**Telecom policy to undergo fundamental reforms**

The government will fundamentally transform the country's telecom policy to unlock the digital economy, improve service quality and prevent internet shutdowns during critical periods, said Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, the newly appointed special assistant to the chief adviser.

Without a fundamental structural overhaul, there will be no significant improvement in the quality of telecom services, he added.

He was speaking at a seminar titled "Steps to Ensure High-Speed, Quality, and Affordable Internet Access at the Marginal Level", organised by the Bangladesh Mobile Phone Consumers' Association at the National Press Club yesterday.

"We will make every possible effort to drive policy reform on behalf of the government despite the numerous challenges ahead. These reforms will be meaningful and policies will undergo a thorough transformation," Taiyeb said.

Taiyeb urged businesses to abandon monopolistic or duopolistic approaches, saying, "The government is determined to dismantle policies that have stifled Bangladesh's data market by allowing certain companies to hold onto the existing fiber infrastructure as if it were a treasure trove.

"The more fibre you lay, the more business you create," he emphasised.

The special assistant also criticised the current policy, saying it was designed around voice calls and revenue collection while restricting the data economy.

"This outdated, legacy-driven approach has long been obsolete," he added.

Modern telecom industries function as digital economy-driven service sectors, but Bangladesh has failed to position its communication industry for machine-to-machine communication, digital services, software innovations, and Internet of Things businesses, he said.

"This flawed perspective has led to the misconception that reducing prices would inevitably shrink revenues for both companies and the government. The previous administration compounded the issue by layering misguided policies, creating a mounting crisis.

"In the name of digitalisation, the past regime introduced inconsistent, subpar, and globally misaligned policies," Taiyeb said.

The key question now is how Bangladesh can transition from a readymade garments-oriented export economy to a technology-driven modern digital economy, ensuring export diversification and sustainable growth, he added.

Mustafa Mahmud Hussain, a telecom policy expert, delivered the keynote speech.

He said Bangladesh's digital progress depends on fair competition in the broadband sector.