



# Digital payment takes a giant leap

Micro-merchants accepting payments digitally

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Mohammad Polash, an owner of a food cart in Mohammadpur's Town Hall market, opened a micro-merchant account with bKash a month ago.

The largest mobile financial service provider in Bangladesh linked a quick response (QR) code with the micro-merchant, or personal retail account (PRA), of Polash.

He sells burgers worth Tk 10,000 a day on an average. Of the amount, customers pay between Tk 1,000 and Tk 2,000 using the QR code, a type of barcode that stores information and can easily be read by smartphones.

Payment through the digital platform is on the rise and a majority of clients are students.

The benefit of the technological transformation taking place in Bangladesh does not end there, as Polash can purchase food ingredients from suppliers digitally as well.

Many street vendors and the owners of small grocery shops like

him now prefer digital transactions, which were only available at shopping malls in big cities until recently. Now, it is visible everywhere from urban to rural markets.

A micro business is allowed to accept a maximum payment of Tk 30,000 per day and Tk 5 lakh per month.

Users of mobile financial services, digital payment services and debit and credit card-holders of banks all

12.36 lakh to purchase goods under the same payment method.

LENDERS GEARING UP FOR DIGITAL TRANSACTIONS

Ali Ahmmed, chief commercial officer of bKash, says that the MFS provider is working to onboard thousands of merchants and incentivising customers to adopt the new service.

It has 26,217 micro-merchants as of November.

Mutual Trust Bank (MTB) has opened 5,000 micro-merchant accounts to serve marginalised businesses.

The bank plans to open one lakh PRAs and bring the businesses of three large kitchen markets in the capital under its programme, said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of the bank.

Account-holders of any bank with Visa debit card can now make payments through the QR code employed by MTB.

Bank Asia, one of the pioneers in the field, has achieved tremendous success by opening more than 51,000 PRAs.



can make payments digitally using phones.

The move is expected to reduce the use of cash to a large extent and pave the way for a cashless society in Bangladesh, which is reliant on cash.

The PRA holders of bKash received payments worth Tk 15.37 crore in November. They used Tk

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A grocer in the capital's Mohammadpur accepting payments through a quick response (QR) code linked to a micro merchant account of bKash, the country's largest mobile financial service provider. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

# Safety in non-RMG factories on the wane

CPD blames it on lack of measures, weak monitoring

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Industrial safety in the non-garment sector has been deteriorating day by day, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday.

This is due to a lack of safety measures with regard to structural, fire and electrical issues due to lax monitoring and enforcement of different compliance standards by different public agencies, it said.

"There are weaknesses in safety related laws, rules and acts concerning fire, electrical, structural, boiler and environmental issues," said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the CPD.

Besides, factory owners and managements have limited interest in investing in safety measures.

Workers are not fully aware about safety concerns and most non-garment factories lack safety committees.

They do not even face any pressure

from stakeholders, including consumers, workers, and civil society organisations, to ensure compliance standards, he added.

"Meagre punitive measures under different laws, rules, acts -- Boiler Act 1923, Explosive Act 1884 -- made those in factory management reluctant to undertake proper compliance measures," he said.

Moazzem made these comments while presenting a paper on industrial safety in non-garment enterprises.

He also spoke of monitoring transparency, accountability and efficiency of public actions at a media briefing on "Fire Incidents in Workplaces and Workers Safety: Where are Corrective Actions?" organised by the think tank.

Industrial safety in non-garment enterprises is almost an unaddressed issue, and the rapid rise of industrial accidents in recent years has further deteriorated the situation.

A fire at a food processing factory in Narayanganj, which killed over 52 workers

and injured more than 50 workers, has highlighted safety concerns in non-garment enterprises, he said.

Since the fire occurred in Narayanganj on July 8, 2021, a total of 82 types of accidents have been reported in national dailies -- almost one incident in every two days.

A majority of these accidents are related to fire (52 accidents) while others were over electrical, boiler explosion and related issues, killing 167 and injuring 256 others.

The majority of deaths and injuries were caused by fire related accidents, according to the presentation.

Dhaka and nearby areas, also major industrial zones, are the most vulnerable to accidents with 29 incidents, followed by Narayanganj, Gazipur and Chattogram with eight incidents each.

Rigorous industrial safety measures are now of critical importance for the reduction of accidents and casualties.

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## Cotton import to reach record high

Textile millers say

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The stage is set for Bangladesh's cotton imports to cross the 9 million bales mark this year for the first time despite the pandemic's severe fallout in the global supply chain because of a sudden rise in demand for yarn and fabrics from local garment exporters.

In the 2021 calendar year, Bangladesh imported 8.5 million bales of cotton spending more than \$3 billion. One bale equals 480 pounds or 218 kilograms (kg).

As export of Bangladeshi garment items has risen significantly with the reopening of global economies, cotton imports will surely surge.

Between July and December, the first six months of the current fiscal year, garment export grew by 28.02 per cent year-on-year to \$19.90 billion.

Of the amount, \$11.16 billion came from knitwear, which witnessed a 30.91 per cent rise year-on-year. The remaining \$8.73 billion came from woven, which is also a 24.50 per cent rise year-on-year.

"The upward trend of garment export will continue up to June this year as we booked a large volume of work orders," said Faruque Hassan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), last week.

"We have already made payments of the letters of credit for importing the cotton," said Mohammad Ali Khokon, president of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), the platform of the primary textile sector and cotton millers.

"We are expecting a rush in import of cotton in March and April this year and again a chaos in the port because of congestion," he said.

