

GOING DIGITAL

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Digital strides we made in 2020

Bangladesh has made significant progress centrally in the path towards digitisation, in almost every sector in the past year. This includes communication, finance, education and even land administration. In this piece, we shortlist five such milestones in the process of digitising Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION OF E-PASSPORTS

The government of Bangladesh launched e-passports at the beginning of 2020, becoming the first country in South Asia to launch e-passports. The biographical and biometric information of passport holders will remain safe in the e-passport chip. The real information of the passport holders and facial recognition will be verified automatically within 30

seconds through digital signature. There will be two types of e-passports with 48-page and 64-page, and their tenure will be five years and 10 years. It will need 15 days for delivering a general passport, while an urgent passport will be delivered in seven days.

The e-passports will be delivered from 72 regional and divisional passport offices and 80 foreign missions gradually. The project - "Introduction of Bangladesh e-Passport and Automated Border Control Management" - has been implemented by German company Veridos GmbH in association with Bangladesh Army, under the Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP). Under this project, some 25,000 e-passports can be delivered daily.

SHIFT TOWARDS FINTECH

The country has seen a drastic shift

towards fintech and mobile financing services like bKash and Nagad amid the Covid-19 pandemic. bKash has seen a daily transaction of approximately 5.8 million. According to bKash officials, currently, their customers are mostly availing services such as bill payments, money transfers and merchant payments for groceries and medicines. Nagad, a joint venture between the Bangladesh Post Office and Third Wave Technologies is another pioneer in the diaspora of fintech. It has so far added 1.84 crore active accounts. Other services like Rocket and UCash are also on the rise.

MASS FACILITATION OF ONLINE CLASSES

Bangladesh Research & Education Network (BdREN), along with the Ministry of Education, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh initiated the process of online classes for university students in the middle of last year



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