

# Mobile internet users decline for 5th straight month

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Online Desk :

The mobile internet subscriber count in Bangladesh declined for a fifth straight month in January due to the regulator's bar on the sale of packages with short validity periods, compounded by persistent inflationary pressure on consumers. There were about 11.63 crore mobile internet users in January, having undergone a massive drop of nearly 22 lakh from that on the previous month, according to data from Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). This is the biggest reduction since December 2021, when the number of mobile internet users had dropped by 28 lakh compared to that in the preceding month. Industry experts attributed the decline to financial constraints of consumers due to heightened inflation and the regulatory bar. In a move that stakeholders, experts and consumer rights organisations say restricts freedom of choice, the BTRC had ordered mobile operators to discontinue 3-day and 15-day data packages from October 15 last year.

According to the BTRC, 69.23 percent of data packages that customers purchase were of a three-day validity, 16.84 percent of a seven-day validity, 3.82 percent of a 15-day validity, and 10.11 percent of a 30-day validity before the restriction. So, the imposition of the regulatory bar has translated to an increase in costs on low-income, grassroots, and young users such as students, said an official of an operator. Many of them used to purchase the 3-day package during weekends and now they can no longer do so, he added. On a year-on-year basis, the number of mobile subscribers increased by 3.65 percent in January. Meanwhile, the broadband internet subscriber base remained unchanged at 1.29 crore in January. Broadband subscribers account for five percent of the country's total internet subscriber base of 12.91 crore. The rest avail mobile internet.