Khokon reiterated complaints that vessels of international shipping

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## National Bank fined Tk 55 lakh

Lender concealed loan info of 11 persons

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank has fined National Bank Tk 55 lakh for concealing loan related information of 11 persons, which was a gross violation of banking rules.

Nine of the 11 are family members of Zainul Haque Sikder, the bank's former chairman, and two top executives of Sikder Group, according to a probe carried out by the central bank.

Rick Haque Sikder and Ron Haque Sikder, both directors of National Bank and sons of Zainul Haque Sikder, are also included in the list.

National Bank did not submit the loan information of credit cards used by the 11 persons.

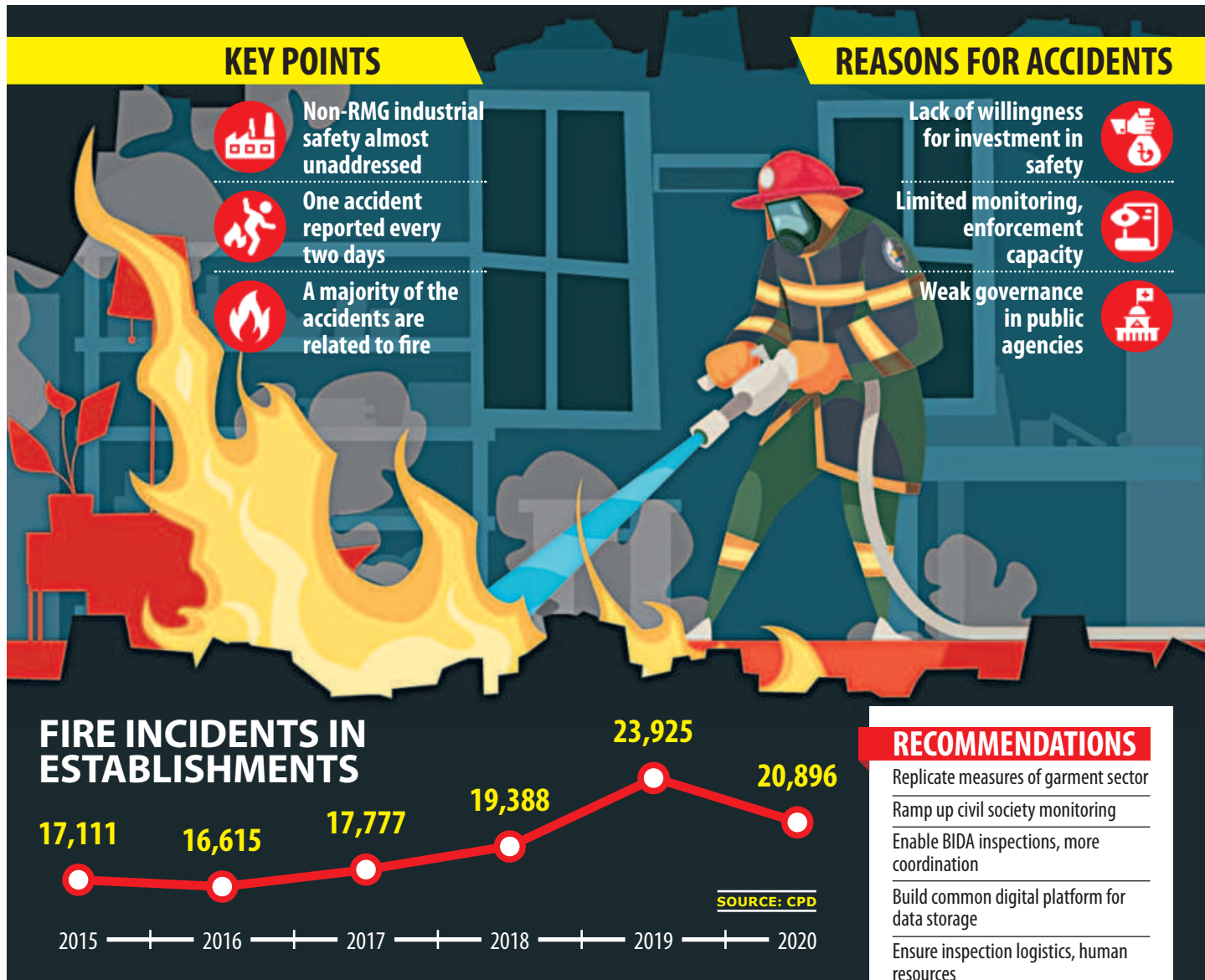
The bank allowed the 11 to spend way beyond the foreign currency quota of the credit cards, in other words depositors' money, on the instruction of Zainul, who passed away on February 10 last year.

Bangladesh Bank imposed a Tk 5 lakh fine against each credit card as the bank had not submitted the relevant information to Credit Information Bureau, said a BB official, wishing not be named.

The banking regulator imposed the fine in December and this month, the official said.

The 11 persons spent a staggering \$10.65 million (about Tk 91.4 crore) from 2017 to 2021 through international credit cards, in a serious breach of banking rules.

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STOCKS			
	DSEX ▲	CSCX ▲	
	0.30%	0.23%	
	7,017.22	12,342.34	

COMMODITIES			
	Gold ▼	Oil ▼	
	\$1,822.44	\$82.68	
	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	

CURRENCIES				
STANDARD CHARTERED BANK				
	\$ USD	€ EUR	£ GBP	¥ CNY
BUY TK	85.05	96.29	115.82	13.13
SELL TK	86.05	100.09	119.62	13.81

ASIAN MARKETS				
	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI
	▲ 0.14%	▼ 0.96%	▲ 0.07%	▼ 1.17%
	61,235.30	28,489.13	3,257.30	3,555.26