

Tech neutrality to be included in telecom policy

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ICT Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy yesterday instructed the telecom division to include technology neutrality in the National Telecom Policy draft -- a longstanding demand of mobile operators.

The decision came at a meeting with officials of the telecom division.

Technology neutrality means the operators would have the choice to use any spectrum frequency for any purpose they like, a move that would bring down their production costs

and enable them to offer better coverage.

At present, the mobile operators can use the 1,800 megahertz (MHz) spectrum for 2G services and the 2,100 MHz spectrum for 3G services.

But with technology neutrality they would be able to use their idle bandwidth on the 1,800 MHz spectrum for 3G services and vice versa.

Once 4G services are introduced in Bangladesh, the operators would also be able to use the 1,800 MHz bandwidth for it.

Joy recommended articulating the defi-

nition of technology neutrality right at the beginning of the draft policy, said Tarana Halim, state minister for telecom, after the meeting.

Formulated in 1998, the current policy focuses on voice telephony and is not robust to the many developments the industry has seen since.

Joy also asked the officials to step up efforts to realise the huge amount of dues owed by various mobile phone and gateway operators, even through arbitration, if necessary.

The telecom regulator is owed close to Tk 4,000 crore, with some debtors being

politically-backed operators.

The defaulters' political identity will be disregarded when collecting the dues, Halim said quoting Joy.

The issues of mobile number portability, network tower sharing and elevating the standard of the state-run mobile operators Teletalk were also discussed at the meeting.

Joy also suggested leasing out idle bandwidth in the local market at lower prices or exporting them.

He expressed a "zero tolerance" stance for illegal call termination and corruption in the telecom sector.