"Pubali Bank prioritizes robust infrastructure and security for successful digitalization"

In conversation with Mohammad Ali, MD & CEO, Pubali Bank

TDS: What is the current status of digitalization within your organization?

Mohammad Ali (MA): Pubali Bank has made substantial progress in digitalization by developing an in-house solution for both conventional and Islamic banking. By 2014, all branches were online, and the bank established connections with Bangladesh Bank's financial inclusion projects. A mobile app for retail customers has been launched, and digital processes for corporate clients are underway.

We have emphasized the development of a robust infrastructure and security system for successful digitalization. Our initiatives include introducing QR codes, deploying POS systems, and completing the digital project for corporate clients by 2024. The bank has installed 10,000 POS systems with a target to serve numerous restaurants and departmental stores. The ultimate goal is to digitize the entire banking ecosystem, eliminating the need for physical branch visits.

TDS: What challenges do you see in implementing digital transformation within the financial sector?

MA: Identified by Pubali Bank, challenges in introducing digital transformation in Bangladesh include the prevalent use of cash transactions, citizen reluctance to adopt digital channels due to concerns about taxes and VAT, and the high costs associated with digital payment devices for small transactions.

Pubali Bank acknowledges the necessity of a centralized directive to limit cash transactions and proposes incentives, such as returns on income generated from digital transactions, to encourage adoption. Addressing the concerns of small vendors is crucial, considering the profitability of digital transactions for them.

A holistic approach, coordination among stakeholders, and continuous monitoring of transactions are suggested to overcome these challenges. The emphasis is on the role of incentives, security measures, and infrastructure development in promoting successful digital transformation in Bangladesh.

TDS: How does your organization guarantee security, encompassing cybersecurity, prevention of forgery, and the safety of data?

MA: The bank emphasizes its commitment to ensuring complete security, including cybersecurity, prevention of forgery, and data safety. The bank has established a Security Operation and Control Center, incorporating security applications for mobile apps. We have implemented necessary security measures specific to various products such as mobile apps, web platforms, email, websites, and databases. Continuous monitoring of transactions is conducted through the security center. We recognize the importance of maintaining a quality product with a robust infrastructure, adequate support, and effective security systems. Overall, Pubali Bank aims to provide uninterrupted customer service with the highest level of security across all areas of operation.

TDS: How does digitalization contribute to addressing sustainability and the inclusion of unbanked individuals in the banking sector?

MA: Pubali Bank has prioritized Green Banking and digitalization, making account opening easier and eliminating the need for physical visits to branches.

For loans and financial inclusion, Pubali Bank has introduced a range of digital solutions. Retail customers can perform various banking tasks through a mobile app, including credit card payments, loan transactions, and fund transfers. The bank is also working on providing digital services for corporate clients, enabling them to manage loan investments, renewals, and submit proposals digitally. Initiatives such as a payroll system for corporate customers and plans to offer QR codes to shops aim to facilitate digital transactions across different sectors.

A centralized directive and incentives for digital transactions could drive financial inclusion.

Despite challenges, Pubali Bank is committed to making banking services accessible digitally for individuals at the retail, SME, and corporate levels. The overarching goal is to achieve a fully digitalized banking ecosystem, reducing the reliance on physical branches and promoting sustainability and financial inclusion.

TDS: What future plans does your organization have to enhance digitalization?

MA: To enhance digitalization in the finance sector, a holistic approach is essential to support the sector's ecosystem. Eliminating sectoral boundaries and improving coordination among stakeholders are crucial for maximizing the benefits of digitalization, including time and cost savings and environmental impact.

"Trust Bank is embarking on a comprehensive digitalization journey"

In conversation with Humaira Azam, MD and CEO, Trust Bank

TDS: What is the current status of digitalization within your organization?

Humaira Azam (HA): Trust Bank has made significant progress in digitalizing its operations and offers a wide range of digital products and services, including mobile banking, internet banking, online account opening, any branch banking, mobile financial services (MFS), ATMs, point-of-sale (POS) terminals, e-commerce, near-field communication (NFC) payments, and alert services.

The TBL mobile app, 'Trust Money,' is a very popular and user-friendly mobile app that allows customers to check their account balances, transfer funds (to other TBL branches, BEFTN, NPSB, MFS), pay bills, and more. We are extensively developing this app to offer more convenience to customers, such as QR and e-commerce payments, PIN generation, and requests for information change, etc.

TBL is also implementing a major switching system with a dedicated digital integration module that will enable product innovation in the consumer segment. The bank is also planning to implement a new website with a chatbot and embrace futuristic technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Data Analytics, Distributed Ledger Technology (e.g., Blockchain), Cloud Computing, workflow automation, and a loan origination system to support Cards, Retail, and SME businesses.

TDS: What challenges do you see in implementing digital transformation within the financial sector?

HA: Bangladesh Bank is introducing policies favoring online and interoperable payment, digital banks, etc.

Trust Bank is committed to bridging the digital divide by investing in digital literacy and awareness programs, expanding its network of branches and ATMs, partnering with other organizations, bolstering its cybersecurity measures, and recruiting and training IT professionals. These initiatives will ensure that everyone in Bangladesh can benefit from the opportunities of the digital economy.

TDS: How does your organization guarantee security, encompassing cybersecurity, prevention of forgery, and the safety of data?

HA: Trust Bank prioritizes protecting its customers' data, safeguarding business operations, and upholding the integrity of financial systems.

Trust Bank's cybersecurity strategy is built on a multi-layered approach, including:

• State-of-the-art switching system with dedicated security and fraud prevention module
• Advanced EMV and 3DS technologies for cardholder and merchant protection
• Endpoint security solutions for workstations and servers
• EDR, FIM, and DLP solutions for intrusion detection, file integrity assurance, and data loss prevention
• Encryption of critical workstations to protect sensitive data
• Next-generation firewall (NGFW) for network traffic filtering and monitoring
• Security Information and Event Management (SIEM).
• Regular VAPT testing to identify and remediate vulnerabilities

The bank continuously invests in the latest security technologies, provides cybersecurity awareness training to employees, and actively monitors and adapts its security posture to address evolving threats.

TDS: How does digitalization contribute to addressing sustainability and the inclusion of unbanked individuals in the banking sector?

HA: Digitization is revolutionizing the banking sector, driving sustainability, expanding loan access, and promoting financial inclusion. By reducing paper consumption and optimizing branch networks, digital banking minimizes its environmental impact. Digital platforms streamline loan applications, enhance credit scoring, and enable real-time loan approvals, making loans more accessible to a wider range of individuals.

TDS: What future plans does your organization have to enhance digitalization?

HA: Trust Bank is embarking on a comprehensive digitalization journey, encompassing a multitude of strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing customer experience, expanding financial inclusion, and driving innovation.

The bank is committed to streamlining existing processes through workflow automation, adopting green banking by introducing a digital loan origination system, utilizing digital underwriting tools, integrating QR code payment capabilities, integrating with e-commerce platforms, and continuously enhancing the mobile app.