

Star BUSINESS

Nagad's interim licence tenure extended again

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank has once again renewed the interim licence of Nagad as Bangladesh Post Office (BPO) is yet to form a subsidiary to run the mobile financial service.

The fast growing mobile financial service (MFS) provider has until September next year to avail a full-fledged licence from the central bank.

This is the seventh such extension since the operator secured provisional approval from the central bank in March 2020.

Nagad has been operating without a full-fledged licence since its inception in March 2019.

A senior official of the central bank, seeking anonymity, gave confirmation to The Daily Star about the extension.

The central bank sent a letter to the Directorate of Posts informing that it had granted the directorate's request for the extension, said the official.

The MFS provider's plan

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is to secure the licence on getting a separate one to serve as a digital bank as its investors want to run the MFS under the digital bank, added the official.

Obtaining a full-fledged licence is a long process and Nagad is working to attain it, said Tanvir A Mishuk, managing director of the MFS provider, on being contacted by The Daily Star.

Nagad is running with approval of authorities concerned of Bangladesh Bank and running under their supervision, he said.

"We are working with the banking regulator to complete the licensing procedure and are also very hopeful that within a short time our procedure will be completed," said Mishuk.

Primarily Nagad wanted to run its MFS under the platform of a non-bank financial institution (NBFI) and investors of Nagad

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With floodwaters from an overflowing Jamuna river starting to recede, farmers in a char of Gaibandha's Phulchari upazila have taken to planting a local variety of paddy they call "gainja" in Bangla. The rice grains are elongated with a reddish outer tint, cultivable at very little cost and harvestable within three months of planting. The photo was taken on Monday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUI

E-commerce to face more scrutiny as BB makes rules to stop fraud

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday introduced a guideline for merchant acquiring, making it mandatory for payment services providers to carry out intense scrutiny before onboarding sellers as it looks to eliminate online frauds and financial crimes.

According to the 'Guidelines for Merchant Acquiring and Escrow Services 2023, merchant-acquiring institutions such as banks, mobile financial services, payments service providers (PSPs), and payments system operators have been asked to draw up their respective onboarding policies.

The policies will give details about the documents to be needed for merchant onboarding, document verification process, risk analysis, risk management, escrow services, refund, merchant activity inspection and monitoring, and directives for merchants in providing services to customers.

It will also include the instructions to be followed by both parties for the settlement of transactional disputes.

The move from the central bank comes as Ponzi-like e-commerce platforms that lured unsuspecting customers to make payments of thousands of crores of taka on the back of hefty discounts during the coronavirus pandemic.

Last year, the central bank identified 25 online sellers, including Evaly, E-orange, Qcoom, Dhamaka, Aladinerprodip, Sirajganj Shop, Alesha Mart, and Dalal Plus that received a staggering Tk 6,050 crore in just four months from clients through payment gateways and banks.

Most of the customers who were defrauded haven't received their products or refunds yet.



"The new guideline aims to make it difficult for e-commerce firms to resort to dishonest means to receive payments from customers," said a BB official yesterday.

"We hope there will be no new Evaly or Sirajganj Shop cases after these rules."

Since operations and transactions of merchants such as e-commerce platforms or online businesses carry the risk of money laundering and fraudulent activities, the BB guideline asked acquirers to receive a host of

documents from sellers.

They include the merchant's name, permanent and current address, a copy of the national identification card, the electronic know your customer, personal retail account, digital business identification number, current trade licence, and the certificate of incorporation.

Their telephone or mobile number, bank, MFS or PSP account numbers, business address, website and email address, description, legality, social importance of the businesses in which merchants operate, the updated list of products, permission for the sale of goods or services, and documents of the association where the merchant is a member have to be submitted.

Acquirers have been asked to conduct regular risk analysis for their merchants in a bid to tackle fraud, money laundering, and terrorist financing and safeguard customer's interests.

For example, if the month-on-month sales of an online marketplace witness a jump of 25 percent, for an online seller 30 percent, for a physical store 40 percent, and for a hybrid retailer 40 percent, acquirers will have to seek an explanation for the increase.

