi) Civil service; vii) Judiciary; viii) Law enforcement; ix) Parliament and x) Environment.

Conclusion: Bangladesh has witnessed rapid expansion of 3G networks which is significantly impacting the growth of mobile-broadband users and it is looking forward to introduce LTE technology. However, fixed Internet penetration is increasing day by day as several initiatives and policies have been formulated and implemented by the Government of Bangladesh to successfully achieve the vision of 'Digital Bangladesh'.