



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

15 September, 2003

Regulation of Telecom Sector

New venture promises better telecom services

People in Bangladesh may soon be paying less for more accessible communication services, like phone lines and Internet, if a new initiative launched this week by the Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) proves successful.

The new project is aimed at supporting the recently established Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to improve people's access to affordable telecommunications, through better management and more private investment in the telecom sector.

To attract invest in the sector, UNDP will work with the Commission over the coming year to develop effective information and management systems for regulating it. In addition, procedures for obtaining operating licenses will be simplified. Meanwhile, already licensed providers working in Chittagong will get the chance to test a 'new generation network', which can connect all providers through one hub, superceding the costly system of one-to-one connections currently used.

To increase understanding of consumers needs, the Commission will listen to the views of people who use telecom services, through regular meeting with consumer groups.

Overall, the initiative could benefit the average person by reducing the waiting time for new telephone connections, enabling more telecom services (call waiting and call forwarding), and faster Internet connections. For the nation, a well-managed and competitive telecom sector has the potential to fuel national growth in a fast-paced global economy built on new technology.

"It can no longer be disputed that technology is a powerful engine for development in any country," UNDP Resident Representative, Jorgen Lissner said. "But the promise of technology frequently falls short due to limited access and inadequate infrastructure. Bangladesh stands out as a country that is acting now to harness the potential of Information and Communication Technology for the future," he said.



MEDIA RELEASE

Although many developing countries already have some basic infrastructure to connect to the opportunity-rich global information network, recent estimates show that less than 15 percent of Internet users live in developing countries. In 2000, under the banner of the Millennium Development Goals, world leaders committed to fight poverty by making available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications to all people.

The Government of Bangladesh made a concrete commitment in 2001 to achieve that goal when it approved the Telecommunications Act, and established the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC). The Commission is mandated to implement the Act. The new initiative now seeks to translate that act into action.

ENDS

For further information please contact, Ms. Lisa Hiller, UNDP Communications Officer via email: lisa.hiller@undp.org, ph: 811 8600, ext.. 2043, mob: 011812042, or, Mr. Binoy Khisha, UNDP Communications Assistant via email: binoy.khisha@undp.org, ph: 8118600, ext. 2431.

Photo Caption: Smiles all round when UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner and Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Chairman, Syed Marghub Murshed sealed the joint initiative during a signing ceremony earlier this week (Sunday 14 September) at the BTRC office in Gulshan.

About the Millennium Development Goals: The initiative contributes to achieving the eight Millennium Development Goal, which seeks to develop a global partnership for development. In cooperation with the private sector, to make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.

About UNDP: UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own development solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop their local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.