If the clarification is found to be unsatisfactory, banks, MFS providers, or PSPs will freeze the transactions with the

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WORLD TOURISM DAY TODAY

Arrival of foreign tourists far below potential

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Bangladesh is home to the world's longest sea beach as well as the world's largest mangrove forest alongside numerous places of outstanding natural beauty. But despite its potential, the country still could not explore the global markets and attract foreign holidaymakers.

Even 52 years after its independence, Bangladesh's tourism sector lags behind many South Asian countries.

According to Index Mundi, which measures the performance of countries in terms of foreign tourists, Bangladesh is ranked 141st out of 188 countries and 42nd out of 46 Asian countries.

Although the number of foreign tourists to Bangladesh increased last year, the nation has failed to utilise its potential to the fullest.

This is owing to a lack of properly planned promotions in the global markets and substandard domestic facilities, such as transportation,

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accommodation, cuisine, tour guides and entertainment options, according to industry insiders.

More than 5.29 lakh foreigners, including holidaymakers, visited Bangladesh in 2022, according to Immigration Police data provided by the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB).

Most of these visitors were from India, the United Kingdom, the US, the United Arab Emirates, China, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Canada, Italy, Turkey, Russia and Japan, said BTB.

However, industry operators said the current trend of inbound visitors was yet to reach pre-pandemic levels.

In 2019, the number of foreign tourists stood at about 6.21 lakh, indicating a year-on-year growth of around 12 percent, the BTB data shows.

But when the pandemic was at its peak in 2020, just 1.82 lakh tourists arrived from abroad, representing a staggering decline of about 71 percent compared to the previous year.

Around 30 lakh Bangladeshi tourists went

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STOCKS		
	DSEX ▲	CASPI ▲
	0.01% 6,283.80	0.02% 18,584.17

COMMODITIES		
	Gold ▼	Oil ▼
	\$1,913.11 (per ounce)	\$88.80 (per barrel)

ASIAN MARKETS				
	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI
	▼ 0.09% 65,958.35	▼ 1.11% 32,315.05	▼ 0.01% 3,215.07	▼ 0.43% 3,102.27

Visa restrictions won't affect RMG exports: BGMEA

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Apparel shipments from Bangladesh to the US will not be adversely affected by any visa restrictions imposed by America, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

This is because the industry can continue operating without its officials having to go abroad thanks to the sophisticated communication systems available in the world today, said BGMEA President Faruque Hassan.

For example, the business kept running even when people could not go abroad due to global lockdowns amid the Covid-19 pandemic, he said during a press conference at the BGMEA office in Dhaka's Uttara yesterday.

The meet was called to inform the media about the current situation of the local apparel industry.

"So, I do not think the visa restrictions will have any bad impact on the shipment of apparels to the US," he added.

Hassan said that instead, the BGMEA is more concerned about helping its members fulfil the various requirements set by buyers for increasing trade.

For instance, a delegation of the United States Trade Representative visited the BGMEA office last week to ask if there has been progress regarding labour law reforms and adjusting the minimum wage for garment workers.

Hassan also said the US does not intend to harm the general public of Bangladesh by causing trouble for the country's garment industry, where a lot of people are employed.

"In the modern communicative world, people can run

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PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Garment exports to the US declined by nearly 20 percent during January-July of this year compared to the same period last year.

No US info yet on ACU payments bar: BB

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Bangladesh Bank (BB) is yet to be officially communicated by the US authorities and Asian Clearing Union (ACU) regarding restrictions on processing payments linked to the ACU, confirmed a top central bank official yesterday.

The ACU is an arrangement to settle payments for intra-regional transactions among nine countries, including Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Iran, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are other members of the Tehran-headquartered ACU.

Under the ACU, Bangladesh clears import bills of an average of \$1.5 billion every two months, subsequently resulting in a drop in foreign exchange reserves.

The Economic Times recently reported that banks in India have

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